

**EXPLORING INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCY GROWTH  
BY NON-MOBILE UNIVERSITY STUDENTS THROUGH  
INTERACTION WITH DISSIMILAR OTHERS**

**Internationalizing at home through voluntary social interaction**

Master's Thesis  
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June 2008



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**Title: Exploring Intercultural Competency Growth by Non-Mobile University Students Through Interaction with Dissimilar Others:**  
Internationalizing at home through voluntary social interaction

**Subject**  
Intercultural Communications

**Nature of the Study**  
Master's Thesis

**Date**  
June 2008

**Number of pages in total**  
310 + 5 appendixes

## Abstract

Internationalization is a catchword at universities in the third millennium. However, for many, internationalization means mobility of students, outbound or inbound. Research indicates that mobile students can benefit in a variety of ways, including the development of skills and knowledge on the way to intercultural competency. The research concern in this study is the non-mobile student, those who will not study abroad, but who will be members of multicultural societies and employees in an increasingly global marketplace.

The research project explores whether and how students who will never live abroad can develop intercultural (IC) competency without a period abroad, as suggested by some theorists. This study involved qualitative interviews with 15 participants (11 who have not lived abroad and 4 who have) of the Buddy Project at the University of Jyväskylä in Finland. The Buddy Project is a volunteer social program that creates small groups of Finns and inbound (foreign) students with the intent to interact and perhaps build networks of friends.

The three findings of this study are

1. Intercultural competency is not possible without the individual spending some time outside the familiarity of his/her home culture. However, within certain conditions, individuals can develop intercultural knowledge and skills that will prepare them in some ways for social interaction in a multicultural environment and/or global marketplace. Several factors can facilitate such growth, while other factors can affect the relationship building process and/or hinder the IC growth from interaction.
2. The terminology used in the literature regarding (IC) and intercultural communication (ICC) competency is unclear at best. This thesis provides a synthesis of the building blocks of intercultural competency, which includes intrapersonal elements (IC) and interpersonal (ICC) components.
3. Motivation to interact is a frequently cited component involved in appropriate and effective ICC interaction. However, the data in this study indicate that simple motivation (interest) is not sufficient for building IC relationships or participating in social organizations. Therefore, an engaged motivation model is proposed that suggests that interest, emotions, activity, and commitment are essential for the building of IC relationships.

**Keywords:** intercultural competency, intercultural skills, intercultural learning, motivation, internationalization-at-home, non-mobile students, voluntary social interaction

**Place of storage:** University of Jyväskylä/Tourula library



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**LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

**BP** – Buddy Project

**CERD** – Committee on Elimination of Racial Discrimination

**CEU** – Council of the European Union

**CHE** – Council on Higher Education

**ECRI** – European Commission against Racism and Intolerance

**ESN** – Erasmus Student Network

**EU** – European Union

**HE** – higher education

**HEI** – higher education institution

**IaH** – internationalization-at-home

**IC** – intercultural

**ICC** – intercultural communication

**ICT** – information and communication technology

**JyU** – University of Jyväskylä

**MoE** – Ministry of Education (Finland)

**MoL** – Ministry of Labour (Finland)

**OECD** – Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development

**OFM** – Ombudsman for Minorities (Finland)

**ROI** – return on investment

**TE** – transnational education

**UN** – United Nations

**UNESCO** – United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization

**UNFPA** – United Nations Population Fund

**UTC** – University of Cape Town (South Africa)



## 1 INTRODUCTION

Relationships between different cultural and linguistic groups are at the heart of diplomacy and the need to choose appropriate ambassadors of one group to another is as old as civilized societies. What is new, however, is the condition of the world which allows and encourages all the people in a cultural and linguistic group, not just its diplomats and professional travelers, to take up contact with people in other groups. (Byram, 1997: 1)

At the heart of any scholarly research is a perplexity. Sometimes it is an intellectual curiosity, other times it is a personal wondering of what might have been. Sometimes it is both. In my case, it began as a pondering of how different my life would have been had I never moved from my home country to Finland for a period of study. The 18 months (at that time) that I had been experiencing another way of living, learning, perceiving, and understanding, and of course, feeling and questioning, had been a period of significant personal growth.

Yet, that brief period of contemplation and imagining might have remained a passing mental exercise except for the intersection of several seemingly unrelated events during the second semester of my Intercultural Communications and International Relations master's degree program:

- ◆ A *Helsingin Sanomat* (Lassila, 2003) report on the demand by the Confederation of Finnish Industry and Employers that the Finnish government more actively recruit immigrants into Finland to counter a projected shortage in the labor force.
- ◆ For a research paper about the growing multiculturalism in Finland and the intercultural implications of that, I learned,
  - Studies indicated the youth of the late 1990s were considerably more prejudiced toward immigrants than their older compatriots (Makkonen, 2003; Suutarinen, Brunell, & Törmäkangas, 2000);
  - Finland had an integration program aimed at helping immigrants and refugees adjust to living in Finland (Government of Finland, 1999; Heikkilä & Peltonen, 2002), but there was no parallel program, or even discussion about the need for one, to help the native Finns prepare for such changes.
- ◆ During research for my internship (spring 2003) involving recruiting international and Finnish students to a new master's degree program in English at the University of Jyväskylä (JyU), I learned from JyU's international office that about 1 in 5 students from this university

participate in exchange programs, meaning up to 80% of JyU graduates probably will not engage cultural difference from within another culture.

- ◆ A Finnish friend commented that, because of her major (Finnish), she never had foreign students in class and rarely saw them around campus. Nevertheless, she expressed interest in meeting them.
- ◆ Finally, talk surfaced in the 2002–2003 academic year about JyU pursuing an “international campus” concept to assist in “internationalizing” Finnish students and to encourage more foreign students to enroll. However, information on the nature and practicalities of the concept, how it would be implemented or even if it were to be implemented, was unknown.

Pondering these distinct areas led to a questioning of whether the leaders or the citizens of Finland had truly anticipated the nature of the changes on the horizon brought about by globalization, internationalization, and immigration. While government officials were forward thinking about the integration for incoming residents of Finland, the plans narrowly focused on the adaptation of the “others,” and ignored that natives would be living, working, and interacting with these new community members, thus needing preparation to adapt to a changing society. Was this need even recognized by Finland’s leadership and, if so, how would this preparation take form? Most probably, the leaders of a multicultural Finland of tomorrow are taking their university education today. And, if the majority of Finns in university studies are not personally experiencing intercultural interaction abroad, were they interacting with foreigners at home? And how would Finns interested in interacting with dissimilar others during their tertiary-level education go about it?

It became clear that I needed to explore more deeply the issues of how and where native Finnish university students who were probably not going to take an exchange period might be interacting with foreigners living in Finland. More importantly, however, it was important to learn whether any interaction that was taking place would or could lead to the development of intercultural competency or intercultural skills in the native Finns.

Such a study would fulfill several interests. First, my intellectual curiosity would be addressed, as I would need to explore, for starters, what type of interaction is actually happening, how learning takes place within interaction, what

challenges and benefits exist for such development, how such learning might be facilitated, and so on. From the social perspective, this research would be valuable because, as I soon found and Straffon (2003), and later, Van Oudenhoven and Hofstra (2006) confirmed, most of the research on the development of intercultural competence, intercultural sensitivity, or communication competence have focused primarily on adult immigrant and expatriate worker subjects, study abroad participants, tourists, and sojourners (e.g., Ady, 1995; Alred & Byram, 2002; M. Berry, 1998; E. T. Hall, 1976; Hammer, Bennett, & Wiseman, 2003; Hutchings, Jackson, & McEllister, 2002; Kealey & Protheroe, 2000; Y. Y. Kim, 2001; Matsumoto et al., 2001; Penington & Wildermuth, 2005; Pettigrew, 1997, 1998a; Taajamo, 2003, 2005; Ward, 2001)—although some studies on intergroup contact involve youth (e.g., Amir, 1969; Horenczyk & Bekerman, 1997)—or on some specific antecedent, process, or trait that explains or facilitates intercultural interaction success (e.g., Arasaratnam, 2004; Barna, 1998; Gudykunst, 1995; Lee, 2006; Rothbart & John, 1985). My research, while it would involve higher-education (HE) students, would focus on the at-home individuals, a quite overlooked subject. Additional social benefit is that little research has been done on how at-home individuals develop interculturally, particularly within the nature of social interaction and/or friendship making, and the outcome of this study could offer some insight for government programs that might address the intercultural needs of native residents. Furthermore, because JyU was exploring the myriad elements of an “international campus,” or would perhaps consider the concept of Internationalization-at-Home that is taking root in some European universities, this research could support their work in creating an environment that attends to the needs of all students, not just those who study abroad. Finally, this study appeals greatly to me personally, since it might help address the curiosity I have about how I might have developed interculturally had I never left the USA for Finland, and perhaps allows people “just like me” to benefit.

### **1.1 Contextual Issues Surrounding the Study**

Studies do not take place within a vacuum; myriad phenomena serve as rationales for, influencers and components of, and beneficiaries of research. In this study, the contextual issues of globalization, migration, and technological advances frame the general discussion around the growing multiculturalism in

Finland and elsewhere and the internationalization of higher education. These phenomena are addressed here and in Chapter 2.

### **1.1.1 The global environment**

Adler (1998: 226) points out that, “For the first time in the history of the world, a patchwork of technology and organization has made possible simultaneous interpersonal and intercultural communication.... Accompanying the growth of human communication has been the erosion of barriers that have, throughout history, geographically, linguistically, and culturally separated people.”

Globalization reflects multiple dimensions of cultural, economic, technological, political, military, and diplomatic processes that affect the entire world through the flow of knowledge, people, ideas, money, and products, making nation-states and societies more interconnected, interdependent, and knowledge based (Burbules & Torres, 2000; de Jong & Teekens, 2003; Enders, 2004; Gornitzka, Gulbrandsen, & Trondal, 2003a, 2003b; Trondal, Gornitzka, & Gulbrandsen, 2003). While these elements have existed for decades, if not centuries, what has accelerated since the 1970s has been the eroding of national boundaries for markets (Ylänkö, 2002), brought about by advances in technology, communication, and transportation, to name a few. How a country is affected by or responds to globalization depends on the country’s history, traditions, culture, values, priorities and goals, and political and economic makeup (de Wit, 2002; Knight, 2004a). Burbules and Torres (2000: 17) emphasize that just as defining of the term globalization depends on one’s vantage point, so does the assessing of its worth, since a benefit of globalization to one culture might be an evil to another.

The concept and nature of globalization have raised much controversy and discussion. In particular, the concern reflects the unevenness of the benefits of globalization, the growing power of multinational corporations, how the various aspects of globalization affect the social dimension within cultures, the blurring of national borders, and environmental threats (Forsander & Trux, 2002a; Gibbons, 1998a, 1998b; Teichler, 2004; Välimaa, 2004).

Another significant element of globalization is population migration. Migration flows are related to the world economy, with—except for refugee crises—individuals seeking to take part in the growing economy in some region (Forsander & Trux, 2002a). The number of people living outside their country of



birth has been estimated to have doubled in the past 50 years, to about 191 million persons in 2005 (United Nations Population Fund [UNFPA], 2006: 5), not including undocumented workers, who often are not counted in the official data. Today, nearly every nation in the world is involved in the migration flow in some manner—as a country of origin, transit, or reception (Ibid). The number of migrants is expected to rise to 230 million by 2050 (Tuomioja, 2005).

The UNFPA (2006) indicates that more than 90% of the 36 million who migrated between 1990 and 2005 relocated to industrialized countries. As a result, 75% of all international migrants now live in just 29 countries, with one of four immigrants living in North America and one in three living in Europe. While Europe currently hosts the largest number (64 million), Van Oudenhoven, Ward, and Masgoret (2006: 638) cited 2005 UN data indicating the leaders proportionate to their populations are Oceania (15%) and North America (13%).

Therefore, globalization and its many facets are significant as a contextual issue for this thesis specifically because of the implications of the phenomenon on local cultures. Some quarters fear the homogenization of cultural diversity, as people around the world “mix and match” components of other cultures with their own to meet their own interpretation of their values (Forsander & Trux, 2002a: 5) and tastes. While this leads to the illusion of sameness in a common world, the reality is that, even in a globalized economy, the need for knowledge of the local culture remains, to connect with local consumption patterns and to avoid cultural faux pas that might jeopardize business goals (Ibid). It is essential, therefore, to consider both the local cultures and the transnational influences of globalization whenever addressing issues of cultural interaction.

### **1.1.2 Growing multiculturalism in Finland**

Historically, Finland has been a supplier of immigrants rather than a receiver, having lost more than a million citizens as emigrants in the century prior to 1990 (Koivukangas, 2005), often the result of economic hardship (Koivukangas, 2003). In particular, after the Second World War, immigration to Finland was negligible (Lehti & Aromaa, 2002), with incomers often the result of intercultural marriage (Heikkilä & Peltonen, 2002) or family ties (Salmenhaara, 2005), or the returning migrants from Sweden (85% of immigrants in the 1980s; Koivukangas, 2003: 4). As a result, Finland retained a

rather high degree of ethnic and national homogeneity (Lehti & Aromaa, 2002), and so Finns are not used to dealing with foreigners on a daily basis (Qassim & Kivelä, 2004), despite the Finland population including Swedish-speaking Finns (6%), the indigenous Samis (3%), and several ethnic minority groups, specifically the Romas, Tatars, and Jews (Koivukangas, 2003; Liebkind & McAlister, 1999; Makkonen, 2004; Välimaa, 2001). Moreover, foreigners have migrated to Finland throughout its history, particularly Germans, Central Europeans, Scandinavians, Russians, and Swedes (Koivukangas, 2003). However, both in absolute and relative terms, the number of immigrants and members of ethnic minorities in Finland is still low when compared other European countries (Heikkilä & Peltonen, 2002; Lehti & Aromaa, 2002; Makkonen, 2004). Immigrants account for less than 2% of the population of Finland (Koivukangas, 2003), as compared to a figure of up to 6% in other Nordic countries and about 10% for some Western European countries (Wallenius, 2001: 61). Koivukangas (2003) reports that if Finland had the same proportion of immigrants as Germany does, it would have an immigrant population of about 500,000 people, as compared to about the 120,000 in 2006 (Ulkomaalaisvirasto, 2007a, 2007b).

However, the rate of immigration in Finland within the last 15 years is among the highest in among the 15 old EU countries (Kilpi, 2006). The number of foreigners living legally in Finland without citizenship has increased from 26,300 in 1990 to 121,739 in 2006 (Ulkomaalaisvirasto, 2007a, 2007b). The current trend of immigration began in the 1990s, particularly with the Finnish Government's policy to encourage the return of persons of Finnish descent, those living primarily in Sweden, Russia, and Estonia (Saarto, 2006). These three groups represented 37% of the total foreign immigration in 2005 (Ibid: 14), although the policy regarding the return of Ingrians (ethnic Finnish Russians) has been tightened since the end of the 1990s (Heikkilä & Peltonen, 2002; Kilpi, 2006). Many of the Ingrians lacked a sufficient Finnish identity and this caused much difficulty in the integration process (Tanner, 2004). More recently, the number of migrant workers from China, India, and Ukraine immigrating to Finland has grown (Saarto, 2006; Ulkomaalaisvirasto, 2007b), although the Directorate of Immigration for Finland indicates the 10 top home countries for immigrants in 2006 were Russia, Estonia, Sweden, Somalia,

Serbia/Montenegro, China, Iraq, Thailand, Germany, and Great Britain (Ulkomaalaisvirasto, 2007b). Meanwhile, more than 42,000 citizens of EU countries currently reside in Finland (Ulkomaalaisvirasto, 2007b). As a point of comparison, 12,100 Finns emigrated in 2006 (YLE News, April 20, 2007), primarily to European or other OECD countries (Ibid; Saarto, 2006).

Nearly half of the immigrants to Finland live in the Helsinki metropolitan region (Heikkilä & Peltonen, 2002; Saarto, 2006). Other large cities in Finland, such as Tampere and Oulu, are less multicultural, despite the effort by the government to locate immigrants evenly across the country (Heikkilä & Peltonen, 2002). The outcome of such location policies has been the domestic migration of immigrants, particularly of refugees, to southern Finland (Government of Finland, 2006; Heikkilä & Peltonen, 2002).

The number of Finnish residents whose first language is not Finnish has tripled since 1992 (Tanner, 2004), with more than 150 mother tongues spoken in Finland in 2008 (YLE News, February 25, 2008). Altogether, foreign citizens in Finland hail from 150 nationalities around the world (Koivukangas, 2003).

While Director of Immigration Annika Forsander emphasizes that immigration is not a new phenomenon, nor is the level of immigrants in Finland unprecedented (she indicates that the numbers of immigrants today are approaching that of 1907 Finland; Johansson, 2007), the rapid growth in the immigration population is notable in that it is new to the current generations of Finns. As a group, adult Finns have not experienced an ongoing process of incoming diversity, are not familiar with the needs of and typical challenges faced by immigrants (Salmenhaara, 2005), and have not developed skills for successfully interacting with dissimilar others. Contemporary Finns have “suddenly” come to a reality in which their neighbors or workmates may not look or behave as Finns have been socialized to expect, and they are seeing how adaptations to social, business and educational practices are being made, although these changes might not be so readily obvious to or personally experienced by those living beyond the Helsinki region. As a result, Finns are not used to the implications and benefits of large immigrant communities as citizens of other European countries have experienced (Forsander & Trux, 2002b; Wallenius, 2001). “This change has reverberated powerfully in Finnish society because of the speed at which it occurred, but partially also because

Finnish national identity has been based on homogeneity, in spite of its established minorities and ethnic minorities” (Forsander & Trux, 2002a: 7).

And as members of the host and immigrant groups come into contact with each other, either directly or through media images, attitudes, suppositions, and expectations are formed by both groups regarding the other, and these mental programs play out daily in a multicultural community (Griffiths & Nesdale, 2006) or form the basis for generalizations made by those who do not personally meet the other. Furthermore, increased immigration often creates a number of problems (Koivukangas, 2003). Two areas that will be explored in greater detail here are labor and employment issues and discrimination and prejudice.

### **1.1.2.1 Labor and unemployment issues**

The relationship between the Finnish labor market and immigrants is a paradox. On the one hand, the Finnish Ministry of Labour recognizes the looming need for additional qualified employees as the older workers begin to retire in large numbers, and thus is looking at the need for immigrant workers, as well as students and retirees, to create a balance between labor demands and labor sources (Ministry of Labour [MoL], 2006a; Office of the Prime Minister, 2004; Qassim & Kivelä, 2004). Industry leaders and employers are calling for a more liberal immigration process to facilitate recruitment of qualified foreign workers (Lassila, 2003), with at least 100,000 foreign worker needed within the next 20 years (YLE News, April 21, 2008). The Finnish government has responded with a more streamlined worker immigration process, as well as other changes in labor practices (Filatov, 2006; MoL, 2006a, 2007a). The Finnish Aliens Act was amended to promote entry of students from developing countries (Saarto, 2006) and to encourage these Finnish-trained students to stay to work in Finland.

On the other hand, the unemployment level of immigrants in Finland is considerably higher than native workers (Koivukangas, 2003). Great differences exist in the employability of some nationality groups because, for example, their prior education and work experience (Saarto, 2006). In 2006, the MoL (2007b) estimated the unemployment rate for all immigrant jobseekers was 24%, but a recent report on YLE indicates that the employment picture for both domestic and immigrant unemployed has improved recently (YLE News, September 18, 2007). Several factors impede the recruitment of unemployed immigrants, such as the

lack of language skills, the low estimation of foreign work experience and training by Finnish employers, and prejudices held by employers. Heikkilä and Peltonen (2002) report that employers' negative attitudes are caused by personal fears, language and/or communication challenges, and unfamiliarity with differing customs of the prospective workers, but not affected by issues such as religion, skin color, or the need for additional supervision. The European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI, 2007) has pointed repeatedly to the discriminatory practices and negative attitudes of employers, particularly toward certain immigrant groups, and encourages more proactive work by the government to improve attitudes and more flexibility in recognizing qualifications gained abroad, the requirement for fluency in both Finnish and Swedish for certain jobs, and other barriers to integrating foreign workers into the labor market (see also Ombudsman for Minorities [OFM], 2007).

In a knowledge-based economy like Finland's (Dahlman, Routti, & Ylä-Antilla, 2005), specialized production, high-tech processes, and teamwork are quite common, and these require effective communication, something that even long-residing immigrants may struggle with (Trux, 2002: 180). Furthermore, immigrants often lack familiarity with the social values and rules that govern daily interpersonal interaction (Mak, Westwood, Ishiyama, & Barker, 1999). Within these realities it has been reported that applicants in Finland with "non-Western" names frequently are not invited to job interviews (Filatov, 2006; Saarto, 2006).

That qualified immigrants have difficulty finding secure jobs that match their qualifications is not unique to Finland. Studies in New Zealand (Coates & Carr, 2005; Ward & Masgoret, 2007)—which mirrors Finnish in regard to social homogeneity, a rather remote geographic location, aging labor market, and increasing immigration—demonstrate selection biases in regard to applicants' countries of origin. Ward & Masgoret (2007) report that international research has consistently demonstrated that immigrants are frequently unemployed or underemployed, have their overseas skills and training devalued as compared to native-trained employees, and have lower income levels than their native counterparts. This "brain waste" can be problematic for small countries, like New Zealand and Finland, whose knowledge-based economies need to compete with larger or wealthier countries for foreign talent and to offer reasons to draw

qualified immigrants toward their domestic economies (Coates & Carr, 2005; Government of Finland, 2006; Salmenhaara, 2005; Tuomioja, 2005).

There are positive signs, however. Heikkilä and Peltonen (2002) discussed a project begun in 1997 to help Finnish employers recognize and value a multicultural workforce. Through the distribution of information to dispel negative attitudes and expectations, and to foster specific internal practices to facilitate tolerance, language support, and flexibility, Finnish businesses are attempting to create a level playing field for native and immigrant workers. In addition, as Finnish-bred children of immigrants come of age and enter the workforce, they should be able to manage the language, cultural, and qualification elements of employment that have vexed their parents.

### **1.1.2.2 Discrimination and prejudice**

While there is a causal connection between prejudice and discrimination, one does not necessarily lead to the other (Reuter, Makkonen, & Oosi, 2004: 12). Indeed the relationship between attitudes (prejudices) and behavior (such as discrimination) is complex (McLaren, 2003). Many factors affect the creation of attitudes and their expression, including how socially acceptable or unacceptable these are, what implications maintaining these have for the owner, how closely other members of the environment watch each others' actions, and so on (Reuter et al., 2004: 12). But there are also differences in how discrimination takes place, whether it is direct or indirect (OFM, 2007), intentional or unintentional, results from action or inaction, and whether these behaviors have been institutionalized and thus out of one's awareness (Reuter et al., 2004). Prejudice toward immigrants is a common problem in many Western nations (Esses, Wagner, Wolf, Preiser, & Wilbur, 2006) and racist violence is one of the most rapidly growing forms of crime in Europe, including Nordic countries (Virtanen, n.d.). Finland is not exempt from such negative attitudes and xenophobia (Koivukangas, 2003), or from racist activity.

The reports of the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI, 2007) and the Committee on Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD, 2003) underscore continuing problems in Finland regarding prejudice, disadvantage, discrimination, harassment, threats and verbal abuse, intolerance, property damage, assault and, at times, violence toward members of the Roma

community, as well as Russian-speaking, Somali, and Muslim immigrants (see also, Virtanen, n.d.). The motivations behind the attacks and abuse appear to be less related to religion than to difference in appearance (CERD, 2003). While some of these incidents are perpetrated by organized groups, such as skinheads, most of the acts are “essentially a spontaneous and not a politically-organised phenomenon” (ECRI, 2007: 27) by primarily young men (CERD, 2003). But discrimination and harassment of members of ethnic minorities and immigrant groups have also been documented at places of business (ECRI, 2007; A.-R. Korhonen, 2005; OFM, 2007).

The attitudes of Finns toward foreigners or immigrants have been surveyed biennially for the Centre for Finnish Business and Policy Studies (Kilpi, 2006: 15), as well as by the Ministry of Labour about every 5 years since the end of the 1980s (Saarto, 2006). Results of these surveys indicate that the Finns’ attitudes are generally more positive toward immigrants in this current decade than they were in the 1990s, but not as positive as they were in the late 1980s (Makkonen, 2004). However, in a longitudinal study that matched these regular surveys against the proportion of the Finnish population who were foreign citizens, the change in the proportion of foreign citizens who were not citizens of the EU15 countries, the number of asylum seekers, Finland’s unemployment rate, and media coverage, Kilpi (2006) found that there in fact has been a gradual improvement in the attitudes of Finnish citizens toward people of other countries living among them, with the exception of two periods of an upswing in negative attitudes, in the early 1990s and in 2002.

More troubling are several surveys in the mid- to late-1990s that found a sizeable number of 15- to 17-year-olds who held particularly negative attitudes toward immigrants, supported at least in part the anti-immigrant activities of skinheads, viewed ethnic minorities unfavorably, and participated in racist behavior and racist bullying in schools (ECRI, 2007; Makkonen, 2002; Suutarinen et al., 2000; Virtanen, n.d.). The study by Suutarinen and colleagues (2000) also pointed to the weak knowledge these teenagers had about the linguistic/ethnic groups in Finland and their respective sizes, a reality that might cause misunderstandings and overgeneralizations, but which may not be so atypical for host citizens of all ages (see, e.g., Kosic & Phalet, 2006). And Makkonen (2004), in comparing Eurobarometer data, notes that Finns rate

themselves only slightly more racist than the average EU citizen. However, Finns attitudes toward refugees and asylum seekers are particularly harsh, which may result from public discourse and media reports which are particularly negative about the motives and implications of asylum seekers (ECRI, 2007; Forsander & Trux, 2002a; Salmenhaara, 2005).

Several rationales are offered regarding these negative attitudes toward immigrants in Finland. The most frequently cited reason is that the surge in immigrants (including refugees) that took place in the early 1990s coincided with a significant recession in the Finnish economy that resulted in high unemployment within the Finnish population (CERD, 2003; Heikkilä & Peltonen, 2002; Kilpi, 2006; Kosic & Phalet, 2006; Koivukangas, 2003; Virtanen, n.d.). The newcomers, therefore, competed with the unemployed natives for scarce jobs openings and stressed the social welfare expenditures from the government (Qassim & Kivelä, 2004). Nevertheless, attitudes toward immigrants improved with the economic recovery, despite significant regional differences, and are expected to remain so as long as the Finnish economy remains healthy (Saarto, 2006).

Of course, Finland is not unique in the struggle to adapt to the influx of culturally dissimilar residents (see, e.g., Pettigrew, 1998b). Recently, a Family Federation of Finland survey found Finns have a more positive view of their immigrant population compared to residents of central and eastern European countries (YLE News, April 20, 2007). The research shows that one in four Finns believe there are too many foreigners living in Finland, while the figure for Austrians was 50%, and two out of three for those in Germany, Hungary, Poland, the Czech Republic, Estonia, and Slovenia.

Kilpi (2006) notes that favorable attitudes toward immigrants also dipped in the early 2000s, which she attributes to the increase in immigrants from non-EU15 countries. Theories that might explain such a rise in negativity include the Similarity-Attraction Hypothesis (i.e., similarity in characteristics leads people to be attracted to each other, Byrne, 1971, cited in Van Oudenhoven et al., 2006; Van Oudenhoven & Hofstra, 2006); the Integrated Threat Theory (realistic and symbolic threats lead to intergroup anxiety; W. G. Stephan, Renfro, Esses, C. W. Stephan, & Martin, 2005); fearfulness borne out of personal attachment styles in some members of the majority, making them wary of making contact with and



learning more about immigrants (Van Oudenhoven & Hofstra, 2006); the outcome of discordant acculturation expectations between host nationals and the immigrant groups (Berry & Sam, 1997; Bourhis, Moïse, Perreault, & Senécal, 1997; Jasinskaja-Lahti, Liebkind, Horenczyk, & Schmitz, 2003); and the role of the media reporting. Several researchers have pointed to the negative or unbalanced picture that some media paint of immigrants, particularly non-Europeans, (ECRI, 2007; Kosic & Phalet, 2006; Salmenhaara, 2005; Virtanen, n.d). Kilpi (2006) underscores the role of the media in creating impressions on the Finnish population because most Finns do not have ongoing contact with ethnic minorities and gain information about immigration and immigrants from media reports (see also, e.g., Liu, 2006). National culture, in particular cultural values and attitudes, may also play a role in the Finnish desires regarding immigration policies and the growing multiculturalism (e.g., Leong & Ward, 2006).

Virtanen (n.d.) posits that a sense of nationalism may underpin the negative feelings some Finns, particularly the youth, have towards immigrants. Finns have a long history of nationalistic activities, going back to the Finnish people's quest for sovereignty. He emphasizes that young people, in particular, are often strongly influenced by concerns for their immediate community, and may feel the need to conduct racist and xenophobic acts on behalf of their communities. Lepola (2000) indicates that the most significant difference between Finns and members of other European countries regarding discriminatory views is that Finns categorize people on the basis of their national origins, that is, whether the person is Finnish or foreign born, whereas members of other societies divide people according to their religions or skin color. Some anti-immigrant behavior could also be motivated by a sense of cultural self-preservation in some Finns (Salmenhaara, 2005).

### **1.1.3 The role of the government in growing multiculturalism**

Strategies and programs to combat racism, xenophobia, and discriminatory activity are integral to the EU's efforts toward equality, justice and social inclusion (Sirva & Stenman, 2002), just as they are for Finnish lawmakers. Therefore, Finnish immigration and refugee policies address the nation's interests within the larger European immigration framework. Finland strives to cooperate with peer EU countries and international organizations (Koivukangas, 2003), as

demonstrated by the document outlining the common basic principles for an Immigrant Integration Policy in the EU, drawn up by the Council of the European Union and its member-state representatives (CEU, 2004).

Makkonen (2004) believes that most Finns would subscribe to the principle that all people are equal, irrespective of age, gender, religion, ethnic origin, class, or disability, because equality and non-discrimination are key values in the type of welfare society Finland envisions for itself. Yet, he notes, while Finns would seem to condemn clear expressions of discrimination and various “isms,” expressions of racism, discrimination, and xenophobia continue to take place regularly, a point with which ECRI (2007) concurs.

In combating the complex issues of discrimination and racial violence, the rule of law is perhaps the strongest tool (Makkonen, 2004). Until recently, Finland had no explicit anti-discrimination legislation, relying instead on its Constitutional provisions of fundamental rights to manage, something the International Migration Branch (1998) indicates was not sufficient. However, by establishing specific laws to address racist and discriminatory behaviors, Finland demonstrates that, at the highest level of the government, such behaviors will not be tolerated (CERD, 2003). In that vein, Finland has ratified Protocol No. 12 of the European Convention on Human Rights, and its Parliament has passed legislation to strengthen the legal and institutional framework to address racism and discrimination (ECRI, 2007).

Finland also has formalized processes to combat racist and discriminatory activity through its recently instituted Office of the Ombudsman for Minorities (ECRI, 2007; OFM, 2007) that succeeds the work of the Ombudsman for Aliens (Sirva & Stenman, 2002), as well as the National Discrimination Tribunal (ECRI, 2007). The Office of the Ombudsman works with the government in creating appropriate policies, championing the needs of the multicultural immigrant community, and serving as the official avenue through which negotiation with and, if necessary, litigation initiated against perpetrators of discriminatory or racist acts. This office also has successfully established and collaborated with various boards, such as Advisory Board on Minorities, and regional councils or boards for Romas, Samis, Russian-speakers, and Muslims, to address specific problems within their communities, including racist or discriminatory treatment

received at the hands of businesses, organizations, or individuals, and to resolve issues of concern at the local level (ECRI, 2007; OFM, 2007; Reuter et al., 2004).

Tanner (2004) finds that Finland has no openly xenophobic party, as do other European countries, a positive reflection on the country, as is the fact that the major parties have approached immigration policies from a factual rather than emotional perspective. This is particularly important since, according to Wallenius (2001: 61), a proper distinction traditionally had not been made regarding why a foreigner was moving to Finland, and thus, to many Finns, “immigrant” meant “refugee,” and the implied outlay of services. Care must be taken when discussing immigrants because this term envelopes a varied group of individuals—refugees, asylum seekers, family members, foreign workers, children, elders, and ordinary migrants—each of whom has distinct goals, expectations, and needs that frame the discussions, policies, and attitudes of the government, as well as average citizens (Bauböck, 1994; Koivukangas, 2003).

In October 2006, the Finnish government adopted the new Migration Policy Programme, which actively promotes work-related immigration, particularly from countries outside the EU and European Economic Area, and establishes a more formal vision to attend to the full integration of immigrants into the Finnish population (Government of Finland, 2006; Saarto, 2006). The program also equally promotes the development of “a multi-value, multicultural and non-discriminating society and thus foster Finland’s internationalisation process, improve the international competitiveness, and serve as a means of responding to the challenges of an ageing workforce and population as a whole” (Government of Finland, 2006: 2)

The resolution presents a range of policy guidelines, such as the promotion of work-related immigration, strengthening of the skills matrix of the population, simplifying the immigration process, recognizing skills gained abroad, promoting newcomers’ participation in the integration process while fostering opportunities for the maintenance of home culture, and addressing a variety of issues and responsibilities from the national and down to the municipalities (Government of Finland, 2006). Some of these guidelines are still in draft form and need further preparation (MoL, 2006b).

But, significant to this study is the portion of the Programme that addresses the vision of “good ethnic relations,” something advocated for every receiving

country by a wide variety of entities, both national and abroad, and for incoming residents and already established ethnic minorities (CEU, 2004; ECRI, 2006; Faull, 2006; Filatov, 2006; Government of Finland, 2006; Tuomioja, 2005). Policy Guideline 13 of the Programme indicates that the development of positive relations between different groups will be considered within all social policy planning, but particularly in labor, education, and housing policies, and will be accomplished through education to generate attitudes of non-discrimination and through practices that foster multiculturalism (Government of Finland, 2006: 15). These goals would be fulfilled through the collaborative energies of political policymakers, organizations, and individuals within the labor market, the immigrants themselves, and the entire civil society in Finland (Ibid: 14), although the exact methods to achieve this are left unstated.

Researchers within the last decade have been raising the importance of contextual forces on the acculturation processes of immigrants, particularly the role of the host society members' attitudes toward and the nature of interaction with the newcomers (J. Berry, 1997a, 1997b; Berry & Sam, 2003; Bourhis et al., 1997; Horenczyk, 1997; Jasinskaja-Lahti et al., 2003; Y. Y. Kim, 2001; Kosic, Mannetti, & Sam, 2005; Saarto, 2006; Van Oudenhoven et al., 2006), with varied acculturation strategies taking place on different domains of an immigrant's life (Navas et al., 2005; Navas, Rojas, García, & Pumares, 2007). As a result, the process of acculturation or integration cannot be viewed strictly from the perspective and experiences of the immigrant, but rather must encompass the mutual and dynamic environment and interactivity when members of dissimilar cultural groups make contact with each other, a process that involves both group-level and individual perspectives (Kosic et al., 2005; Van Oudenhoven et al., 2006). Thus the acculturation of immigrants should be considered a multidimensional construct, allowing for a multitude of means and outcomes, and within a variety of distinct domains by which newcomers and current citizens re-create the environment they share (Van Oudenhoven et al., 2006). Multicultural societies can exist in a variety of ways, such as transnationalism (immigrants retain ties with former homeland while building new life in new country), pluralism (support for cultural maintenance while encouraging intergroup contact in the new society, with a striving for equality among groups); creolization (a cultural mixing to create a new hybrid culture),

assimilation (newcomers let go of most of their former cultural values in favor of the new culture's way of life), and integration (support for cultural maintenance and intergroup contact, but recognizing the role of the host society as the dominant group), with evidence demonstrating that those nations which support "cultural heritage while at the same time promoting a superordinate national identity show high levels of ethnic tolerance" (Van Oudenhoven et al., 2006: 649). Therefore, it is important to recognize the needs for the skills and abilities of multiculturalism not only for the newcomers, but also for the everyday life of the native society in the 21st century (Matsumoto & LeRoux, 2003). This point is underscored by Kağıtçibasi (1997: 44), who states "Unless concerted efforts are made to engender an appreciation of these differences, ideally through equal-status interdependent contact opportunities, the increased awareness of intergroup differences may exacerbate the 'us-them' type of thinking. Thus, multiculturalism, by itself, is no guarantee of tolerance."

Finnish policymakers seemed to value the concept of integration, since this approach is a major element of Finnish immigration legislation, first initiated when the Act on the Integration of Immigrants and Reception of Asylum Seekers came into force on May 1, 1999 (Government of Finland, 1999), and later amended and applied, beginning January 2, 2006, to accelerate integration processes and to adjust problems surfaced through field experience (Saarto, 2006). Finland defines integration as "the personal development of immigrants with the aim of enabling them to participate in working life and society whilst preserving their own language and culture. Integration is a two-way acclimation process involving the participation not only of work communities and other local organisations, but also society as a whole" (Government of Finland, 2006: 18), which will provide "adult immigrants with the linguistic, social, cultural and life and other skills and knowledge to take control of their life and enable them to cope with everyday situations in their new surroundings" (Ibid: 23). This vision is accomplished through individual integration plans, drawn up between the immigrant and the local municipality shortly after the immigrant arrives and takes place within his/her first 3 years in Finland (Government of Finland, 2006; Qassim & Kivelä, 2004). Integration plans are a mixture of language studies, basic or professional education/training and employment counseling, work-related skills development, ongoing contact with native Finns, and participation in other

activities to further the immigrants' interaction in Finnish society (Heikkilä & Peltonen, 2002; Government of Finland, 1999; Qassim & Kivelä, 2004).

The challenges faced by the integration process are many. Certainly a need exists to address the needs of individuals who migrate for reasons other than employment, such as family migrants and refugees/asylum grantees (Salmenhaara, 2005), who generally fall outside the scope of the personal plans designed to facilitate integration (Government of Finland, 2006: 18). Currently, any adjustment assistance these individuals might receive comes from employers or the person's own initiative (Ibid). The policy needs also to consider more long-term concerns and practices, to avoid problems experienced in other European countries when policies failed to meet the needs of second- and third-generation immigrants (Faull, 2006). Language acquisition is another crucial element and will remain so for the coming years. While poor Finnish language skills hinder an immigrant's access to the Finnish labor market, language courses are in high demand and delays are frequent in the progression from one class to the next advance (Heikkilä & Peltonen, 2002) or the courses have not met the needs of learners because of the diversity of language abilities in any given class (Tanner, 2004). However, even as most people would agree that adequate language skills are essential for success in the realms of labor and socialization, Blommaert (1995) points to a catch in the emphasis on learning the national language, based on a Dutch study, but certainly a concern applicable to Finnish circumstances:

... Even if one learns the language of the host country, one can still remain a "foreigner". Dutch, for the people discussed in the interview, is only a *second* language, and apparently isn't more than a thin crust of the layers of cultural behaviour the foreigners have built. So "language" tricks us. It may trick us into believing that that these people who have learned our language have also adopted our culture. But it is still *our* language (and it remains our language, even if they learn it), and this becomes clear when one examines the way in which foreigners use our language: they use it "just verbally", but their implicit behavior is still firmly rooted in their own culture. ... Members of another culture can learn the language, but even if they speak it perfectly, ... they still aren't members of our culture. ... So language, even if it has been acquired by non-members of the cultural group, can still lead to forms of discrimination... because "below the surface", foreigners will always remain foreigners. It will always be us and them (pp. 23–24).

This thinking might explain the lack of contact and interaction between immigrants and the majority population, which, according to Saarto (2006), remains problematic, and, along with ongoing racist and discriminatory attitudes, has implications for other goals and the ultimate success of the

integration process. Each of these areas is important because integration outcomes for all immigrants have implications on the success of the immigration policies as a whole (Salmenhaara, 2005) as well, perhaps, the attitudes of the native population toward this process. Koivukangas (2003) acknowledges that the issue of integration, and by extension, the creation of social cohesion, is an important challenge not just for Finland, but also for the whole European Union, as leaders advocate and seek to solidify the basic European values of democracy, equality, and the rule of law (Faull, 2006).

Yet, these values and the implementation of an ambitious integration policy require a native society that is as equally prepared as the immigrants. While the most recent policy planning explicitly states the need and desire to create a multicultural society devoid of racism, intolerance, and discriminatory activity, the process to reach that goal is vague at best; the details of such movement still needs to be defined. Additionally, much ink has been used by the Finnish government and various anti-racism organizations in emphasizing the need to eliminate racism, xenophobia, intolerance, and discrimination; the verbiage that addresses in positive tones the individual and collective social and cultural benefits of Finland's growing multiculturalism is considerably smaller. Undoubtedly, Tuomioja (2005) is correct when he acknowledges that "the whole of the society must be better prepared to welcome people of different origins" (para. 10), and that "Finns have to grow more tolerant and see merit in doing things sometimes slightly different" (para. 13).

To reach such a reality, native citizens need more than inspiring words and grand visions. What is needed are clear and concrete means for people to gain the knowledge and skills required to live in a multicultural Finland, just as the immigrants are gaining knowledge and skills to do the same. While the Ministry of Education is charged with providing Finnish students opportunities for learning tolerance for diversity throughout the educational system (Qassim & Kivelä, 2004), that will address primarily the attitudes of Finns in future years. What are needed are methods for preparing the Finnish adults for today.

The literature provides a multitude of research studies that address what can happen when people of dissimilar cultures interact, finding that simple interaction does not guarantee a successful interaction (e.g., Kağitçibasi, 1997; Lustig & Koester, 1996; Martin & Nakayama, 1997; Pettigrew, 1997, 1998a;

Ting-Toomey, 1999), even when the language barrier is resolved (Porter & Samovar, 1997). Negative outcomes take place for a variety of reasons on the individual, dyadic, and group levels (see Chapter 3). Therefore, it is quite likely that interaction between members of the majority society and the immigrants might not result automatically in the enlightened attitudes that the policymakers envision and desire. Individuals who develop intercultural competency, what Matsumoto and LeRoux (2003) call a “multicultural mind,” are more likely to have a successful outcome than those without such abilities. However, attaining such levels takes considerable time and effort, often over several years, to develop. While this is done most effectively by becoming immersed in another language, culture, way of life, and way of perceiving—indeed, being the “other”—this adjustment process can begin, with appropriate measures, even within the home environment.

Because Finland is relatively new to the process of developing immigration policies, it is in an excellent position to learn from the experiences—both good and bad—of other countries, and to adapt that knowledge to achieve more appropriate policies for its specific national circumstances (Salmenhaara, 2005; Ylänkö, 2002). This would involve seeing its immigrants and growing multiculturalism not through the lens of utilitarianism, specifically to arrest a labor shortage, but rather as a permanent and essential era in nation building (Faull, 2006); that immigrants and minorities are not seen as objects of work, but rather subjects of this state working toward gaining their rights through active participation in the greater society (Qassim & Kivelä, 2004). It would also require significant investment in a process that moves its native citizens toward intercultural competency.

## **1.2 The Need for and Implications of This Study**

While this study focuses on Finnish students at a particular university, its implications reach beyond Finnish universities and the border of this country. Just as the global economy, technological advances, global media, migration flows, transportation networks, the breakdown in individual cultural identity, an interconnected and interdependent world, porous national borders, and growth of supranational organizations (Anderson, 1982; Chen & Starosta, 1996; Landis & Bhagat, 1996; Parsuramen, 1999; Ting-Toomey, 1999) affect Finland, they impact



other nations as well. Workplaces, classrooms, places of religious observance, and neighborhoods around the globe are increasingly becoming points of contact with dissimilar others. These changes require people to continually adapt how they live, work, and play (Lustig & Koester, 1996; Matsumoto & LeRoux, 2003; Ting-Toomey, 1999), as well as how they perceive, understand, plan, feel, and behave. Life in the 21st century, both internationally and domestically, requires intercultural communication competence (Chen & Starosta, 1996; Lustig & Koester, 1996), the means of managing difference (Ting-Toomey, 1999).

Furthermore, these changes affect individuals as well as the societies they create, with implications for their economic, cultural, social, and political futures. “The development of societies now depends on the culture shared by human beings more than on their economy or technology. ... The development of society now depends on culture and on its adaptive capacity” (Marga, 2004: 475). Even so, “cultural flows between nations are not...detached from economic and political realities” (Rizvi, 2000: 208). Societies, therefore, will benefit from their members gaining understanding of themselves and others, and being reflective about contemporary social conditions and what those mean for themselves and their fellow humans, all which leads to a more harmonious coexistence within their own society and beyond (Byram, 1997), as well as the ability to compete effectively in the interconnected economy (Keohane, 1999) and manage in politically difficult or unstable situations. People and societies who can interact well within themselves and among other nations, cultures, and languages will be prepared to capitalized on whatever technological, scientific, communication, and information revolutions lie ahead (Hayward, 2000).

Therefore, this study is essential because very few studies, in Finland or elsewhere, look at intercultural growth of individuals interacting with dissimilar others from the at-home perspective. The literature indicates research into intercultural growth through time abroad (e.g., Alred & Byram, 2002; M. Berry, 1998; Berwick & Whalley, 2000; Teichler & Jahr, 2001), and a change in attitudes toward dissimilar others through intercultural friendship (e.g., Horenczyk & Bekerman, 1997; Pettigrew, 1997) and intergroup contact (e.g., Brewer, 1996; Gaertner, Dovidio, Anastasio, Bachman, & Rust, 1993; Nesdale & Todd, 2000; Rich, Kedem, & Shlesinger, 1995; Ward & Masgoret, 2006). Studies also address intercultural learning in the classroom and other university programs (e.g., Barker,

2000; Bourne, 1998; J.-s. Chang, 2006; Klak & Martin, 2003, Leask, 2001). Yet, while many universities are exploring an internationalization-at-home concept based on the intuitive belief (drawn on research such as above) that intercultural competency development can take place within the home environment, I have found only a few studies that researched intercultural communication competency development within interaction by people within their home environment.

As a result, the implications of these research findings can extend beyond the intercultural changes within the 15 informants of this study. For example, at the university level in Finland and other countries, the findings offer ideas on how to incorporate and encourage the experiential aspect of interaction with dissimilar others, as well as some barriers to achieving productive interaction. This study also encourages higher education leaders to find appropriate ways to help prepare their current students for lives and professional careers in multicultural societies and the global economy. Such considerations are essential if JyU continues its pursuit of an international campus—or another such internationalization—concept. Although international/intercultural education involves classroom learning and support of diversity, the essential element of interpersonal interaction with dissimilar others cannot be a simple programmatic add-on because it is in the very interaction that all of the class lessons learned come into play.

For Finland, explicitly, the findings raise concerns regarding the interpersonal and programmatic barriers and difficulties that individuals face when interacting, particularly voluntarily, with dissimilar others, but also offers encouragement on how such interaction can be beneficial. Because of Finland's vision of a cooperative and supportive multicultural population, the need to develop intercultural competencies in the population at large is of significant importance. Simply encouraging members of the majority population to initiate contact with dissimilar others cannot guarantee productive and affirming outcomes, and could quite possibly result in negative outcomes, such as increased stereotyping by some interactants (see, e.g., Hughes & Baldwin, 2002). Study after study emphasizes the need for structured support for such interaction (e.g., Allport, 1954; Amir, 1969; Pusch, 2004; Teekens, 2003; Ward, 2001).

Certainly Finland is not alone in the need to prepare its native population for growing multiculturalism in its midst and to improve the knowledge and intercultural skills of its labor force to succeed in a global economy. In most

countries, only a small minority of the population lives abroad for any notable length of time (cf. OECD, 2005; UNESCO, 2007), thus developing intercultural skills from first-person interaction in a dissimilar culture. All countries could benefit from the findings of this study in creating appropriate programs for and in encouraging residents to personally invest in developing intercultural skills and knowledge.

While this study has implications for planning and implementation at the governing level, it more particularly offers insights at the individual level. Because any type of structured support for interaction—at the organizational, regional, or national levels—obviously involves individuals and their attitudes, emotions, self-and national identities, and actions, this study looks at what the individuals themselves must do in order to develop themselves to meet the interpersonal, social, and business challenges that the 21st century brings.

### **1.3 The Selection of Subjects for the Study**

The characteristics of one's study subjects affect intimately the approach to the research, the processes undertaken, the nature of the data, and the interpretation of the results. This study was undertaken at the university level for a variety of reasons, but this choice of setting also has significant implications for the findings.

#### **1.3.1 Why conduct an intercultural competency development study at the university level?**

In conducting a study about whether intercultural competency can be developed through interaction with dissimilar others, there are several reasons why the setting of a university is a good choice. The reasons are social, academic, and logistic, and reflect the dual roles of the university: its task in educating individuals and its role in influencing and supporting its society. The responsibilities are multifaceted in both areas.

Historically, universities have been intimately involved in the evolution and shaping of society (de Jong & Teekens, 2003; Sadlak, 1998)—by way of the pursuit of knowledge, the preparation of the elite, and the outcomes of research. In the past 250 years, universities have also been instrumental in nation building (van Ginkel, 2001), and in adapting to the changing environment (M. Machado, Farhangmehr, & Taylor, 2004), both locally and globally.

The investment of public funds to support higher education institutions (HEIs) can be viewed as both an expenditure and an investment the society makes (Burbules & Torres, 2000), with the individuals and the society as co-beneficiaries (De Villé, Martou, & Vandenberghe, 1996), particularly since national prosperity has been linked to the percentage of highly educated members of that country (Woodhouse, 1999). Universities today are multipurpose and multiproduct institutions (Enders, 2004) entrusted with and expected to fulfill a role in the economic, social, knowledge-building, and innovation aspects of their society. This obligation is basically two-fold: (a) creating and disseminating knowledge resulting from research (Marga, 2004) to feed its nation's economic development and competitiveness in an increasingly global and high-tech economy (Dobson & Hölttä, 2001; Hansen, 2002); to form social development (Enders, 2004); and to facilitate curriculum innovation for a nation's lower levels of education (van Ginkel, 2001), and (b) the intellectual and experiential preparation they provide their students. Some universities, including JyU (Mukkala, Ritsilä, & Suosara, 2006; JyU, 2006a, 2007h), include social outreach and/or regional municipal and business collaboration as a third key element of their mission.

While HE has, traditionally, reflected the society in which it operates, Sadlak (1998) suggests that this is shifting “from being a *reflection* of social, cultural and economic relationships to being a *determinant* of such relationships” (p. 106, emphasis in original). This point is particularly relevant since “higher education is where the global-local interface is most acute” (Findlow, 2001: 1). The environment in which universities operate—and must prepare their students to live in, behave appropriately and sensitively in, and contribute to—comprise local civil societies that are increasingly pluralistic, businesses that are increasingly global in reach and multicultural in operation, and a world that is increasingly culturally, technologically, and economically interconnected (Bhawuk & Brislin, 1992; Bourne, 1998; Byram, 1997; de Jong & Teekens, 2003; Hutchings et al., 2002, Mestenhauser, 2000) and in which transculturalism and mobility are contemporary realities (Rizvi, 2000). The desired tertiary-level educational outcomes are not just intellectual in nature, but also practical and specific: multilingual abilities; interpersonal and intercultural skills; ability to work in multicultural teams, adaptability to alternative business methods, and possession of other business competencies; an understanding and tolerance of intercultural

differences while approaching dissimilar others as peers; and a developed intellectual and emotion commitment to the cohesion of society and the unity of humankind (De Villé et al., 1996; Kameoka, 1996; Moore, 2005; Pitkänen, 1999; Stier, 2003; Ting-Toomey, 1999; Volet, 2004). No longer are these skills expected only for those anticipating lives abroad or careers that involve intercultural negotiation or diplomacy; these skills are essential even for those who remain within their domestic environment (Blommaert, 1995; Esnault, 1991; Hutchings et al., 2002). As a result, universities are expected to educate their students to be world citizens (Kerr, 1991; van Ginkel, 2001), while also playing a role in the evolution of the globalization process (Sadlak, 1998). Traditionally, education has mirrored society; today, that society is global and multicultural (Anderson, 1982; Yu, 1999).

Universities offer a unique setting in which these objectives could and should be attained. Certainly, students attend university to be exposed to new ideas, concepts, and practices. But in order to develop the knowledge that comes through interaction with and joint exploration of the world around us, the individuals must possess open attitudes, a willingness to engage difference, sensitivity, and the capacity to analyze issues, all which also explicitly apply to learning about and amid cultural difference (Yu, 1999). University campuses have traditionally been viewed as locales appropriate for the discussion of diverse ideas and ideals, democracy, and issues of the greater good, as well as to critique and explore what had been considered self-evidences and accepted views and attitudes, including those related to culture (Breton, 2002; Klak & Martin, 2003; Pitkänen, 1999). For these reasons, recommends Pitkänen (1999: 67), “we should, in one way or another, get outside our own cultural circle in order to see our systematic blindness.” This is the philosophy behind international exchange programs, which JyU encourages for its students (JyU, 2006b, 2007b, 2007d, 2007e). For a small, homogeneous country like Finland, mobility plays an important role in helping the society adapt to multiculturalism (Dobson & Hölttä, 2001).

Conducting a study such as this at the university benefits from, as the literature has indicated, the young adulthood period as one that is formational, in terms of the human maturation process and HE experiences, on aspects of cognitive, moral, attitudinal, and psychosocial development (Klak & Martin,

2003; C. Machado, Almeida, & Soares, 2002; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1992), and which will affect how individuals subsequently perceive and interact with others (Lloyd & Härtel, 2003). Through the maturation process, and facilitated by the university education, students can come to learn that “there is no one answer and no universal laws of human behavior,” which then leads to the exploration of differences, the decrease in dualistic thinking, and more sophisticated thinking about the world around (Pusch, 2004: 2) that humans are obliged to share with others (Ibid: 3).

In addition, friends made during one’s university time seem to be particularly enduring and influential throughout one’s adult life (Froment, 2003). Research further indicates that one’s peer group in college serves as a change agent, providing a resource for sociocultural norms (Antonio, 2004; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1992). Therefore, exposure to individuals from dissimilar backgrounds at this particularly formative time allows for a diverse experience of “normal,” and thus more open and accepting perceptions of others as one goes through life.

So, taken as a whole, the rationales for conducting a study regarding the development of intercultural competencies through interaction benefits from the university setting that reflects the essential roles of higher education and academic/personal exploration for both individuals and the greater society. Why the study took place at this particular university is more a matter of logistical convenience—ready access to Finnish students who were exposed to international students—although JyU had been contemplating the benefits of multicultural education through the concept of an international campus.

### **1.3.2 Options for study subjects at the University of Jyväskylä**

The University of Jyväskylä, located in central Finland, is a multidiscipline institution of higher education with more than 15,000 students, about 700 of whom are students from about 70 countries (JyU, 2007h). Within its seven faculties, JyU offers 15 master’s degree programs, as well a variety of minor courses, in English (JyU, 2007c, 2007h). The institution currently participates in five exchange programs and has established international partnerships in the field of education with 46 HEIs abroad (JyU, 2007a). JyU also offers extensive learning opportunities through its Open University and continuing education programs (Mukkala et al., 2006).

Knight (2004b) notes that internationalization strategies comprise a wide variety of options. Perhaps the most natural environment would be the classroom, in which the academic setting provides the parameters in which students of various cultures may interact (Ward, 2001). Particularly through group projects, the process of becoming acquainted becomes “automatic” (Taajamo, 2003: para. 27). Taajamo further believes that it is through their studies rather than their leisure time that the host and guest students are more likely to meet and begin establishing rapport. One reason for this is the structure that a class brings to relationships, providing a forum for people to meet.

However, extracurricular activities offer multiple opportunities for internationalizing at-home students as well, for a number of reasons. First, particularly at JyU, the ratio of international students to Finnish students is immensely disproportionate: about 700 international students in a student body of 15,290 (JyU, 2007a, 2007b). So many Finns may not have the opportunity to study with one or more international students. Second, while the intercultural skills learned during project work is considered beneficial (Volet, 2004; Ward, 2001), particularly in light of the contact hypothesis (Allport, 1954), the depth of the interaction may remain quite superficial unless there is some other shared interests or interpersonal chemistry that moves the academic relationship toward friendship. Additionally, intercultural relationships provide a different experience of cultural aspects in play than do less deep emotional connections (Martin & Nakayama, 1997). Finally, by having an additional avenue for interaction, Finns can potentially meet people from a greater variety of cultures, thereby benefiting from learning diverse intercultural communication skills.

The concept of social interaction that normally occurs during the academic and extracurricular activities is more implied than explicit in the work of Knight (2004b). Nevertheless, the benefits that come from communication with culturally dissimilar others can take place, in theory, just about anywhere. At JyU, there are no formal, systematic ways within the academic, or even social, settings where all, or even most, Finnish university students have the opportunity to interact with the international students on campus. Because of this lack of natural occasions, it is important that extracurricular activities be made available for those interested (Taajamo, 2003). This is perhaps even more important in the Finnish culture than in some other cultures since the Finnish communicative

norm is less talkative and more silence bound (see Sajavaara & Lehtonen, 1997; Siira, Rogan, & Hall, 2004; Tixier, 1996; Tulviste, Mizera, de Geer, & Tryggvason, 2003). Moreover, the threshold for initiating a discussion with a stranger is very high (Sajavaara & Lehtonen, 1997; Tixier, 1996), although, once familiarity is established, Finns find it easier to engage in conversation (Taajamo, 2003). The use of a lingua franca is also a concern. Nevertheless, extracurricular or social activities provide another avenue for Finns to meet culturally dissimilar others.

Social activities based on shared interests provide the infrastructure for Finnish and foreign students to meet and perhaps develop friendships. At JyU, the larger of these activities—and those intended primarily to bring Finns and foreigners together—are managed by two organizations, often working in tandem: the International Office and the International Committee of the university's Student Union. These activities, for the most part, are purely voluntary. Such activities are of interest in this study because participation presupposes a motivation for meeting people of other cultures.

Five social programs (the Host Family Program, Stammtisches, international tutor program, Each One/Teach One, and the Buddy Project) were considered for this study, and four were found lacking for various reasons. The Host Family program brings international students together with Finnish families so that all involved may benefit from interacting with members of another culture. This program was not considered because, in most cases, the host families do not involve university-level children in the home.

The Stammtisches, regular parties of international students often planned by members of the various cultures represented within the Erasmus Student Network (ESN), was not considered for two reasons. First, the parties are intended primarily for the Erasmus students, and therefore proportionately few Finns attend the events. Second, and perhaps more importantly, it would likely be quite difficult to study such a phenomenon.

The tutor program assigns one Finnish student to a group of international students so that the incoming foreigners would have someone local to help them navigate the city and university campuses; to manage the processes of housing, banking, shopping, and so forth; and to serve as an ongoing resource for assistance throughout the semester. While this program particularly



interested me, it was not selected because, at the time of data gathering for this study, one criterion for selection as a tutor was that the Finn had lived abroad for a period of time. The organizers assume this criterion would result in individuals who would be more interculturally experienced and thus more sensitive to the challenges faced by the incoming students. That same rationale means that this group of Finns did not represent the focus of this study.

The Each One/Teach One program, run through the university's Language Center, pairs individuals of different native languages to help each partner learn the other's respective language. For example, a Finn would seek someone who speaks Chinese and, through ongoing interaction over a semester, the Finn would improve his/her Chinese and the Chinese student would improve his/her Finnish. This program was interesting, but was not considered at this time because of the logistics in reaching the potential interviewees in a timely and practical way. It remains a good topic for future study.

The final program considered, and ultimately selected, was the Buddy Project (BP), organized by the ESN. In this program, a group of Finnish students is assigned to a group of international students, purportedly by shared interests. The size of the group varies, from four to eight people, depending upon how many individuals of each subgroup (Finns and foreigners) register for the program and how many actually show up for the "kick-off" (orientation/group designation meeting). At the kick-off, groups are assigned and activities are arranged to help "break the ice." Afterward, the groups are to manage their future meetings on their own. Meetings vary according to the interests and availability of the group members; participation is strictly voluntary.

The BP provided several key elements that made it appropriate for this particular study. First, the program is voluntary, and its purpose is strictly social: It simply brings Finns and international students together to chat (see Appendix A for an advertisement flier). Additionally, dozens of Finns would be participating, and a considerable number of these Finns would not have lived abroad, thus providing a sizable pool from which to draw interview subjects. While the program has been arranging new groups for several semesters, there is no formal structure, which will provide opportunity to view the process with minimal structure or formality skewing the results. Finally, because the cohort was kicking

off relatively early in the semester and was to last several weeks, there was opportunity to find and interview participants before the semester closed.

#### **1.4 Research Questions**

In considering what exactly I would pursue in this research study, the vastness of the lack of knowledge needed to be somehow narrowed, particularly since so many questions exist, each with inherent outcomes and implications. Ting-Toomey (1999: 3) explains that a study of intercultural communication is primarily a study of cultural difference that can “make a difference” in intercultural encounters, with conclusions providing a sense of the conceptual tools and skills needed to manage difference creatively. While this study is not explicitly about identifying tools or concepts for implementation by others, it is interested in understanding enough of the experiences of the informants so that it can feed the processes in how individuals, HEIs, and government officials can go about obtaining personally or establishing programs that will facilitate the personal development of those key concepts and skills.

Ultimately, I was curious about whether the Finnish students could develop intercultural competency simply from the most basic of interaction processes: conversation with a dissimilar other. Karwinksa (1999: 170) states that dialogue is considered one of the most important social relations of our time because, as social contact with dissimilar people is becoming more regular in locales all around the world, how people speak to and interact with each other has everyday implications in the quality of our lives. Culture is expressed and transmitted through communication (Y. Y. Kim, 2001; Ting-Toomey, 1999), therefore interaction can be a key component in learning culture and for developing the competencies needed to interact appropriately with dissimilar others.

Creswell (1998) recommends a single overarching question as the foundation of a research study, which is then supported by several subquestions, which are presented here. This study’s overarching question is:

What is the intercultural competency outcome of students (in this case, Finnish university students) who have never lived abroad interacting with peers of dissimilar cultural backgrounds through participation in voluntary social programs such as the Buddy Project?

The following subquestions will flesh out more in analysis:

1. What is the nature of the intercultural learning gained by this interaction, if any?
2. What is the depth of the intercultural learning gained by interaction, if any?
3. What factors affect the intercultural learning through interaction?
4. What implications exist for Finnish students who will never live abroad who are able to, or not able to, gain intercultural skills from interaction?

### **1.5 How This Thesis Is Arranged**

This thesis comprises seven chapters. This first chapter has provided the genesis for the study, derived from personal perspectives, contextual needs within the Finnish society, and the current lack of scientific research addressing this issue. In addition, this chapter presented rationales for why this study should be done with informants from a specific program and within the university setting.

Creswell (1998) states that qualitative research benefits from a discussion of the context of the matter under exploration. Therefore, Chapter 2 addresses the larger context of internationalization in higher education, and particularly the concept of internationalization-at-home. It will explore the issues of internationalization in general, and more specifically the internationalization of HEIs around the world and within Finland, particularly at JyU. This is followed by the exploration of the various components of intercultural competency development in Chapter 3. This chapter also presents several theories that will undergird the analysis of the data from the informants.

The methods used to collect the qualitative data and to analyze the data are provided in Chapter 4. The presentation of selected data composes the material in the fifth chapter, as well as an expanded conceptualization of motivation. This chapter also includes a rough quantification of the data to surface a different perspective, as recommended by Silverman (1993). Chapter 6 provides the analysis of the data and a discussion of the significance of the data.

Finally, Chapter 7 draws on the previous chapters to present a summary of the findings and areas for future research. The limitations of this study, which are many, are included.



## **2 INTERNATIONALIZATION-AT-HOME: VISION & ACTION**

Because this study explores the potential for Finnish university students to develop intercultural skills through interaction with dissimilar others specifically within a university setting, an general understanding of the contextual issues facing higher education (HE) in general, and the University of Jyväskylä (JyU) in particular, frames this study. This chapter investigates the issues and practices of internationalization, primarily within Finland, specifically the internationalization-at-home (IaH) concept.

The complex concept of internationalization has been a research topic within the past decade. Despite this focus on internationalization, Gornitzka and colleagues (2003a: 12) state that substantive policies and research—particularly in regard to the less visible elements—have not materialized. Investigations tend to focus on primarily the tangible, quantitative outcomes, such as statistics on student and faculty exchange, rather than the intangible but essential areas, such as motivation for participating (or not) in mobility schemes and their outcomes (Gornitzka, 2003), or, in relation to this study, the responsibility of higher education institutions (HEIs) towards the internationalization of their students, including their non-mobile students.

### **2.1 The Concept of Internationalization**

HE is changing because the world around it is changing (Knight, 2004a; Scott, 1998). Universities are multipurpose institutions that “have performed basic functions that result from the particular combination of cultural and ideological, social and economic, educational and scientific roles that have been assigned to them” (Enders, 2004: 362). Aspects of modern life, such as information and communication technologies (ICTs), a market economy, an increasingly mobile labor market, and decreasing funding for education, for example, make the nature and process of post-secondary education more complex (Knight, 2004a). Yet while HE remains predominantly within a nation’s purview (de Wit, 2002), globalization in its many forms influences the national competency of universities. So internationalization of HE has surfaced between the needs, desires, and interests of the nation, on the one hand, and the continual advancements and changes in the global demands and environment on the other (Scott, 1998).

### **2.1.1 Internationalization defined**

Despite the expansive and expanding literature on internationalization, the information contained within is fragmented, with little agreement on definitions, core concepts or elements, or anticipated outcomes (Callan, 2000; Trondal et al., 2003). Over the years, various definitions of internationalization have surfaced (see Burbules & Torres, 2000; de Jong & Teekens, 2003; de Wit, 2002; Knight, 1999; Knight & de Wit, 1999; Otten, 2003; Söderqvist, 2001; Trondal et al., 2003; van der Wende, 1997). It is fairly common that the assumptions and visions of this concept even within a single institution are not in sync (Mestenhauser, 2000). Knight (2004a) questions whether a truly universal definition of internationalization in HE is possible, or even appropriate, although she has worked for over a decade to articulate one.

In its most generic form, internationalization is defined as relations between nation-states, and presumes the existence and relevance of nation-states (Gornitzka et al., 2003a; Otten, 2003). It reflects the notion that national borders are being crossed—by goods, services, labor, companies, media, and so on, in a general sense, and by students, faculty, researchers, institutions, as well as knowledge, activities, and interests, in the educational sense (Gornitzka et al., 2003a)—within a form of interconnectedness and cooperation (Enders, 2004; Knight, 2004a).

In the HE arena, “Internationalization at the national/sector/institutional levels is defined as the process of integrating an international, intercultural or global dimension into the purposes, functions or delivery of post-secondary education” (Knight, 2004a: 11). As a process, internationalization is a means to the end rather the end in itself (de Jong & Teekens, 2003; Söderqvist, 2001), although Ivić (1999) suggests it can be both, but at different times in the development of the internationalization process.

### **2.1.2 Related terms**

To fully understand the concept, implementation, and implications of internationalization in the realm of HE, one must understand related concepts and terminology, since these are often used indiscriminately within the literature and in practice at all levels (Söderqvist, 2001). For this study, understanding how *globalization* and *regionalization* relate to internationalization is most important.

The relationship between globalization and internationalization has been debated widely, but recent literature seems to support that they are distinct concepts and that internationalization is not simply a smaller version of globalization (de Jong & Teekens, 2003; Scott, 1998; Trondal et al., 2003). Globalization brings various pressures to the work of administrators and teachers (Burbules & Torres, 2000), to government officials, whose find their ability to control fully the nature of their HE system can be compromised by external forces (Enders, 2004; Stoer & Cortesão, 2000), and to students, who may be concerned if they are receiving “internationalized-enough” skills and knowledge to manage sufficiently in the global labor market (Yelland, 2000).

Unlike globalization, regionalization does not blur the borders between nation-states (Teichler, 2004), and thus is more like a “regionally delimited internationalization” (Gornitzka et al., 2003a: 10). The nature of regionalization varies according to the nation-states’ shared goals, such as trade, economics, scientific research, labor mobility, or even military or political stability (Sadlak, 1998). Regionalization in this study involves the European Union and thus aspects of *Europeanization*. The EU, the world’s most “extensive and intensive form of regionalization,” is a response to the pressures of globalization (Laffan, 1998: 235), particularly in the area of higher education (Enders, 2004). De Wit (2002) differentiates between regionalization associated with globalization, which leads to a harmonizing of the rules, structures, and systems within the region, and regionalization reflecting an internationalization perspective, in which the nation-states maintain their distinct systems and procedures, but coordinate elements for facilitating the shared goals. He indicates that the Bologna Declaration, in which the ministers of education of 29 European nation-states agreed in 1999 to standardize several areas of their national HE policies and practices, is an example of the former type of regionalization, while the Socrates program, in which student and faculty mobility was coordinated within the already-established processes of the national HE systems, is an example of the latter.

### **2.1.3 Rationales for internationalizing higher education**

The rationales for internationalization for an individual, an institution, or a nation reflect a “complex and multi-level set of reasons which evolve over time and in response to changing needs and trends” (Knight, 1999: 20). Naturally, then,

the adoption of any particular rationale will result in different internationalization processes, activities, or outcomes at any given university. The form of internationalization in an HEI reflects the nature and role of various stakeholders within the HE system who will possess interests, motivations, and perspectives that can be not only distinct but possibly conflicting (de Wit, 2000; Knight 2004a).

Most traditional rationales, often reflecting national-level perspectives, can be grouped into four categories: political, economic, academic, and social/cultural (de Wit, 2002; Knight, 1999, 2004a; Yelland, 2000). There is, however, much overlap in these categories and the blurring of these motivations makes it hard for institutions to clearly articulate distinct rationales for internationalizing (Knight, 1999). Further, Knight (2004a; 2004b) notes that many emerging rationales, such as international branding and profile, income generation, student and staff development, strategic alliances, and knowledge production, cannot be neatly placed in one of the four traditional categories noted above.

While all of the traditional rationales have implications for this particular study, the cultural/social rationale is most specifically related because of its embodiment of national cultural identity, intercultural understanding, citizen development, and social and community development (see de Wit, 2002; Knight, 1999, 2004a). These emphases directly relate to the concepts underpinning internationalization-at-home (IaH), which envisions students and others enabled and supported in experiencing an intercultural dimension, exploring elements of cultural identity, recognizing and appreciating cultural difference in interaction, whether at home or abroad (see de Wit, 2002; Otten, 2003; Parsuramen, 1999).

The internationalization of a HEI also brings the development and sharing of knowledge and research data, and the transfer of expertise and skills among many academic and social areas, benefiting not only the individuals involved, but also adding vibrancy to the dynamic development of the HEI (Badat, 2004; Libhaber & Greene, 2006). However, this is not a universal perspective:

...many people—and some governments—do not consider internationalization as a de facto public good.... There is a new emphasis on local identities and specific ethnic lineages. There are new forms of xenophobia, and new restrictions on world travel. Such cultural and political tendencies cannot just be dismissed... and the case for internationalization must be made, rather than assumed. (M. Hall, 2004, para. 5; see also Teichler, 1999).

The need to make the case for internationalization is essential because internationalization affects multiple areas within HEIs, such as curricula,



pedagogy, research, administration, personnel, student recruitment, mobility of staff and students, quality, social responsiveness, and communication (Crowther, 2000; University of Cape Town [UTC], n.d.). The literature points to a variety of difficulties HEIs have in implementing internationalization activities and programs (see, e.g., Gacel-Ávila, 2005; Gantsog & Altantsetseg, n.d.; Laus & Morosini, 2005; Maiworm, 2001; Mihyo, 2004; Sanchez, 2005; Siaya & Hayward, 2003; Theiler, 2005; Yang, 2005). This is particularly the case in countries in which the HE system competes with other pressing national needs for funding and resources or for which a HE system is under development (see e.g., Badat, 2004; Bernardo, 2002; Brodjonegoro, 2003; Butters, Quiroga, & Dammert, 2005; Cook, 2001; Fergany, 2000; Findlow, 2001; Fourie & Neale-Shutte, 2005; Holm-Nielsen, Thorn, Brunner & Balán, 2005; Jaramillo, 2005; Katjavivi, 2002; Knight, 2003, 2006; Kritz, 2006; Marginson & McBurnie, 2003; Mazrui, 2003; Rajesh, 2005; Theiler, 2005; Welch, 2002; Working Group on Higher Education, 2004)

The literature seems to indicate three distinct drives for internationalization at the national level: HE improvement and eventual competitiveness, financial or political/social motivation, or the benefit of the individual/society through IC experience and cultural understanding. In broad strokes, it appears the first category applies primarily to developing countries and the last category primarily to developed countries. The middle category comprises developing, developed and emerging economies. Table 2.1 provides these rationales in greater detail.

**Table 2.1** Rationales for Nations to Internationalize Their Higher Education Systems.

<p><b>Some national rationales to internationalize higher education systems:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Develop human capital to meet social, health or political conditions (Badat, 2003)</li> <li>◆ Address insufficient or excess domestic HE capacity (Gupta, 2005; Marginson &amp; McBurnie, 2003)</li> <li>◆ Advance nation building or shape social perspectives (Badat, 2003; Bernardo, 2002; Brodjonegoro, 2003; Marginson &amp; McBurnie, 2003; Scott, 1998)</li> <li>◆ Position country within global knowledge economy or advance economic or technological competitiveness (Badat, 2003; Brodjonegoro, 2003; Gacel-Ávila et al., 2005; Holm-Nielsen et al., 2005; Marginson &amp; McBurnie, 2003; van der Wende, 2001a)</li> <li>◆ Prepare citizens for global labor market (Marginson &amp; McBurnie, 2003)</li> <li>◆ Enhance regional integration (Theiler, 2005), and/or strengthen/safeguard regional cultural heritage or economic/political benefit (Sanchez, 2005; Söderqvist, 2001)</li> <li>◆ Provide young citizens with skills needed to further international peace, friendship, trust and/or reconciliation (Gantsog &amp; Altantsetseg, n.d.)</li> <li>◆ Support HE capacity building in developing or emerging economy countries (Bernardo, 2002; Marginson &amp; McBurnie, 2003)</li> </ul>
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Knight (2004a; 2004b) indicates that the emerging rationales do not fit easily into the traditional categories, and that is particularly true when discussing the rationales that HEIs have for internationalizing their campuses. HEIs apply the concept of internationalization differently and for different purposes (Bernardo, 2002; Knight, 2005). Table 2.2 provides some of the rationales in the literature for why HEIs internationalize.

**Table 2.2** Rationales for Internationalizing Universities Around the World.

<p>Some rationales for the internationalization of HEIs from the literature:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ To learn from peer institutions and to improve general quality of HE (Bernardo, 2002; Kang, 2004; Knight, 2003; Marginson &amp; McBurnie, 2003), or because internationalization is viewed as “indispensable” in certain fields of study (Teichler, 1999)</li> <li>◆ To develop international competences or reputation, and thus competitiveness (Fourie &amp; Neale-Shutte, 2005; Sanchez, 2005; Teichler, 1999; van der Wende, 2001a)</li> <li>◆ To provide opportunities for student, faculty and staff mobility to develop international knowledge and intercultural skills (Gantsog &amp; Altantsetseg, n.d.; Kang, 2004; Knight, 2003; Marginson &amp; McBurnie, 2003), as well as language competency (Marginson &amp; McBurnie, 2003)</li> <li>◆ To draw into the domestic classroom diversity in language, cultures, and perspectives to aid in learning (Gantsog &amp; Altantsetseg, n.d.; Marginson &amp; McBurnie, 2003)</li> <li>◆ To promote through collaboration the circulation of ideas, knowledge, technology, and personal capital that enriches research and innovation (Gupta, 2005; Marginson &amp; McBurnie, 2003; Knight, 2003)</li> <li>◆ To enhance the revenue stream for the institution (Gupta, 2005; Marginson &amp; McBurnie, 2003; Sanchez, 2005)</li> </ul>
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#### **2.1.4 Rationales for internationalization in Finland**

Internationalization has been a stated priority at all levels of education in Finland (Ollikainen, 1997), with national consensus on the importance of the internationalization process and international cooperation in response to globalization forces (Maassen, Nokkala, & Uppström, 2004; MoE, 2004). This broad-spectrum approach to internationalization in education reflects the traditional role of education in Finland’s historic nation building. In particular, the university system was politically and culturally influential in developing Finnish national identity and, ultimately, the creation of the bilingual nation (Klinge, 1992; Välimaa, 2004), and university academics have been intimate participants in and have helped shaped every debate of national consequence (Välimaa & Hoffman, 2007).

Rationales for internationalizing HE exist on both national and institutional levels. In Finland, the Ministry of Education (MoE) influences the planning, application, and outcomes through its annual budgetary negotiations with each

HEI (Dobson & Hölttä, 2001). A review of the statements by, primarily, the MoE on why internationalization of HE is essential indicates the rationales fall into two general areas: economic and sociocultural, with the economic rationales—often in terms of competitiveness—more often cited. The Finnish government sees the internationalization of HE as a fundamental and long-term investment in Finland's visibility in a competitive global economy—and to address the looming labor shortage (MoE, 2001); to improve the internationalization of Finnish industries within an integrated EU with freer movement of labor, goods, and services (Dobson & Hölttä, 2001); to produce graduates who possess a European outlook and internationally competitive skills (MoE, 2001, 2004; Ollikainen, 1997); and to enhance tighter collaboration between internationalized Finnish HEIs and their regions regarding the HEIs' research outcomes, innovation, and creativity, as well as international contacts and expertise (MoE, 2004), especially since local mores, culture, and values remain crucial components even in a global environment (Ahola, 2005; MoE, 2003a).

In regard to the sociocultural rationales, the national perspective is that internationalized HEIs should support communality and acceptance of difference, respect cultural rights, promote active membership in civil society and one's responsibility toward the environment, and provide access to knowledge, skills, and technical services to allow individuals to grow in ability, aptitude, and professional skills throughout their lives and contribute to the greater society (MoE, 2004). Internationalization activities are not aimed strictly at Finns learning about other cultures, but equally emphasize that others learn about Finland, its culture, its uniqueness, and its strengths (MoE, 2003a), and its contributions to the area of global research and industry. The sociocultural rationales of HE internationalization, which attend to the development of the individual and the society, have implications for the economic outcomes of the nation, just as successful economic outcomes benefit the individuals and society.

The national vision for the internationalization of education has been regularly articulated in a number of MoE documents (e.g., MoE 2001, 2003a, 2003b, 2004, 2005a, 2005b) and by others (e.g., Halonen, Mäkeläinen, & Vuorinen, 2006) over the years. Each new document has become more specific, not only in defining the vision of internationalization in all levels of Finnish education, but also specifying more clearly what is encompassed in this

construct (the expected actions and outcomes) and who is responsible for what and how, including issues of funding and assessment. However, a document released by the MoE in 2007, titled *Global Education 2010* (MOE, 2007), outlines the Programme for Global Education, with quite significant directives that underpin the need for this study and the application of this study's results.

In its Programme for Global Education, the MoE (2007) rightly acknowledges that global education is not only about learning about other cultures and how they work, but how that knowledge sheds light on one's own culture and its workings. In Finland's vision, such an education goes beyond cultural differences to world citizenship, built upon both the commonalities and differences in human existence and a responsibility to act on behalf of humanity. This type of citizenship transcends national borders, and so the essential abilities of cultural sensitivity and empathy must be developed early in young learners, as well as expanded and supported into adulthood. Therefore, global education, its content, and its methodologies—essential in instilling the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to live in a multicultural society and world—is intended to take place both within the classroom and beyond.

Briefly, the Programme (MoE, 2007: 11) recommends a range of activities by a variety of sectors and parties and those that are significant for this study are provided here. Global education activities are expected to, among other things,

- ◆ Guide toward individual and communal global responsibility and the ethic of a world citizen, based on fairness and respect for human rights;
- ◆ Support growth toward critical-minded and media-critical citizens with the knowledge and skills necessary to act successfully as a member of one's own community within an interconnected world;
- ◆ Promote national and international interaction, intercultural dialogue and learning, and understanding and appreciation of difference;
- ◆ Increase knowledge and skills that assist in the understanding and influencing of the continually globalizing economy, and the ramifications of both on society and culture; and
- ◆ Comprise education in human rights, equality, peace, media, intercultural understanding, sustainable development, and development and equity.

The MoE recognizes that education and culture are related and affected over time. Thus, the plan anticipates continued growth in individuals' international knowledge, skills, and attitudes within a process of building these indispensable competencies through a multifaceted learning process involving various sectors and organizations. The Ministry expects the design and implementation of global education to be planned, analytical, and systematic (2007: 13) and to be part of the

everyday school environment, rather than background rhetoric for periodic discussion. The Programme expects the knowledge and skills needed for international and IC interaction to be addressed through comprehensive and content-rich multicultural studies integrated into all education configurations and for all persons at all levels of education, from primary to adult, achieved through consolidating multicultural subject matter within all curricula, teaching methods and content, and operational cultures of all educational institutions. In addition, Finnish HEIs are encouraged to accelerate their collaborative and cooperative interaction with peer institutions in developing countries.

Internationalization rationales at individual Finnish HEIs<sup>1</sup>, when stated, mirror the national rhetoric on economic and social emphases. International reputation and competitiveness are the primary economic rationales, and quality education and international readiness of students for a global market are the social rationales.

## **2.2 Internationalization-at-Home as an Emerging Means Toward Internationalizing Higher Education**

Considering that universities historically have drawn students and scholars from other cultures to engage in the shared quest for knowledge, it is no surprise that mobility is the most familiar means of obtaining an international dimension for a university environment. Indeed, for some HEIs, internationalization means mobility (Gornitzka, 2003), primarily of outbound students. Thus, the traditional means of internationalizing in HE involves primarily study abroad schemes. However, new means toward internationalization have emerged in recent years, fueled by developments in technology, particularly ICTs (Trondal et al., 2003), but

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<sup>1</sup> Information regarding universities in Finland is derived a brief study of institutional materials on internationalization. The websites of the 19 Finnish universities (the National Defence University was not included because it narrowly focuses on the military and national defense, and applicants must be Finnish citizens; 2007 Helsinki Area Research, n.d.; National Defence University,) were reviewed for current actions, future plans, strategies, and visions regarding internationalization, and particularly IaH. Also, the international office at each institution was contacted seeking further documents (in English). Some universities did not reply to either of two inquiries; others had their materials available only in Finnish or Swedish, or have interwoven their perspective into general university strategies rather than having separate documents. It is important to note that the information covers an 8-year spread, meaning not all materials reflect the contemporary status at all HEIs, and vary in regard to specificity, making direct comparison difficult (see Åbo Akademi University, 2007; Finnish Academy of Fine Arts, n.d.; Helsinki School of Economics, 2007a, 2007b; Helsinki University of Technology, 2006; Lappeenranta University of Technology, 2003, 2006; Sibelius Academy, 2006a, 2006b, 2007; Swedish School of Economics and Business Administration [Hanken], 2002, 2007; Tampere University of Technology, 2006a, 2006b; Theatre Academy of Finland, 2007; Turku School of Economics and Business Administration, 2005; University of Art and Design Helsinki, n.d.a, n.d.b, n.d.c.; University of Helsinki, 2003, 2006a, 2006b; University of Joensuu, 2007a, 2007b; JyU, 2007a, 2007b, 2007c, 2007d, 2007e, 2007f, 2007g, 2007h, 2007i; University of Kuopio, 2002, 2006; University of Lapland, 1998, 2006, n.d.; University of Oulu, 2005; University of Tampere, 2001, 2007; University of Turku, 2006, 2007a, 2007b, 2007c; University of Vaasa, 2000, 2005, 2007a, 2007b. Also personal correspondence with Maria Valtonen, Theatre Academy, July 30, 2007.)

also by looking at the traditional means in a new way. Some innovative universities seek ways to provide an internationalized education for their non-mobile students, who represent the vast majority of post-secondary students, and particularly regarding their international and intercultural competence (Nilsson, 2003). The outcomes of the mobility of a small percentage of students (inbound and outbound) on campus are seen as a means to enhance the internationalization process for the benefit of all (Ryan & Hellmundt, 2003; Ward, 2001).

The *internationalization-at-home* concept grew from the view of the Socrates program of the EU as a vehicle for meeting the needs of non-mobile students (Wächter, 2000) and embodies the values and practices of internationalization taking place on the home campus (Wächter, 2003). While the various circumstances and aspects of IaH may be complex, not clearly defined, and perhaps not even understood (D. Hoffman, 2003), researchers are beginning to articulate elements that could compose an IaH program. Such elements would involve the integration of dimensions of international and intercultural education within the teaching and learning processes, extracurricular activities that further the vision and practice of internationalization, sustained interaction between students and faculty of diverse cultural backgrounds, and a closer relationship between the university community and society members of different cultural or ethnic backgrounds (Wächter, 2003). The emphasis in an IaH environment is on the intercultural learning and interaction that arises when students and faculty from dissimilar cultural and educational backgrounds—domestic and foreign—gather on a campus. Said a different way, on many campuses an *international* education is focused on the mobility dimension, while an *intercultural* education is created through a variety of programs and interaction opportunities to which both domestic and foreign persons contribute and from which both benefit (Crichton, Paige, Papademetre, & Scarino, 2004). In short, IaH is any and every internationalized activity at an HEI except mobility (Nilsson, 2003).

The IaH concept has at its foundation two pillars: the understanding that internationalization embodies far more than academic mobility and the emphasis on teaching and learning in an environment that is rich in diversity (Wächter, 2003). These pillars find their strength in two realities in contemporary Europe: first, the EU goal of one in ten students taking an academic exchange period in another European country is ambitious, but not likely to be attained or exceeded

(Wächter, 2000) and, second, the various forms of migration are growing within contemporary Europe (Wächter, 2003). As a result, states D. Hoffman (2003: 78), the discussion of IaH necessarily involves the study of transformation within countries, cultures and institutions—as well study of issues abroad. Stier (2003: 83) describes the traditional forms of internationalization as the “lighthouse perspective,” in which one stands atop a lighthouse looking into the distance for the foreign, the exotic, the international, without seeing all of the same at the foot of the lighthouse, in one’s own “neighborhood.” Some HEIs today have begun to see the foreign students in their midst as opportunities to provide an expanded approach to education, striving to create a more diverse student body and to create a more equal education through the process of educational reform and institutional adaptations (M. J. Chang & Astin, 1997; van der Wende, 1997). Thus, IaH exists at the foot of the lighthouse, and intends to bring together native students and foreign and domestic students and faculty of dissimilar cultures.

Wächter (2003) indicates that the concept of IaH has been purposely kept fluid in regard to its definition and application so as to be able to capture the potential benefit from both the top and the bottom of the lighthouse, and to not constrain the concept by giving it a rigid definition, thus anticipating—perhaps even encouraging—the concept to develop. On the other hand, a set of shared assumptions keep the concept pliable yet coherent, so that IaH does not become so broad that it becomes all things to all people.

Within this dynamic of fluidity and constraint of an HEI that embraces the concept of IaH, students can fulfill not only their academic needs, but also their personal needs to grow intellectually, emotionally, professionally, and culturally, and in a vast array of competencies (Stier, 2003). Growth in all of these areas leads to an international competence, described by Nilsson (2003) as (a) knowledge and an ability in international relations, comprising, among other things, foreign language competency, knowledge about the political, social and economic development and status of other countries and regions of the world, and (b) the development intercultural competence, such as an understanding, respect, and empathy for people of different national, cultural/ethnic, social and religious origins. These outcomes are intended for a broad spectrum of HE constituents, with the concern that all students need global and cultural learning, whether or not they will accept employment in another culture upon graduation.

### 2.3 Internationalization-at-Home Elements and Practices

The IaH concept can comprise a number of practices and activities that can refashion the nature of higher education. A review of the literature finds IaH expressed in innovative HEIs in four areas: (a) traditional mobility schemes and cooperation/partnerships with peer institutions (although these programs are not necessarily conducted solely in the traditional way), (b) curriculum reform and other elements affecting the teaching and learning within an internationalized environment, (c) activities that reach beyond the classroom, conducted via interpersonal or technology-facilitated interaction, and (d) leadership/administrative-level adaptations. On a personal level, these new perspectives on internationalization require individuals to learn how to be more self-reflexive and critical thinkers in their attitudes and practices regarding diversity, cultural difference, and the nature of knowledge (Stier, 2003; Teekens, 2003; Volet, 2004; Yershova, DeJaeghere, & Mestenhauser, 2000). To succeed in this new concept of HE, teachers and students need to be able to engage sensitive and/or controversial topics that demand openness, introspection, curiosity, patience and understanding, as well as tolerance and respect for others (Stier, 2003) and perspectives that are different from and perhaps conflicting with their own.

Larsen, Momii, & Vincent-Lancrin (2004) provide a simplified way to organize the various activities and programs of internationalization, grouping them into two primary dimensions: domestic and cross-border (see Table 2.3). The domestic dimension incorporates all of the international and intercultural

**Table 2.3** Activities and Programs for Internationalization.

<b>Cross-border</b>	<b>Domestic</b>
Student mobility	Internationalization-at-home
Faculty/staff mobility	<i>Classroom diversity</i>
Regional collaboration	<i>Curriculum development</i>
Transnational education (TE)	<i>Language learning/lingua franca</i>
<i>Offshore</i> TE (twinning, hubs, joint degrees)	<i>Collaborative research networks</i>
<i>Distance education</i>	<i>ICT uses</i>
	<i>Extracurricular activities</i>

Adapted from Larsen, Momii, & Vincent-Lancrin (2004: 2–3).



aspects of teaching and learning, research, social activities, and student and faculty development that take place without the individuals leaving their home country, in other words, internationalization-at-home. The cross-border dimension encompasses the wide variety of programs that cross national boundaries, involving and people as well as programs, processes, and institutions. Some programs (such as use of technologies) bridge both categories. IaH takes advantage of both domestic and cross-border activities in order to provide an internationalized experience for inbound and outbound students and faculty and, more specifically, for non-mobile students, faculty and staff. Some of these activities are looked at in a bit more detail in the next subsections, although this discussion will be limited by the need for brevity.

### **2.3.1 Cross-border internationalization activities**

#### **2.3.1.1 Student mobility**

Two types of outbound mobility exist: the so-called free movers, who make their own decisions about where and when to go, often funding the exchange themselves, and the government/organization-funded and arranged exchange programs (Gornitzka, 2003). By far, the latter represents the largest number of mobile students in developed nations, often for short-term exchanges (Dwyer, 2004), while mobile students in developing countries, who travel abroad primarily for their full degree (Marginson & McBurnie, 2003), are more likely to be free movers. Even within the development of emerging means of internationalizing, outbound student mobility will remain an essential element of an HEI's internationalization strategy, as well as means for the transfer of knowledge from one nation to another (Ivić, 1999; van Damme, 2001).

Although about 2.5 million students travel each year for studies in another country (UN News, 2006), this represents only a small proportion of students enrolled at the HE level worldwide (Larsen et al., 2004). Significant inequality exists in the distribution of sending and receiving countries (Gantsog & Altantsetseg, n.d.; Gibbons, 1998a; Hatakenaka, 2004; Jaramillo, 2005; Olsen, 2003; Sanchez, 2005; Theiler, 2005; UN News, 2006), with English-speaking countries—the USA, the UK, and Australia—as three of the top five host countries (van der Wende, 2001b; UN News, 2006). While Asia provides the largest number of mobile HE students in raw numbers (Marginson & McBurnie,

2004), sub-Saharan Africa provides the highest proportional mobility, with 1 in 16 students studying abroad, compared to 1 in 250 for US students (UN News, 2006) and 1 in about 36 in 2005 for Finnish students (cf. Garam, 2005; Statistics Finland, 2007). While mobility flow traditionally has been from less developed countries to more developed, the current trend has shifted to between developed countries or from developed countries to newly industrialized countries (Bernardo, 2002; Kritz, 2006; Scott, 1998).

Mobility within Europe is a special case precisely because of its infrastructure and financial underpinnings. The cornerstone of intra-European mobility is the Erasmus Programme, launched in 1987, which, among other goals, financially supports tertiary-level students' study for up to 12 months in another European country (European Union, Education and Training [EU Erasmus], 2006a; Teichler & Jahr, 2001). This largest study abroad program in the world currently involves 31 European countries and more than a 100,000 mobile students annually (Kritz, 2006). The Erasmus program was integrated into the Socrates Programme in 1995, which expanded the emphasis on student and faculty mobility to European HEIs, underscored by institutional contracts of commitment to a more integrated internationalization process (Froment, 2003).

The Socrates Programme seeks to enhance the quality of education within the EU and support the European dimension within higher education (EU Erasmus, 2006a), with the idea is that, by promoting communication across the many cultures within the European economic area and steeped in shared European values, the continent would competitively benefit from a flexible, mobile, and well-educated workforce (Zemke, 1998) prepared within a framework of diversity of culture, language, and educational systems (Confederation of EU Rectors & the European University Association, 2000; EU Socrates, 2006; Gordon, 2001). The program also advanced internationalization elements, such as curricular improvements for non-mobile students and international research collaboration (Maiworm, 2001).

Yet, these EU programs, chief vehicles by which many European HEIs are internationalizing, raise some concerns. The primary question focuses on how truly international these exchange experiences are for European students within the European academic space, made easier by the lower costs and more familiar academic arena, and may be perceived more as "internal" experiences (Altbach,

2004b; see also de Wit, 2002). This feeling is furthered by Neave (2004: 3), who questions whether “mobile bodies lead to open minds,” since Erasmus communities of inbound European students of various cultures invariably create their own subculture, distinct from and “almost as a protection against that which they ought to be exposed.” Papatsiba (2004) concurs, noting that the Erasmus period does not systematically lead to a student’s decentering in relation to his/her culture of origin. Without that, not only does the individual not gain much intercultural experience or insight into his/her own cultural identity, but also does not gain the revelation of a European identity either. The simple fact that a student is mobile or encounters a distinct culture is meaningless without self-reflection, since “the mere consumption of the exotic is but a pale imitation of what intercultural exchange and encounter is meant to be” (de Jong & Teekens, 2003: 48). This is further complicated by Kritz’s (2006) data that student flows within Europe are regional, with Mediterranean-area HEIs receiving more students from south European countries, central European HEIs receiving from Eastern European countries, and Nordic HEIs receiving from northern European countries.

Additional questions arise regarding the nature of the students who are able to participate in mobility schemes and their experiences, with reports indicating that Erasmus students are a fairly select group compared to the average postsecondary student (Teichler & Jahr, 2001; van Damme, 2001). Otten (1999: 244) notes that mobile students are, by their socialization, exceptions to national typologies and that it is likely that “the personal and cultural identity of these students are affected by factors which are significantly different from average cultural value orientation of a certain culture or society.” Moreover, Teichler and Jahr (2001) have found that a high proportion of the mobile students in their study had already received some sort of international experience prior to their Erasmus study abroad period, a fact that might have made them more inclined to pursue the mobility scheme. Furthermore, and perhaps more importantly, they found that the Erasmus exchange program “often *reinforces* but *does not create* internationally relevant competencies. This obviously holds true for foreign language proficiency, knowledge of the host country or values often viewed as linked to study abroad, such as ‘international awareness’” (Teichler & Jahr, 2001: 449; emphasis added).

Regarding the mobility of Finnish students, the MoE has established a goal of every third student taking a study period or traineeship abroad as part of his/her

HE studies (Garam, 2005; Kaiser et al., 2003; MoE, 2003b). For researchers, the goal is that every post-graduate researcher will spend a study period abroad (Maassen et al., 2004). Neither of these targets has been hit. In 2005, in relation to the annual intake of students, one in four university students went abroad (Garam, 2005). Most available data on outbound mobility focuses on exchange students.

In 2005, 4,670 Finns (roughly two thirds of them women; Ibid; Zirra, 2006) studied abroad for at least 3 months, although the rate of mobility varies according to institution (Garam, 2005). Nearly 90% of Finland's outbound mobile students go to European countries, with a majority of mobility taking place through the EU's Socrates program (Ibid.). It estimated that Finnish free movers number about 5,000 (Ahola, 2005; MoE, 2001).

Outbound students benefit in a host of ways from immersion in a dissimilar culture (see, e.g., Bruch & Barty, 1998; de Wit, 2002; Hansen, 2002; Maiworm, 2001; Sadlak, 1998; Teichler, 2004; Teichler & Jahr, 2001; van Damme, 2001). What makes the IaH mobility emphasis different from traditional mobility schemes is that the institution values and tries to benefit from an individual's abroad experience, both incoming foreign students and returning natives, as well as members of minority ethnic or cultural minorities within the home environment (Otten, 1999; Stier, 2003; Teekens, 2003). One rationale behind the Bologna Declaration was to make the education systems of European countries comparable to facilitate mobility within Europe (European Union, Education and Training [EU Bologna], 2006), but also to make Europe more attractive to students from other parts of the world (Reichert & Tauch, 2003, van der Wende, 2001b) and thus supporting both elements of mobility within an IaH environment.

### **2.3.1.2 Mobility of faculty and staff**

While the movement of faculty is not a new phenomenon, what is new, and vital, is the understanding such mobility brings to the individual scholar within the context of internationalized education, to his/her students in the host country and, upon return, to the students in his/her home HEI (Maiworm, 2001; Welch, 2002). Within the EU member and candidate nations in the 2005-2006 academic year, more than 23,000 teachers were mobile under the Erasmus program (EU Erasmus, 2006b). Recently, organizations and governments in other developed countries have instituted faculty exchange programs (Bernardo, 2002).

The internationalization of faculty, particularly through mobility, but also through faculty attendance at international conferences and workshops, has direct impact on the internationalization process at HEIs since most of the internationalization strategies and activities are the products of individual faculty members (Butters et al., 2005; Ellingboe, 1998; Gacel-Ávila, Jaramillo, Knight, & de Wit, 2005; Knight, 1999; Laus & Morosini, 2005; Siaya & Hayward, 2003). In the EU, growth in the number of faculty going abroad has grown noticeably in the past five years, although some countries are considerably more active than others (Centre for International Mobility [CIMO], 2007). However, internationalization of HE can place immense strain on academic personnel, with internationalization resulting in additional classroom, scholarship, mobility, and programmatic expectations or responsibilities, often without increased support or remuneration (Barker, 2000; Fourie & Neale-Shutte, 2005; Leask, 2005; Maiworm, 2001; Volet, 2004), although programs such as Erasmus provide additional funding to support faculty mobility and teaching and curricular reforms (Maiworm, 2001; Teichler, 1998). Thus, brain drain (or, alternately, burn out) of faculty remains a concern for HE reform and internationalization strategies worldwide, but most particularly in developing regions (Council on Higher Education [CHE], 2004; Mohamedbhai, 2002; Rajesh, 2005).

The research available on faculty/staff mobility in Finland, in either direction, is scarce, although a CIMO (2007) study shows the growth in faculty mobility, both to and from Finland, has increased since 2003. While faculty mobility has been considered a “vital” means of promoting internationalization (MoE, 2003b) for more than a decade, the administrative push behind the process has not materialized as it has for student mobility. Official documents place faculty mobility on par with student mobility (MoE, 2001, 2003b) because exposing faculty to international experiences opens their access to new pedagogies and course content that can affect their teaching in the domestic environment. A similar benefit for the home students takes place through inbound foreign faculty.

### **2.3.1.3 Regional collaboration**

Regions with shared cultural, economic, or political values often establish a framework through which mobility schemes for students and academic staff

can be streamlined, research networks or joint programs can be created, or institutional cooperation can be enhanced. The Erasmus/Socrates and Bologna programs are European examples of such regional collaboration (de Wit, 2002; Rickett, 1991; Teichler, 1998).

While simplification of interaction among HEIs is the primary motivation for regional collaboration in many areas of the world, other reasons can be equally essential for HE systems. In sub-Saharan Africa, where HEIs are still in the process of establishing modern scientific university systems, and many fields require knowledgeable faculty and significant financial investment by cash-strapped economies, the greater need is shared resources (see, e.g., CHE, 2004; Katjavivi, 2002; Mihyo, 2004). Meanwhile, in Arab countries, the primary concern is a search for the balance in their HEIs between the Islamic values for society, knowledge, and education and the pressures to develop scientific and technological expertise (often based on Western values) so needed for their economies to grow and compete globally (see e.g., Bahgat, 1999; Cook, 1999; Findlow, 2001; Kadi, 2006; Knight, 2003; Mazawi, 1999; Mazrui, 2003).

Finland's regional cooperation, of course, focuses on European peer institutions, as well as various regional (e.g., EU, Council of Europe, Nordic Council of Ministers) and international (e.g., UNESCO, OECD) organizations and associations (Maassen et al., 2004). But the Finnish international strategy has been to invest collaboratively in certain geographical regions beyond the European continent, beginning with southeast Asia in the 1990s (Dobson & Hölttä, 2001), and widening to include the Baltic countries and Russia, in addition to Europe, the Nordic countries, and the USA as key partners (Fogelberg, 1999; Maassen et al., 2004; MoE, 2004, 2005b; Ollikainen, 1997), while strengthening cooperation with Latin America and Africa (MoE, 2004).

#### **2.3.1.4 Transnational education**

Morrow and Torres (2000: 42–43) call transnational education (TE) “global distance education,” which encompasses a variety of strategies in which knowledge, programs, or institutions cross borders rather than people, although some TE schemes do have mobility components (Larsen et al., 2004), but there is not necessarily a relationship between the nations (Knight, 2004a). In the arena of HE, transnational education often remains outside the sovereignty of a nation's

education system, providing a homogenized (often Western) educational product via technologies (de Wit, 2002). (See Altbach, 2004b; Bernardo, 2002; Bublana, 2003; Hatakenaka, 2004; Kritz, 2006; Larsen et al., 2004; Marginson & McBurnie, 2003; Saint, 1999; van der Wende, 2001b, for more information.)

Many concerns have been voiced regarding the implications of TE, particularly for the cultures of developing and emerging economies, such as various threats to local HE systems (see, e.g., Altbach, 2004b; Mihyo, 2004; Mohamedbhai, 2002), issues of quality and oversight (see, e.g., Government of India, 2006; Gupta, 2005; Kritz, 2006; Laus & Morosini, 2005; Pérez, 2005; Marginson & McBurnie, 2003; cf. Theiler, 2005) and indigenous linguistic and cultural identity erosion (see, e.g., Bernardo, 2002; Bollag, 2000; Brodjonegoro, 2003; Fergany, 2000; Gantsog & Altantsetseg, n.d.; Government of India, 2006; Harman, 2002; Knight, 2003; Mazrui, 2003; Rajesh, 2005; van der Wende, 2001b). However, TE also allows expanded access to world-class education at a fraction of the cost of education abroad, with a lower investment of public funds, and access to state-of-the-art knowledge or technology transfer opportunities for knowledge-based economies to remain competitive (see, e.g., Government of India, 2006; Holm-Nielsen et al., 2005; Kritz, 2006; Mohamedbhai, 2002; Rajesh, 2005), often provided via flexible means (Bernardo, 2002; Larsen et al., 2004). If done well, transnational options allow for the consumption of HE by local students that is both cost-effective and culturally rich (Gupta, 2005: 9), perhaps allowing a developing country to “leapfrog” certain phases of HE development (Saint, 1999).

A significant amount of imported transnational education occurs in the Asia-Pacific region, primarily Singapore, Malaysia, Hong Kong, and mainland China (Marginson & McBurnie, 2003). However this trend is also growing in Eastern Europe, Central and South America, India, and, recently, in the wealthy countries of the Middle East (Findlow, 2001; Government of India, 2006; Gupta, 2005; Holm-Nielsen et al., 2005; Kritz, 2006; Larsen et al., 2004; Theiler, 2005). The literature does not indicate TE is an issue for or a significant practice in Finland.

### **2.3.2 Domestic internationalization activities (IaH)**

Around the world, more educators and HEIs are recognizing the value of education enrichment that inbound exchange students bring to the host campus (Barker, 2000; Harman, 2002; Welch, 2002); the same applies to immigration

populations within the home country (Nilsson, 2003; Stier, 2003). The benefit for faculty exists as well (Harman, 2002).

The literature does not provide many examples of extensive work by HEIs on IaH programs. In fact, many references in the literature report the lost opportunities or slow progress in getting foreign and at-home students to interact, with often the at-home students less likely to get involved (see, e.g., Dunstan, 2003; Gantsog & Altantsetseg, n.d.; Siaya & Hayward, 2003; Ward, 2001), or the small number of changes that are actually taking place (Siaya & Hayward, 2003). But there are sporadic examples of HEIs, notably all in Western countries, implementing any number of programs, or laying the groundwork through strategic planning (see, e.g., de Jong & Teekens, 2003; Nilsson, 2003; Paige, 2003a). This is facilitated in Europe by continent-wide initiatives such as the Socrates program.

The Finnish MoE recommends that all degrees should incorporate an internationalized study period, *either in Finland or abroad*, to enhance students' cultural diversification (MoE, 2001). Some researchers and administrators noted that Finnish students, faculty, and staff benefit and can be "internationalized" by the presence of foreign students in classes and on campus (e.g., Fogelberg, 1999; Maassen et al., 2004; Taajamo, 2003). However, I found no examples of how this has been put into action systematically. So if Finnish universities are providing highly interactive and engaging multicultural classes, or other programs that internationalize at-home students on campus, it has not been widely publicized.

### **2.3.2.1 Classroom diversity**

The flip side of outbound mobility is inbound mobility, and the potential for creating multicultural learning environments. Research indicates classroom diversity can provide an outstanding learning experience, in content and process (Ryan & Hellmundt, 2003; Ward, 2001), for both domestic and foreign students. Benefits include the reduction in prejudices and stereotypes, increased awareness of cultural diversity and equality, adaptation of life values and perspectives, development of alternative communication skills, improved language skills, the development of an international perspective toward and recognition of the non-neutral nature of knowledge, as well as various opportunities for cognitive and affective learning (Crichton et al., 2004; Holmes, 2004; Leask, 2004; Le Roux, 2002; Messman & Jones-Corely, 2001; Olsen, 2003; Soeters & Recht, 2001;



Volet, 2004; Ward, 2001). Methods such as group projects and experiential learning are particularly effective in providing opportunities for student growth (J.-s. Chang, 2006; Crichton et al., 2004; Speece, 2002; Ward, 2001).

Yet, despite the immense potential offered by diversity in the classroom, some researchers have pointed to the lack of evidence that HE teachers were adapting either the content of or pedagogical methods within their courses (see, e.g., Stone, 2006; Ward, 2001). Such adaptations are essential because of the influence of culture on learning styles, language use, expectations and practices regarding academics and scholarly research and writing, the relationship between teacher and student, and the dynamics of the class group (see, e.g., Barmeyer, 2004, Gabb, 2006; Holmes, 2004; Ryan & Hellmundt, 2003; Teekens, 2003; Yamazaki, 2005; see also J.-s. Chang, 2006).

In Finland in 2005, 7,697 students came to study, 4,629 of them to the university (Garam, 2005: 4), although it appears this figure includes exchange students as well as degree students. Garam (2005) notes, however, that there are significant balance differences in regard to fields of study. As with the outbound students, inbound mobility is also Euro-centric, with up to 80% of students coming from European countries (Ibid.). However, foreign degree students come from a more diverse background than do exchange students, with just over half from Europe, 11% from African countries, 28% from Asia, and the balance overwhelmingly from western hemisphere countries (Zirra, 2006: 10).

And even though lower targets for the number of foreign degree students has yet to be met, the MoE has set a quantitative target of 10,000–15,000 inbound international degree students by 2010, which would represent 4% of the total student populations in Finnish HEIs, low by international comparisons but still double the percentage in 2002 (Garam, 2003; MoE, 2001, 2003b; Zirra, 2006). Most Finnish universities indicate that they are receiving—or actively pursuing—an increase in the number of inbound degree-seeking students and researchers, furthered by an increase in the number of courses and degree programs in foreign languages, principally English.

### **2.3.2.2 Curriculum development**

One means of providing an international experience for at-home students is to weave international and intercultural elements into curricula and courses. Leask

(2001: 114) concludes, “Internationalizing university curricula is a complex process that is as much about whom and how we teach as it is about what we teach.” While the definition of what an internationalized curriculum is (or, for that matter, should be) is neither universal nor uncontested, there is growing consensus that such curricula involve interdisciplinary approaches, international focuses and intercultural skills development (see, e.g., Bernardo, 2002; Crichton et al., 2004; Leask, 2001; Otten, 2003; Siaya & Hayward, 2003; Volet, 2004; Ward, 2001; Welch, 2002); increasing second language requirements or teaching whole courses in a non-local language (Barker, 2000; Gacel-Ávila, 2005; Harman, 2002; National Unions of Students in Europe, 2005; Nyborg, 2002; Sanchez, 2005; Welch, 2002); or enhancing international collaboration in research (Hatakenaka, 2004). The focus should be to provide real substance of other cultures and perspectives, rather than simple superficial exposure (Barker, 2000) so students can acquire a true understanding of IC differences that affect actions, understandings, and beliefs (Bernardo, 2002; Moore, 2005), as well as that the nature of knowledge is not neutral, but culturally affected (Volet, 2004).

A challenge to internationalizing curricula is that it takes time, energy, and expertise, and many HE faculty feel international activity is beyond the scope of their teaching, or they already face time constraints in providing the basics tenets of their field (Siaya & Hayward, 2003). It is important to demonstrate that internationalization is a facet of every field (Moore, 2005), that good HE must develop wider perspectives, a certain level of IC competence, and critical thinking (Otten, 2003; Volet, 2004; Yershova et al., 2000), and thus is fundamental in every field wishing to provide quality education (Lasonen, 2003). Increasingly governments and educators recognize the ongoing need for learning and support programs—or could even structure the initial HE experience—for lifelong learning (Ericsson, 2000; Sporn, 2003; Tuijnman & Boström, 2002; Yorke, 2003).

Breton (2002) further advises that joint programs or double diploma arrangements and other international networking of programs allow for the essential subject learning within a broader international experience. Such joint degrees are currently being devised at many Finnish universities, including programs with partner universities around the world, such as the Master in International Management offered by the Helsinki School of Economics (2007b)

and 17 other universities, and the European Masters in Intercultural Communication offered by JyU (2005a) and six European partner universities.

However, the internationalization documents from most Finnish universities do not indicate much about their curricular modifications (other than language of instruction, the need for integrated international mobility/traineeships, or pursuit of joint degrees) to make their programs more international. This might result from the responsibility of the faculties and departments to oversee such matters.

### **2.3.2.3 Collaborative research networks and partnerships**

Cooperative networks among peer institutions, particularly from several continents, can provide great opportunities for drawing elements of internationalization into an HEI and help share the costs of quality research and programs (Bernardo, 2002; de Wit, 2002). Such collaboration, however, is essential for HEIs in developing economies, which face limited resources—human, financial, technical, and expertise (Bernardo, 2002; Katjavivi, 2002; Fergany, 2000; Laus & Morosini, 2005; Mazrui, 2003; Theiler, 2005; WGHE, 2004), although the transfer of knowledge in this manner is often limited because the research capacity in economically disadvantaged countries is underdeveloped (Bubtana, 2003; Fergany, 2000; Fourie & Neale-Shutte, 2005; Marginson & McBurnie, 2003; Theiler, 2005). Nevertheless, some countries, such as Norway, make it national policy for their HEIs to cooperate specifically with peer institutions in developing countries (Nyborg, 2001), as does the EU's Mundus Program (Hernández, 2004; Kritz, 2006).

Whether these research networks and partnerships also provide an intercultural element depends on the diversity of cultures within the region, network, or partnership, and how willing the nations are to recognize diversity. However, the literature suggests that African, Latin American, and the Middle Eastern Arab countries working collaboratively seek to emphasize similarity in culture, indigenous language and knowledge, and shared perspectives as a counter to the strong Western-biased “international” knowledge, research, and education systems so prevalent on the Internet and in TE opportunities (Bahgat, 1999; Findlow, 2001; Fourie & Neale-Shutte, 2005; Knight, 2003; Mazrui, 2003).

International research collaboration by at-home students and researchers offers multiple benefits. Collaboration can bring a variety of culturally influenced

perspectives on knowledge to bear on data and analysis, moving findings toward a universality of scholarship (Bernardo, 2002; see also Humphries, 2002).

All universities in Finland stress their interest in improving their competitiveness of programs, raising their international profile, emphasize the quality of their degrees and research centers, and tout the extent of their international network of collaborative partners. The documents, however, suggest that internationalization in Finnish universities is both the means toward, and the ultimate outcome, of these interests: Successful internationalization strategies and activities within the university lead to partnerships with peer institutions beyond, leading to more mobility and joint projects, which further the internationalization of activities within the university, and the process continues. However, despite these international research networks, I found no references to how these networks might facilitate intercultural growth or understanding, or that research findings were discussed in multicultural forums at Finnish universities.

#### **2.3.2.4 Language learning/lingua franca**

Reports indicate that HEIs in most regions of the world are increasing the level of language teaching/learning (Bernardo, 2002; Gacel-Ávila, 2005; Knight, 2003; Sanchez, 2005) for students as well as faculty (Jaramillo, 2005). European countries, in particular, have underscored the emphasis on multilingualism with EU and government policies and funding (Callan, 1998; Teichler, 1998). HEIs normally have a requirement for inbound students to learn the native language, which is essential to allow foreign students to interact with their hosts beyond the campus (Wächter, 2000).

While no global lingua franca has been determined officially (Kemper, 1999), English has emerged in recent decades as the most frequently used language for international communication regarding technology, diplomacy, business and trade, popular culture, science, and higher education (Altbach, 2004a; Bollag, 2000; de Wit, 2002). The impact of English on universities in the processes of teaching, learning, and research is felt perhaps most acutely in HEIs in “small language countries,” such as the Netherlands, Iceland, Sweden, and Finland (de Wit, 2002; Nilsson, 2003; van der Wende, 2001b), but also in countries in Asia, Africa, and Eastern Europe (Bernardo, 2002; Marginson & McBurnie, 2003; Okubo, 2003). In most non-English speaking countries, HEI courses and whole degree programs are

taught in English to attract foreign students who are unwilling or unable to study in the local language, and to improve the English-language skills of domestic students (Altbach, 2004a, Callan, 1998; de Jong & Teekens, 2003).

Traditionally, there has been little opposition to the use of English for research purposes, although that has not been the case regarding teaching (de Wit: 2002), where the principal concern is that teaching and research in English can result in the stunting of academic terminology of native languages (Bollag, 2000), as well as potentially decimate not only local languages but their accompanying cultural practices and indigenous knowledge (de Wit, 2002; Findlow, 2001; Fourie & Neale-Shutte, 2005; Mazrui, 2003; Yang, 2003). In addition, a single global language places enormous pressure on those individuals, and by extension their countries, who do not speak, or speak well, the lingua franca (Kemper, 1999; Phillipson, 2001). Furthermore, a second language as the medium for instruction requires a distinctly different linguistic competency than simple linguistic capability (de Jong & Teekens, 2003; Nilsson, 2003; Teekens, 2003).

Language issue, both language learning and an educational lingua franca, are intricate elements of the IaH education, and competencies that at-home students must master (Stier, 2006; Wächter, 2003), but for different reasons. Further, a recent study (Sakuragi, 2006) found students' motivation to learn a foreign language related to a greater acceptance of ethnic groups, one intended outcome of an IaH education. Wächter (2003) suggests that, without the integration of language acquisition into an IaH curriculum, the process of internationalization of HE cannot be fulfilled for at-home students.

In Finnish HE, perhaps the biggest adaptation to encourage inbound foreign degree students has been making English the language of instruction in some courses and degree programs. The Universities Act of 2004 revised the language of instruction provision, allowing universities to confer degrees for programs in languages other than Finnish or Swedish, thus allowing universities new potential for international cooperation through Master's programs in English, and courses in other languages, such as Russian or German, all which serve both domestic and international students (Garam, 2003; Halonen et al., 2006). Currently more than 350 international study programs are available in English at Finnish HEIs (CIMO, 2006). However, in determination to keep the native languages from being stunted by the increase in foreign-language degrees and

research efforts, a few universities emphasize the need for Finnish-speaking and Swedish-speaking students become familiar with the essential terminology in their fields in their national languages (e.g., University of Helsinki, 2006b).

### **2.3.2.5 ICT use**

The prospect of using ICTs to assist in the internationalizing of at-home students and staff has been held out as the future trend of HE. ICT-facilitated activities, such as joint courses and degrees, collaborative research and projects, and the internationalizing of curricula, are suggested as an important way to create cultural diversity, to expose students to various types of culturally influenced perspectives on knowledge, and to bring into home universities international case studies and research (Collins & van der Wende, 2002; Joris, van den Berg, & van Ryssen, 2003; Leask, 2004; Stone, 2006). This is particularly true for HEIs in developing countries and in transitional economies (Fourie & Neale-Shutte, 2005; Seddoh, 2002), who are less likely to have inbound students to internationalize the home campus. However, these same economics are more likely to face underdeveloped ICT infrastructures and lack of connectivity; low levels of access to computers and funding; lack of experience and expertise; or poorly developed national policies and strategies to further ICT progress (Bubtana, 2003; Fourie & Neale-Shutte, 2005; Gantsog & Altantsetseg, n.d.; Saint, 1999). But there are examples of such international networks of HEIs interconnected by ICT use, such as the multi-country Universitas 21 consortium, which brings together HEIs from nearly a dozen countries to offer online programs, staff and student exchanges; cross-border curriculum development; and provide a system for students to conduct part of their degree online and the balance on campus (Kritz, 2006; Marginson & McBurnie, 2003).

In the survey of Finnish universities, many institutions indicates an increase in use of ICTs in teaching, although only a few specified how this ICT use relates to internationalization of their curricula, such as courses or seminars produced with partner institutions, group discussions via the Internet, or creating a “global classroom.” A few discussed ICT program development as an outgoing service based on institutional expertise or as a means of increasing access to foreign language education. The assumption with the latter idea is that material in another language constitutes internationalized opportunities.

This is interesting because knowledge about ICTs is considered an essential element of Finland's knowledge society (Maassen et al., 2004)

### **2.3.2.6 Extracurricular activities**

The literature provides very few research examples of extracurricular activities designed to internationalize students. My literature review, confirmed by Ward (2001), indicates that most of such studies focus on the international students (e.g., Toyokawa & Toyokawa, 2002), although a few recent studies are now looking at the benefits or outcomes of extracurricular interaction for at-home students, often the result of some intervention (e.g., Halualani, Chitgopekar, Morrison, & Dodge, 2004; Klak & Martin, 2003; Nesdale & Todd, 2000; also Ward, 2001). Other research focuses on the nature of intercultural friendships as the result of mobility schemes (Taaajamo, 2003, 2006; Ward, 2001), or the precursors for, barriers to, problems with, outcome of, or other aspect of social interaction (e.g., Arasaratnam, 2004; Dunstan, 2003; Gudykunst & Shapiro, 1996; Hubbert, Gudykunst, & Guerrero; Morgan & Arasaratnam, 2003; Otten, 2003; Sorrells, 1998). These studies were primarily undertaken in the US, Australia, or Europe, although in some cases the international students were from another continent.

On Finnish campuses, a variety of extracurricular activities exist in English (e.g., the Buddy Project, a host family program, parties and, at JYU, Café Lingua, which is a game night offered in multiple languages), designed to bring native and foreign students together for social interaction. However, most of these are structured as voluntary activities outside any systematic means to develop internationalization skill and are rather small in scope. While these would quite be beneficial in an IaH environment, there is no indication that these are used regularly to derive concrete internationalizing benefit for either domestic or foreign students.

In summary, despite the benefit potential offered by cross-border and domestic internationalization activities and programs, immense progress is yet needed to make internationalization—and particularly IaH—commonplace on HE campuses worldwide. But there are positive signs for the future. First, internationalization is slowly beginning to find a central place in the policy documents (mission statements and strategic plans) and budgets in many HEIs

around the world (de Wit, 2002), thus reaching into the spheres of action in these institutions. Moreover, internationalization activities are moving beyond simple mobility programs and into other strategies that affect the quality and relevance of teaching and learning, research, and social service in a more interconnected world and HEI experience (de Wit, 2002; Seddoh, 2002, van de Wende, 2001b). It must be remembered, however, that there is great diversity regionally and nationally in this matter among and within HE systems and within individual institutions (see, e.g., Knight, 2003, 2006; Siaya & Hayward, 2003, Theiler, 2005).

In the internationalization visions and practices of several Finnish universities, and I suspect this is true for many more HEIs around the world, the term *internationalization at home* is used, but this concept is defined primarily as the presence of foreign students and faculty on campus or in the classroom, a foreign language for instruction, or the option to take courses related to other cultures or intercultural communication. In actual practice, the activity does not reflect or explain how those elements of the campus environment make a concrete impact on the international/intercultural development of the non-mobile Finnish students. No Finnish institution, and only a few in the literature (e.g., de Jong & Teekens, 2003; Nesdale & Todd, 2000; Nilsson, 2003; Paige, 2003a), addressed the fact that simple contact is not enough—for either the at-home Finns or the incoming students. However, a couple of Finnish institutions did recognize the role of the teacher in a multicultural classroom, and thus were advocating pedagogical preparation for teaching staff in an internationalized campus environment; promoting the recruitment of foreign faculty as a means to introduce alternative learning approaches and international concepts; debriefing returning mobile students, although there is no indication if or how that process will benefit at-home peers; or emphasizing communication and intercultural aspects as integral elements of a high quality HE degree program. So, despite these small glimmers of IaH practices, no university in Finland is currently fully implementing an IaH program or even envisioning such a comprehensive process aimed at their non-mobile students.

#### **2.4 Internationalization at the University of Jyväskylä**

This study was placed within an internationalization context, in particular IaH, because, at the time this research was initiated, JyU was promoting a concept



known as the “international campus.” A clear definition of what such a vision would have involved had not been articulated but whatever was to finally come into fruition would have implications for intercultural learning in extracurricular experiences of the students.

It is hard to characterize JyU’s internationalization strategy clearly. Certainly the rhetoric on the website and official public documents tout the vision about becoming an internationally competitive university, about the number of exchange and foreign degree students on campus each year and those who go abroad, the number of English-language master’s programs or courses, and the expanding collaborative partnerships with peer institutions in other parts of the world. Overall, the rhetoric reflects what any number of universities in Western European countries are doing, and certainly nearly all Finnish HEIs.

Three rector-appointed committees have tackled various elements of the internationalization planning in the last 5 years. In 2003, the first committee was commissioned to define the concept of an international campus, as well as measures and indicators for achieving such a concept, and to propose recommendations of actions. Their work resulted in a document titled *Kansainvälinen kampus: Työryhmän raportti*, marraskuu 2003 (JyU, 2003), for which there was an official translation in English. The committee succeeded in its work by proposing a framework to address internationalization issues for JyU’s three areas of focus—education, research, and regional interaction—within an international atmosphere—or ethos, in their terms—that would strive to integrate international staff and students into the university community. In their planning, the committee understood the essential need to prepare a flexible action plan because the dynamic nature of international collaboration, networking and cooperation varies significantly among the departments and institutes within the university. Their proposal also recognized that departments and institutes were at differing levels of preparedness and interest in internationalizing, and thus recommended three separate levels of internationalization. Such a vision would establish a minimum level of international activity for all departments, but would provide a route for growth. Finally, the report established indicators of internationalization within four categories (degree and volume of international operations and networking, quality of international activity and its level of integration within the unit’s operations, international expertise of staff, and

evaluation and development of international operations) for each of the three university focus areas, with accompanying assessment criteria.

Among the educational indicators of internationalization significant for this study are the inclusion of international studies/internationalization studies and work practice and/or activities in all students' personal learning plans (HOPS) and/or within the degree programs; the inclusion of communication and interaction skills required for a globalized work life within the unit's teaching program; the use of international students and staff as resources for the development of the unit, and the integration of the same in unit operations; "innovative inclusion" of international research and societal function in the unit's instruction; and several items related to the staff's readiness and abilities in foreign-language instruction and international competence (JyU, 2003). The report also details specific action recommendations in support of the above indicators and the promotion of internationalization-at-home.

While this visionary document laid out a route for JyU to implement many of the essential tasks of IaH, its reception by the faculties and departments was mixed. According to Sakari Liimatainen, JyU's Director of Planning, and Tuija Koponen, Head of the International Office (interview, December 20, 2006), the primary concerns of some faculties and departments involved the number of activities proposed and that meeting these activities would require additional funds that the units did not have. One faculty was particularly harsh in its criticism because it sees no value in most internationalization activities other than research cooperation and dislikes processes that involve central administration in the faculty's affairs. The expense and cumbersome implementation of activities also was noted in the university management's review of the proposal (Ibid.). As a result, the document was not sent to the university senate for consideration.

In 2004, a second rector-appointed group was directed to streamline the concrete indicators so that they did not require additional funds but could be used by the administration management the annual budget negotiations with the faculties. This committee's final report—*Kansainvälinen Kampus: Toiminta-ajatus, toimenpideohjelma ja kansainvälistymisen indikaattorit* (JyU, 2005)—was submitted to the rector in April 2005. I have seen an unofficial translation.

This report was considerably less encompassing, but more practical in nature in recognizing the challenges and requirements the university as a whole, and the

departments individually, face in a global educational environment. It underscores the reality that internationalization is an inseparable, essential, and natural element of the university's research, education, societal service function, and administrative support, and that multiculturalism on campus is enriching.

This committee reaffirmed the need of and concepts for internationalization competencies for personnel and student learning plans, the role of international networking and partnerships, and increased internationalization of degree programs and classes. It also fulfilled its task in narrowing the recommended activity level for the departments and institutes. While providing further rationales for an international outlook integrated into all levels of the university's work, the only seemingly cost-inducing proposal that remained from the original proposal was that each department have an international study coordinator and an international affairs appointee, the latter of whom was to be involved in unit decision making (JyU, 2005b).

Unfortunately, the second plan was also unfavorably received and was not forwarded to departments and faculties, nor to the university senate, although several of the indicators were used as part of the budget negotiation process anyway (Interview with Liimatainen and Koponen, December 20, 2006). In 2007, another work group was appointed to update the internationalization program of the university, but nothing yet has been proposed (Personal correspondence with chairman Matti Leino, June 9, 2008).

Therefore, in the past 5 years, JyU has been able to articulate an internationalization vision but unable to implement comprehensive internationalization strategies on multiple levels or for at-home students. Moreover, the term *international campus* has been eliminated from the university's updated English-language Web pages (cf. JyU, 2006b; [www.jyu.fi](http://www.jyu.fi)). Nevertheless, the institution, through the administration and several faculties, has moved ahead in trying to establish minimal standards to raise its international profile and fulfill its goals of being internationally competitive and maintaining quality education and research programs, as outlined in its mission statement (JyU, 2007e), and the JyU's current budget and activity plan (interview with Tuija Koponen, December 7, 2007).

Like other Finnish universities, JyU must meet the MoE directives as part of its funding negotiations. These include targets for mobility, the number of

degree programs in English, expanded use of ICTs for international programs, and developing international partnerships and networks, especially in specific regions of the world (see MoE, 2004). JyU is on par with Finnish universities.

Despite not having an official plan of indicators by which to measure international progress, JyU is doing well in several areas. For example, during the 2005-2006 academic year, JyU hosted more than 350 exchange students from more than 70 universities (JyU, 2006a), and it is actively promoting increased student mobility, particularly in its traditionally under-represented fields (2007d). That same year, 291 foreign degree students were enrolled in either bachelor's or master's programs, and another 120 were doctoral students (JyU, 2007a). The aim is to enroll 400 international degree students by 2010 (JyU, 2007e). Further, JyU has established bilateral university-level agreements with 46 international partner institutions (Ibid.); has agreements that support educational cooperation with HEIs in Africa, the Balkans, and North America, with new contacts initiated in India; and actively participates in various international exchange programs (2007b) that open an exchange network to more than 250 universities worldwide (Mukkala et al., 2006). Mobility is strongly encouraged for its faculty and, by 2010, the level of outbound teachers is expected to be more than 130 teachers (JyU, 2007e). JyU was the first Finnish university to decide to fill professorships principally through an international recruitment process (JYU, 2007a).

JyU (2007a) offers 15 international master's programs in English, 12 of which have been recognized by the MoE, the highest number of such programs offered by any university in Finland. In addition, a variety of English-language minors are available (JYU, 2007b). Meanwhile, JyU is increasing its emphasis on the use of ICTs and virtual learning (Mukkala et al., 2006), which allows for access to intercultural communication courses (2007d). In 2007, the university senate approved the development of joint doctoral and master's degrees with international partners (JyU, 2007f, 2007g), and the university will launch an Erasmus internship mobility program for fields that currently include a practical training component within their curricula (2007d).

JyU's mission (2007e) continues to state that its vision is to offer high quality international degree programs in English or other foreign languages as a means to recruit international students, to make multicultural dialog and collaboration a natural part of studying, and to provide opportunity for non-mobile students to

internationalize at home. Unfortunately, like the other Finnish universities, JyU seems to assume that the simple presence of international students makes learning multicultural and that domestic students will automatically internationalize. In no documents to which I have had access does JyU discuss providing its current teachers with pedagogical training to manage diversity in the classroom and, more important, draw on the very nature of difference in such a group to develop multicultural awareness, build international and intercultural knowledge, and facilitate IC growth—for either domestic or foreign students.

Summarizing, JyU is achieving a level of internationalization through the work of some of its faculties and leadership vision, although the institutional vision for internationalization has not resulted in a systematic or comprehensive internationalization strategy and related activities. Further, despite the verbiage in its official documents, the concepts of an international campus or IaH do not appear to be fully formed in that specific activities or courses, teacher training, and/or virtual learning environments are not designed or implemented expressly for the internationalization/intercultural development of the non-mobile domestic students. This is particularly unfortunate because of the many strengths this university has over some of its peer HEIs. For example, JyU has a UNESCO Chair in Intercultural Education, master's and doctoral programs in intercultural communication, a sizeable teacher education program that includes multicultural studies, and two interdisciplinary institutes that offer considerable benefit: the Institute for Educational Research and the Agora Center, which has research labs focusing on ICT and/or use of digital technologies for enhancing learning. Drawing on the expertise in each of these areas could provide a significant foundation to conceive and implement a multi-faceted IaH program.

Although it is possible—maybe even probable—that some informal programs aimed at at-home students are taking place, the overall level of activity is neither deep nor wide, and most likely not much different than a large number of HEIs in developed countries. At the administrative (and work group) level, the vision is defined; the application is lagging. As a result, hundreds of at-home JyU students graduate with few measurable IC skills, little concrete and field-specific international or IC knowledge, and lacking the tangible preparation they need to excel in a global economy and multicultural environment.



### **3 INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCY**

The purpose of internationalizing a campus is for students and personnel to benefit from interacting with dissimilar others within the learning environment. The reason why students participate in activities such as the Buddy Project (BP) is to meet and perhaps become friends with peers from different countries, and thus learn about different ways of living. One particular element that makes these “others” different is their culture. Moreover, the expectation is that the students will interact well with those of dissimilar cultures. The level of successful interaction reflects one’s competency. As with most endeavors, knowledge, learning and experience improve one’s competency in the given task. This chapter explores the many facets of the complex concept of intercultural (IC) competency.

One cannot speak about intercultural competency without understanding the concept of culture and the significant impact it makes on how individuals perceive, reason, and behave. To interact well with someone operation from a different worldview and communicative pattern, the individual must understand how culture affects not only the communication process, but also one’s own outlook on social interaction, life’s events, and the immediate environment and context, as well as within the world around. How individuals master the various elements of culture and cultural expression—their own and that of another—reflects the level of their intercultural competency.

The first subsection explores the various aspects of culture and intercultural interaction. Next, I address the multifaceted and ambiguous concept of competency and delve into the various definitions and components of, roadblocks to, and assessment and ethical ramifications of the competency construct. I end the chapter with an explanation of various theories regarding intercultural competency or its components, and how they relate to the analysis of the data in this paper.

#### **3.1 The Cultural Aspect of Intercultural Competency**

If someone is to be competent, they need to be competent in something. It is this “something” that differentiates the multitude of competent behaviors humans exhibit in various aspects of their lives. And invariably, this something involves both the broad and intimate understandings of some phenomenon or activity. In the case of intercultural competency, the individual must have a broad and intimate understanding of culture, including what it is, why it is,

what it does, how it is learned and expressed, and barriers to this understanding or application. Yet there is more to the word *intercultural* than just culture. An interculturally competent individual must master the knowledge of culture and the experiences of its expression by and between people of various cultures. This subsection looks at these two issues more closely.

### **3.1.1 Culture defined**

The concept of culture has been addressed in the scientific vernacular only since the late 1800s, and known more broadly only in the past five or so decades (E. T. Hall, 1998). Yet despite research into the many facets of culture throughout the 20th century, no single definition of the concept has been concretized, perhaps because several scientific disciplines, such as anthropology, psychology, history, communication, linguistics, and education, investigate the concept of culture through their own theoretical lenses (Lustig & Koester, 1996; Salo-Lee, 2003). Martin and Nakayama (1997) believe that any one definition of culture would be too restrictive.

Culture can be conceived in two ways. *Objective culture* includes the institutions of life, such as social, economic, political, educational, and linguistic systems, as well as artifacts of those institutions, such as music, art, literature, theatre, and food. *Subjective culture*, however, is more elusive (Bennett, 1998a) and “elastic,” in that it takes on shades of meaning, depending upon one’s perspective (Ting-Toomey, 1999: 9). It is also dynamic in the sense that new elements of a culture are incorporated over time, and other elements lose importance, and that the environment influences how and when a culture changes (Bourne, 1998; Porter & Samovar, 1997). Subjective culture refers to the “attributes of the cognitive structures of groups of people” (Triandis, 1977: 3) and the psychological features that define a group of people, reflecting the group’s everyday thinking, dispositions, and behavior (Bennett, 1998a: 3). Moreover, objective and subjective cultures interact: People in a culture are socialized to behave and perceive the environment in a certain way by the institutions there, which in turn perpetuates the institutions (Ibid.). When addressing intercultural competency, subject culture is at the core.

Thus, culture is an all-encompassing patterned, unquestioned way of thinking, feeling, reacting, perceiving, behaving, and living within a group



(Bennett, 1998a; Ericsson, 2000; Hecht, Andersen, & Ribeau, 1989; Hofstede, 2001; Porter & Samovar, 1997) that affects the shared worldview, customs, kinship system, and social organization of a group of people (Scollon & Scollon, 1995). As a result, culture differentiates and sets the boundaries between groups of people (Bennett, 1998a; E. T. Hall, 1998; Porter & Samovar, 1997; Scollon & Scollon, 1995). As social inventions that meet human needs and define the meaning of life for a particular group, cultures possess their own internal logic and coherence, and possess their own validity (Paige, 1993b).

The beliefs, attitudes, values, norms, traditions, and skills of a culture are shared by most, but not necessarily all, members of a particular group (Lustig & Koester, 1996; Ting-Toomey & Chung, 1999). However, these patterns are, for the most part, accepted and expected by members of the group, and guide interpersonal relationships (Singer, 1998; Ting-Toomey & Chung, 1999).

Many of the cultural patterns are expressed through symbols, such as verbal and nonverbal linguistic codes, icons, and signs (Hecht et al., 1989; Lustig & Koester, 1996; Singer, 1998); therefore culture has both material (tangible) and symbolic (abstract) manifestations (Hecht et al., 1989; Ting-Toomey, 1999). The stability of these patterns is reinforced by social interaction (Lustig & Koester, 1996). The shared perceptions and means of organizing the world allow members of the group to better explain events of the environment in which they live and the behaviors of people within that environment (Ting-Toomey & Chung, 1999), thus allowing people to predict the outcomes of and respond better to events and behaviors around them (Porter & Samovar, 1997). This provides for the group's internal cohesion and helps clarify membership (Scollon & Scollon, 1995).

Culture is not innate; it must be learned (M. Bennett, 1998a; Porter & Samovar, 1997). Culture and its expressions are taught and reinforced interpersonally and intergenerationally (Hecht et al., 1989), primarily through one's socialization (Y. Y. Kim, 2001), and provides the individual with the skills and knowledge needed for his/her psychosocial survival and acceptance within a particular group (Adler, 1998). Culture is ubiquitous, pervasive, multidimensional (Porter & Samovar, 1997), and encompasses all of a society's institutions, social organizations, history, knowledge, and so on (Hecht et al., 1989).

Humans need predictability and minimal ambiguity in order to survive both physically and psychologically (Barnlund, 1998) in a very complex, changing, and

insecure world. In his seminal work of 1954, *The Nature of Prejudice*, Gordon W. Allport wrote, “Someone has defined culture as that which gives ready-made answers to the problems of life” (p. 285). Therefore, because a culture makes it possible for its members to make sense of the complexity around them and they have been socialized to know what is appropriate behavior to the common, and many of the novel, situations, there is no need for them to expend energy determining the meaning of most events or how to respond to them (Porter & Samovar, 1997). Although all humans share a similar biology that takes place within the same rhythms of life (e.g., birth, aging, parenting, death), and share the same physiological functions and needs (e.g., food, sex, affection), “the ultimate interpretation of human biology is a cultural phenomenon: that is, the meanings of human biological patterns are culturally derived” (Adler, 1998: 231).

Because culture is learned through the very process of living, growing and socializing, it becomes part and parcel of how one views the world, an intangible element that resides within one’s mind (Hofstede, 2001; Lustig & Koester, 1996; Porter & Samovar, 1997). It also affects practically all that one perceives and how one behaves. Culture, therefore, is reflected in many taken-for-granted practices (E. T. Hall, 1976; Scollon & Scollon, 1995), and becomes “often unarticulated and sometimes unarticulable” (Singer, 1998: 197).

Cultures (and their members) are ethnocentric in that every group views its way of life as “normal,” “cultured,” or “chosen” and all other cultures are odd or uncivilized (Allport, 1954; Barnlund, 1998; Ericsson, 2000; Porter & Samovar, 1997). Thus, culture influences its members’ expectations, perceptions, and judgments of other people, other ways of life, and the happenings of the world. Culture is a selective filter—influencing what its members value as important or unimportant—and thus limits what choices from a multitude of options a member of that group can take in expressing her/himself (E. T. Hall, 1976; Hecht et al., 1989; M.-S. Kim, 1993; Porter & Samovar, 1997).

In summary, culture is essential to human survival by providing a series of behavioral patterns, values, beliefs, and shared symbols that allow members of a particular group function with predictability and with decreased anxiety, thus allowing group members to invest that time in other essential pursuits. While the physical environment around the cultural group influences how the group and its members respond, once the pattern of responses has been formed into a culture,

the individuals within the group reinforce and perpetuate these patterns until the culture itself has characteristics that make it distinct from other cultures (Leong & Ward, 2006). However, culture is not something “out there,” but rather exists within conscious and unconscious perceptions of each member of the community (Dressler, 2002). Most cultures share various aspects of patterned behavior and thought, but research has found that no two cultures share the exact same patterns (Gudykunst & Ting-Toomey, 1996; Hofstede, 2001; Lustig & Koester, 1996). These patterns are known as dimensions of cultural variability. In order to be interculturally competent, an individual must know not only what culture is in the theoretical sense, but also in the practical and lived sense. The dimensions of cultural variability facilitate that understanding.

### **3.1.2 Dimensions of cultural variability**

Dimensions of cultural variability reflect continua of values and behaviors reflected in groups (Kluckhohn & Strodtbeck, 1961/1976; Ting-Toomey & Chung, 1999). Some values and behaviors are universal (such a mother’s attentiveness toward her infant; Lustig & Koester, 1996), but there is no universal human culture (Kluckhohn & Strodtbeck, 1961/1976). Rather, national cultures in general, and ethnic cultures in particular, are a unique combination of the patterns, perspectives, and norms that peoples use to solve the problems of life.

Because each dimension is expressed differently in each culture, the totality of these continua of dimensions allows researchers to make broad predictions of cultural similarity and difference (Gudykunst & Matsumoto, 1996; Gudykunst & Ting-Toomey, 1996). Not only do ethnic groups differ in the social meanings embodied in their cultural dimensions, but they also attach varying degrees of importance, emotion, and stability to them (Giles & Franklyn-Stokes, 1989).

The values held by the culture undergird the various culture-specific behaviors (both verbal and nonverbal) and attitudes expressed by the majority of members of the culture, as well affect the perception of the members (what is noticed or overlooked) in addressing the various stimuli in the environment (Ericsson, 2000; Gao, 1999; E. T. Hall, 1976). It becomes obvious, then, based on this information, that the various dimensions of cultural variability will impact how individuals within the culture communicate (Gudykunst &

Matsumoto, 1996; Lustig & Koester, 1996), by affecting with whom, how, and what is communicated (Lloyd & Härtel, 2003).

However, it must be remembered that many intangible aspects of the group's collective "mental programming"—beliefs, values, and so on—can only be observed, heard, or experienced indirectly; only the *consequences* of these patterns are observable or inferred (Hofstede, 2001; Lustig & Koester, 1996). Hofstede calls these inferences *constructs*, and emphasizes they do not exist objectively, but rather reflect some degree of the perceptions, values, and cultural constraints of the researcher (or observer); in other words, the constructs are subjective. Moreover, how each dimension plays out in a culture reflects an interrelatedness among the dimensions, so variables need to be understood within the context of the entire system that guides the lives of that group's members (Lustig and Koester, 1996); it is an aggregate of the members' individual patterns. Since each dimension is a continuum, the full extent of that continuum can be found in every culture (Allport, 1954; Bennett, 1998a; Hofstede, 2001; Lustig & Koester, 1996; Scollon & Scollon, 1995; Stewart, Danielian, & Foster, 1998; Ting-Toomey & Chung, 1999). This is particularly true for national cultural patterns, since ethnic minorities may differ considerably on some of the dimensions as compared to the majority (Adler, 1998). Further, direct comparisons of cultural variability can be problematic because the feature of one culture compared to a second culture might look entirely different when compared to a third culture (Lustig & Koester, 1996).

The easiest dimensions to describe are the observable behavior, which include all aspects of the communicative sphere (encompassing all verbal, nonverbal, written, tangible, or behavioral expressions). More difficult to identify, but no less essential, are the internal dimensions, often forming the motivation for the external dimensions. Internal dimensions include the beliefs, values, assumptions, expectations, and worldview that the culture has developed to address various facets of life, and which become visible only through action. Some dimensions have both internal and external aspects.

The components of cultural variability are diverse, reflecting researchers' diversity of perspectives. While the terminology used by the researchers is often quite different, there exists some overlap in many of the constructs presented by researchers. Table 3.1 provides generalities on some of these dimensions; Appendix B provides these dimensions in greater detail.

**Table 3.1** Common Dimensions of Cultural Variability.

Cultural Dimension Category	Source
<p><b>Innate Character of Human Nature</b></p> <p>Reflects how members of the culture view the innate character of humans (evil, evil-and-good, good) and whether these characteristics are mutable.</p>	<p>Kluckhohn &amp; Strodtbeck, 1961/1976</p>
<p><b>Humans versus Nature</b></p> <p>Reflects how members of cultures view humankind's relationship with the natural environment and their social environment. Addresses issues of mastery of or subjugation to nature; the relationship between humans, nature, and the supernatural; and attitudes toward fate or control of events.</p>	<p>Kluckhohn &amp; Strodtbeck, 1961/1976; Schwartz, 2004, 2007; Trompenaars &amp; Hampden-Turner, n.d.</p>
<p><b>Temporal Orientation</b></p> <p>Reflects how members of a culture conceive time, how time is used in daily activities, how time is valued, and the emphasis members put on the past, the present, and the future.</p>	<p>Kluckhohn &amp; Strodtbeck, 1961/1976; E. T. Hall, 1998; Trompenaars &amp; Hampden-Turner, n.d.</p>
<p><b>Mode of Human Activity</b></p> <p>Reflects how a person is valued or given status within a culture (through accomplishment or ascriptive role), how members of cultures deal with risk and uncertainty, how members view the timing of rewards for activity, and how elements within the environment and their relationships are viewed.</p>	<p>Kluckhohn &amp; Strodtbeck, 1961/1976; Hofstede, 2001; Trompenaars &amp; Hampden-Turner, n.d.; Ting-Toomey, 1999; Bond (1987, cited in Lustig &amp; Koester, 1996: 141)</p>
<p><b>Mode of Human Relationships</b></p> <p>Reflects the wide variety of ways peoples might interact with others in their society. The most common construct discussed involves the relationship of the individual to the group, whether the individual is paramount or the group is. Other modes of interaction involve issues regarding power and wealth distribution within the society and attitudes toward this, gender roles and behaviors, and how rules are applied by members within the society. It also involves the importance placed on the preservation of one's own or another's "face."</p>	<p>Hofstede, 2001; Schwartz, 2004, 2007; Bond (1987, cited in Lustig &amp; Koester, 1996: 141); Trompenaars &amp; Hampden-Turner, n.d.; Ting-Toomey, 1999</p>
<p><b>Communicative/Emotional Expressiveness</b></p> <p>Reflects the effect of context on meaning and presentation of messages within interaction; the expression of gentleness, compassion, and courtesy toward others; the acceptability of emotional displays by members of the culture; and the level of restraint and moderation exhibited in daily activities and communicative events.</p>	<p>Hall, 1998; Bond (1987, cited in Lustig &amp; Koester, 1996: 141); Trompenaars &amp; Hampden-Turner, n.d.</p>

One could say that all of the external expressions of cultural variability are in fact cultural communication patterns since everything that a person does—intentionally or not—can communicate (Porter & Samovar, 1997). As a result, nearly all of the external expressions of cultural variability can fall (although not always neatly) into one of four categories: verbal (including the use of words in written texts), paralingual, nonverbal (including the use of silence), and relational. How an individual perceives and responds to each of these categories has significant implication on his/her competency in interaction.

The most obvious communication pattern is language. Yet the verbal expression of culture extends far beyond a group's use of linguistic symbols and sounds, to include how that language is used, by whom, and in what situation. It might also involve how that language relates to other languages within that environment. As the Communication/Emotional Expressiveness category in Table 3.1 indicates, how a message is composed—what is said and how, and what is not said—results in great variations in verbal communication styles (see Gudykunst & Ting-Toomey, 1988).

Paralanguage is the nonphonemic aspects of the language. Through the use of paralanguage—the tone of voice, pitch, speed, pauses, and so forth—the meaning of the words can be shaded and whole communicative episodes can be influenced (Y. Y. Kim, 2001; Ting-Toomey, 1999; Passaseo & Calleja, 1999). This type of communication can be either intentional or unintentional.

Language is also affected by the nonverbal communication, which can be consciously or unconsciously created. In fact, E. T. Hall (1998: 53) states that “from 80 to 90 percent of the information we receive is not only communicated nonverbally but occurs outside our awareness.” These nonverbal communicative elements include body movement (kinesics; Andersen 1999a, 1999b; Lustig & Koester, 1996) and facial expression (Andersen, 1999b), eye contact (oculesics; Andersen, 1999b; Lustig & Koester, 1996), and touch (haptics; Andersen, 1999; Lustig & Koester, 1996; Ting-Toomey, 1999). Other culturally-bound elements of life that communicate include body shape (Andersen, 1999b), the interpersonal use of space (proxemics; Andersen, 1999b; E. T. Hall, 1998; Lustig & Koester, 1996; Ting-Toomey, 1999), how people orient themselves or place items within a space (Porter & Samovar, 1997); how information is organized (Jandt, 1995), and even accepted sleep patterns (Lustig & Koester, 1996). So every movement—or lack of movement—can be interpreted by others through their own lens of behavioral acceptability and propriety based on the dimensions of our own cultural variability (Barna, 1998; Lustig & Koester, 1996).

In regard to the relational aspect of communication, Triandis et al. (1972: 264) identifies four social relationships that they indicate are culture-common, and perhaps pancultural. These relationship types reflect the array of socially acceptable manners in which individuals act toward others, both positive and negative. Gudykunst & Ting-Toomey (1996: 11–12) discuss Triandis et al.'s

dimensions of social relationships, but offer slightly different interpretations. Nevertheless, these scholars agree that what is permissible or discouraged in communicative situations is influenced strongly by the nature of the relationship between the interactants and reflects cultural expectations. The point in understanding the existence of these cultural variations, both internal and external, own and other's, is that these dimensions and expressions represent what members of a culture expect from one another. As a result, the various elements of one's culture serve as the lens through which individuals view the values, attitudes, and behaviors of people from other cultures. By extension, these elements can affect one's competency and one's perception of someone else's competency.

Moreover, most people are quite unaware of the nature of their own cultural expression, comprising the vast array of values, assumptions, behaviors, communication styles, expectations, and so on (Martin & Nakayama, 1997), until they encounter a cultural expression that is different. This reality prompted E. T. Hall (1998: 59) to observe that culture hides more than it reveals, and what it hides, it hides most effectively from the culture's members.

Some theorists emphasize that individuals do not "have" cultures; groups do. The patterns of values, attitudes, and behaviors that individuals exhibit compose one's personality (Bennett, 1998a; Hofstede, 2001). Because a culture is the aggregate of the unique and interacting characteristics, views, and norms of the individuals within a group in response to their environment, a smaller unit of measurement for the formation of these values and behaviors must exist. Hofstede (2001: 10) explains: "Culture determines the uniqueness of a human group in the same way personality determines the uniqueness of an individual."

Adler (1998) states that the interaction between culture and personality finds expression in a person's identity. While each person has her/his own temperament, preferences, perspectives on events and others, and values, the culture in which he/she lives imprints on her/him the pattern of accepted and expected behaviors by members of that culture. As one goes through life, and identifies with subgroups within the larger culture, the person develops multiple identities ("selves") that become salient to the individual and to others at different times, depending on the social context, thereby affecting one's perceptions and behaviors (Collier, 1989; Gudykunst & Gumbus, 1989; Gudykunst & Matsumoto, 1996; Martin & Nakayama, 1997). Identities such as

one's gender, ethnic identity, religious affiliation, and profession also serve as the lenses through which individuals view the world and those around them.

### **3.1.3 Enculturation and acculturation**

Culture's role is to organize and maintain patterns of thought and behavior that make interaction among members of the group easier and more predictable. In order for this process to be successful, members of the cultural community must abide by the norms and patterns, and introduce new members to the collective perspectives and expectations. This learning of the culture is ubiquitous and complex, and the influences of this cultural learning take place as soon as the new member enters the collective. As a result, children, from the moment of birth, are formed and rewarded for abiding by the patterns of acceptable behavior and outlook (Y. Y. Kim, 2001). This process is commonly known as *enculturation*, which "programs" a child into the group psyche, and thus a recognizable member of the larger community (Ibid.: 47).

Communication—both verbal and nonverbal—is the tool for fostering the enculturation/acculturation process, as it is for all human learning (Ibid.). Culture, adopted unconsciously, becomes so ingrained into the mind and personality of the individual that it normally only becomes conscious to the person when something or someone within the cultural environment acts differently from the expected norms. As a result of experiencing this difference, the individual is changed—even if in something a minor as simply noticing the difference. *Acculturation* is the process, then, of dealing with the phenomena that occur when people of different cultural mindsets meet each other (and, in ways great and small, changing as a result). The process of acculturation can take place on a group-wide basis as well as a personal basis (Ibid.).

Y. Y. Kim (2001) states that no immigrant or sojourner can escape the adaptation process at some level if he/she remains in and functions within the larger host culture. The flip side of that is that the newcomer cannot fully assimilate into the new culture, no matter how long or hard he/she tries, although some individuals are able to manage quite sufficiently, effectively, and happily in more than one culture. The adaptation process is further affected by the host culture, which plays an important supporting (or, in some cases, unsupportive) role in this process. While Kim addresses the role of the host



environment on the cultural level in terms of host receptivity (the natives' openness toward and willingness to accommodate strangers, and to allow them to participate socially) and host conformity pressure (the degree to which the natives exert—consciously or unconsciously—pressure on the stranger to cease his/her home culture patterns and adopt the host culture patterns), very little research exists on the role of individual members of the host culture and their processes of adaptation in meeting newcomers of different cultural patterns. This represents a considerable gap in the competency development literature.

### **3.1.4 Ethnocentrism and stereotyping**

Since culture operates largely unconsciously, the “rightness” of the group's responses is anchored in its members psyche intellectually, emotionally, and behaviorally; groups are conditioned to view the world, and reality, from their own unique perspective; and there is no reason to doubt the accuracy of this assumption (Barnlund, 1998; Lustig & Koester, 1996; Singer, 1998). This involves not only conceptual issues, but also the processing of the sensory data, moral judgment, and the categorization of the stimuli that create events, thoughts, ideas, and relationships. The word to describe this self-serving, self-focused view of one's culture and the world is *ethnocentrism*.

Because each person is formed within some cultural system—and people cannot separate themselves from these cultural influences (Adler, 1998)—everyone is, to varying degrees, ethnocentric (Ericsson, 2000; Mestenhauser, 2000; Ting-Toomey, 1999). However, ethnocentrism, when combined with the natural tendencies to place experiences and perceptions into broad categories (Allport, 1954) and to prefer what is typical to one's own experiences, reduces a person's willingness or ability to understand messages from disparate cultures, which in turn highlights or exaggerates differences (Lustig & Koester, 1996).

Allport (1954) emphasizes that the human mind must use categories or generalizations in order to think; this essential process provides an orderly system to manage the thousands of bits of stimuli in daily life. Furthermore, new experiences must be organized into old categories: A person cannot possibly assess each object, event, or experience uniquely. Once these categories are formed, they form the basis for normal prejudgment of future events. Reliance on categories helps people make quicker decisions about how to respond to events,

people, and experiences. But this tendency for perception organization can also lead to stereotyping, which are generalizations about individuals derived from often limited information about a group or person (Gudykunst, Ting-Toomey, Hall, & Schmidt, 1989; Vassiliou, Triandis, Vassiliou, & McGuire, 1972).

Stereotypes arise when one perceives or behaves toward another as if all the characteristics of the other's identity group apply to this individual (Bennett, 1998a), making no allowances for what characteristics are uniquely the individual's, or for that person's variations in behavior from situation to situation or from time to time within a similar situation (Stewart et al., 1998). The general tendency of humans to categorize experiences relates directly to social interaction. As a result, social categorization is a major cognitive tool that individuals use to define themselves, their role in the world around them, and others in that world (Gudykunst et al., 1989). Once these categories are established, they create filters and biases in the lenses people use to view others, with a predisposition toward perceiving things that confirm their beliefs, values, and expectations about the social world, particularly related to whether the observed individual is a member of one's own or another group (Gudykunst & Gumbs, 1989; Gudykunst & Kim, 1984; Gudykunst et al., 1989). Moreover, stereotypes can provide a false sense of understanding of the other interlocutor during interaction, including self-fulfilling prophecies about the other (Bennett, 1998a; Gudykunst et al., 1989), increasing the chance of a less-than-competent outcome.

Even though people cannot keep themselves from creating categories—sometimes broad and inappropriate categories—about others, they can temper the appeal of stereotypes. While all possible beliefs exist in all cultures (reflected in individuals) at all times, each culture (the collective) has a preference for a particular belief (or beliefs) over others. In regard to intercultural competency, an awareness of cultural-level preferences via the dimensions of cultural variability can be helpful in selecting one's behaviors during interaction with a dissimilar other, but one must remember that these group-level dimensions will not necessarily apply at the individual level. Therefore, cultural generalizations can be used tentatively as “working hypotheses” that are tested in every interaction with a dissimilar other (Bennett, 1998a). In matters of research and analysis, as well as interpersonal interaction, it is important to remember that cultures do not talk to each other, individuals do (E. Hoffman, 1999; Spitzberg, 1997).

### 3.1.5 Communication and culture

Intercultural competency most usually is exhibited within an interaction, that is, in some form of communication. Additionally, communication is the method by which members of a culture reinforce and perpetuate cultural patterns of thought and action (Y. Y. Kim, 2001) and it is the glue that binds the many facets of the cultural existence (Ting-Toomey, 1999). So an understanding of the role of communication in culture and cultures' influences on communication is essential for interculturally competent behavior.

Some ICC researchers believe that culture can be equated with communication, and in fact are inseparable (e.g., Chen & Starosta, 1996; Fantini, 2000; E. T. Hall, 1998; Hecht, et al., 1989). But Ting-Toomey (1999) disagrees, noting that even though culture and communication are reciprocally influential (see also Gudykunst & Ting-Toomey, 1996; Martin & Nakayama, 1997), they are distinct concepts. To understand the complexity of the interplay between culture and communication, they must be treated separately, with an effort to distinguish the unique characteristics in each concept.

Communication is built upon the human need to be connected with others (Porter & Samovar, 1997) and takes many forms. Porter and Samovar (1997: 2) underscore that communication comprises many forms of *behavior* that are interpreted by others, and it is to these behaviors that people respond. People act on (react to) their perceptions of what is happening around them, not on some objective external reality (Lustig & Koester, 1996; Martin & Nakayama, 1997).

Behaviors communicate when they become messages, and they become messages when two conditions are met: They are observed by someone and they elicit a response from that someone (Porter & Samovar, 1997: 9). Behavioral messages can be conscious or unconscious, intentional or unintentional, current or residual (Lustig & Koester, 1996; Porter & Samovar, 1997). In other words, virtually any behavior can be a message. And because it is impossible for people not to behave (Porter & Samovar, 1997), it is impossible not to communicate.

What any behavior communicates, however, depends on the people involved, as each brings to the situation a unique set of symbols, assumptions, perspectives, and cultural understandings by which to attribute meaning (Barnlund, 1998; Lustig & Koester, 1996), often extracting from the communication process whatever "fits" their own culturally biased view of reality (Barna, 1998). So events in life,

including communicative events, are devoid of meaning until someone attributes a meaning to them (Barnlund, 1998; Martin & Nakayama, 1997).

Because people, and therefore all communication/behaviors, do not operate in a vacuum, the continual effects of life's dynamics change how one behaves and how one interprets others' behaviors (Martin & Nakayama, 1997). The changing nature of people and contexts in communicating means that all message exchanges are unique. Therefore, communication cannot be perceived as a product, or an event—conceived as a point in time. Rather, it is a process and takes place within a continuum of other communication events (Lustig & Koester, 1996; Martin & Nakayama, 1997; Stier, 2003), and beyond the two interlocutors currently interacting. Communication also involves more than just speech and hearing, but indeed it uses all of the senses (Martin & Nakayama, 1997) to comprise the elements of the message and the context, and much of what is valued in these sensory perceptions are culturally-bound.

Furthermore, because the exchange of messages is done between people, it means that communication, in all its forms, is a social practice (Lustig & Koester, 1996; Martin & Nakayama, 1997; Ting-Toomey, 1999). Thus communication is guided by the social know-how of the individuals involved, which is steeped in the cultural values, norms, expectations, symbols, and so on, of a particular group of people. When the interlocutors represent different patterns of social (cultural) know-how, they experience intercultural communication.

### **3.1.6 Intercultural communication**

Intercultural communication (ICC) occurs whenever a message composed by someone of one culture is interpreted by someone of another culture (Porter & Samovar, 1997), thus requiring both the sender and the receiver to negotiate the meaning of the shared symbols within this (usually) interactive setting (Ting-Toomey, 1999). When such an exchange takes place, the individuals cannot (or rather should not) assume that enough similarity exists between them regarding values, behavioral expectations, or communicative expression—even if they are speaking the same language—to expect the communication process will be mutually successful (Bennett, 1998a; Lustig & Koester, 1996). The role of culture in an ICC exchange is more than just an element of the process; rather it is the lens through which each participant

views the exchange and even what one thinks about communicating interculturally (Martin & Nakayama, 1997). ICC does not automatically presume that the individuals involved are from dissimilar countries or ethnic groups. Singer (1998) emphasizes that the degree to which a communicative exchange is intercultural depends on how many identities (and therefore sets of symbolic interpretation) and experiences the individuals share, recognizing that dimensions of cultural variability are continua rather than dichotomies.

Overall, an intercultural interaction is similar in process, approach, and purpose as any parallel interaction within one's home culture (Gudykunst & Shapiro, 1996; see Porter & Samovar, 1997, for explanation of the communication process). The difference, of course, is the added complexity of another cultural perspective. This is by no means a minor element, as it can affect the pacing of the exchange; the expression of emotion; the role of talk and silence; the words chosen; how one communicates with one's body and within the contextual space; issues of honesty, self-disclosure, and intimacy; matters of how respect, status, and self-esteem are displayed and received; even the nature of the relationship. The list of elements of communication that are affected by culture is extensive; little can be assumed.

The language used in an ICC exchange also can cause difficulties. Giles and Franklyn-Stokes (1989) note that the characteristics of one interlocutor's language use can affect the other's evaluation of him/her as well as affect the attributions assessed regarding the intent of the original interlocutor. These authors further note that the nature and values inherently contained within intercultural settings can influence considerably the manner of communicating, as well as what the individuals feel is appropriate for their communicative intent, based on their perceptions of the social roles and relationship between the interlocutors. Knowledge about cultural difference, attentiveness to the context and nonverbal elements, the goal of the interaction, one's personality or temperament, and even one's current emotional state can affect the nature and outcome of an ICC exchange, and thus the perception of one's intercultural competency.

Few cultural universals exist; the degree of overlap within communicative codes (even intraculturally) is less than perfect (Barnlund, 1998). Spencer-Rodgers and McGovern (2002) list barriers that arise from the cultural differences among groups, resulting from aspects of cognition (e.g., fundamental differences in how

knowledge is perceived and processed, values, norms, etc.), affect (e.g., how one feels within the moment as well as the types and levels of emotional expression considered appropriate within various cultures), and patterns of behavior (e.g., language, customs, external expressions of cultural variability, communication styles, etc.). From these barriers, conflicts can arise, often quite unintentionally.

Barna (1998) posits six stumbling blocks to effective ICC. First, people naively assume that, because people everywhere face the same biological and similar social challenges of life, there probably is a large degree of similarity among peoples. This “people are people” perspective (p. 174) reflects the worldview of that particular person, who while is acting “naturally” with the other, is really acting out of ethnocentricity. But the reverse is equally problematic: If no commonalities are expected, then the person may be too intimidated to initiate an exchange or may become totally ineffective in communication.

The second stumbling block is language—not just proficiency in speaking but in understanding how the language is applied (Ibid.; see also Byram, 1997). Third is the misinterpretation of nonverbal cues, but Barna (1998) extends this to the wider nonverbal elements of cultural variability as well, such as how cultures view time and space and the subtle ways cultures communicate respect or formality. Preconceptions and stereotypes are the fourth stumbling block, not only because they are ethnocentric and normally incorrect, but also because they interfere with the reception and interpretation of communicative stimuli, thus blinding one to some of the elements in a communicative exchange. They sometimes can rationalize held prejudices. These realities of preconceptions lead to the fifth problem, which is the tendency to evaluate rather than observe. The standards by which a behavior is judged are drawn from one’s own cultural values of good/bad, right/wrong, appropriate/inappropriate, worthy/unworthy, and so on. Barna (1998) indicates that these evaluative tendencies are heightened in times of anxiety or fear. Finally, high anxiety, also known as stress, can build to levels that require some type of outlet, sometimes in the form of negativity, hostility, or withdrawal. This last stumbling block can also negatively impact all of the previous hindrances to effective ICC (Ibid).

As a result, ICC experiences are not always enjoyable; some can be quite frustrating, disconcerting, and distressing (Martin & Nakayama, 1997). Fortunately, most people react to intercultural situations with amusement and

curiosity. Successful communicative exchanges depend on both parties recognizing and respecting the uniqueness in each communicative code in use, and/or possessing the motivation and means to bring the two communicative systems into approximate alignment (Barnlund, 1998). While the difference in how people respond to such an exchange may be based on variability in temperament, it also can result from lack of knowledge about oneself and one's culture and that of the other, as well as inexperience in dealing with the nuances of ICC. And this is where the study of cultural variability and ICC skills and IC competency development are useful.

### **3.1.7 Intercultural relationships**

While some intercultural communication comprises fleeting moments of interaction, most are part of some level of relationship—business, community, workmate, and so on. Such relationships can flourish only if there is competent behavior between the interactors. Indeed some researchers (e.g., Kealey & Protheroe, 2000; Y. Y. Kim, 2001) include the ability to build significant relationships with dissimilar others as an essential element of intercultural effectiveness or adaptation. The type of relationship that is of most importance to this study is that of the intercultural relationship and, more explicitly, friendship.

Children learn the meaning of relationships, such as family and friend, through their primary socialization process that includes the specific expectations, obligations, and privileges that come from interacting within this network of people (Lustig & Koester, 1996). One's culture, then, serves as the lens through which the concept of friend is interpreted and the practice of friendship takes form (Ting-Toomey & Chung, 1999). In an intercultural interaction, therefore, how one person defines a relationship—for example, as a friend and all that the concept means in that individual's culture—might not correspond with his/her coactor, who may define that same relationship more narrowly or more intensely. This mismatch of perspectives on the relationship may result in different expectations and interpretations of behaviors (Lustig & Koester, 1996), and perhaps confusion, disappointment, or conflict. Moreover, the culturally perceived nature of a friend relationship affects not only how people interact in regard to what they expect, and what and how they speak to each other, but also the myriad ways people communicate nonverbally. Touch, for example, is highly

bound by culture, not only in who can touch whom, but also in what form, when, and where (Lustig & Koester, 1996; Ting-Toomey, 1999).

Most people develop friendships voluntarily and based on four principles of relational attraction: proximity, physical attraction, similarity, and complementarity (Martin & Nakayama, 1997). Although cultures vary in how these principles are applied, Martin and Nakayama claim that they seem to apply in most cultural contexts, and across race, class, and ethnicity. In addition, relationships, whether intercultural or intracultural, follow the same three stages of development: the orientation phase, the exploratory phase, and the stability phase (Ibid.). The *orientation phase* involves people getting to know each other. Because the individuals know very little about each other, they tend to use social categorization and/or stereotypes, and noninterpersonal information to manage the interaction. The *exploratory phase* is one of discovery, as the people make “small talk” about nonintimate topics to try to establish some commonality.

Critical at these two stages, according to Ting-Toomey (1989), is impression management, because of the cultural norms that come into play, as well as the identity negotiation process that begins and will continue to influence the relationship. Other issues affecting the early stages of relationship building include politeness, reflected in the physical distance between the partners (Ibid.), the amount of talk versus silence, the topics selected, and projected self-worth (Gudykunst & Matsumoto, 1996); the anxiety one feels when trying to establish common ground with a dissimilar other, particularly if previous experiences have turned out poorly or if one holds a negative stereotype of the other (Gudykunst, 1995; C. W. Stephan & W. G. Stephan, 1992); the role of self-disclosure not only about one’s culture and current life, but about more intimate topics and past experiences (Lee, 2006); and the ability to deal effectively and with mutual satisfaction when the inevitable conflict arises (Ibid). Many of these aspects also play a role in one’s competency.

At the *stability stage* of relational development, however, the parties in an IC relationship become more in tune with each other’s symbolic system, cultural mental programming, and personality and temperament. The topical areas and nature of conversation become broader and deeper. As a result, the relationship becomes less intercultural and more idiosyncratic; any dissimilarities (personal or cultural) have less of an impact (Gudykunst & Kim, 1984; Gudykunst & Shapiro,



1996; Martin & Nakayama, 1997) as the result of the creation of a relational identity for the IC friends (Lee, 2006). How long this takes, of course, depends on the nature of the individuals and the context and nature of the relationship. Ting-Toomey (1999) notes some relational partners can make quick transition from culture-based interaction to personal-based interaction. Such transitions may also rest on the outcome of turning points, when a comment, action, or inaction results in the relationship progressing, stagnating, or regressing (Lee, 2006; Martin & Nakayama, 1997). Because pivotal points are often imbued with culturally influenced perspectives, negotiating these issues requires meta-communication, creativity in problem solving, patience, and a desire to build on similarities the other rather than emphasize the differences (see Lee, 2006). Lee also underscores the role of networking, involving one's IC friend within one's web of family and friends, in establishing and maintaining a strong IC relationship.

However, Bhawuk & Brislin (1992) caution that although IC friendships are, in general, beneficial, sometimes deep interpersonal relationships can be difficult. Maintaining an intimate relationship requires a deep emotional interrelatedness, while more casual friendships can simply reflect elements of intercultural sensitivity, such as respect, graciousness, and fun. They note that some people who have no difficulties building friendships steeped in respect and kindness find the experience of becoming deeply committed to someone from a distinctly different worldview, communication style, and cultural orientation problematic and difficult to sustain.

The benefits of an IC friendship also embody the essential building blocks of competent behavior: breaking stereotypes, developing new means and skills of communicating, acquiring new or different knowledge about the world (geographically, socially, culturally, historically, etc.) and its peoples, and a greater understanding of one's culture and place in the world (Martin & Nakayama, 1997; Ramsey, 1998). Additionally, ICC skills development can lead to "relational learning," the ability to draw learning from one relationship and generalize it to other relationships and contexts (Martin & Nakayama, 1997).

Short-term sojourners, such as tourists or exchange students, can develop intercultural "acquaintances," relationships that develop through informal and sporadic interaction. While these experiences are often enjoyable and can lead to increased knowledge and/or understanding of another culture (Horenczyk &

Bekerman, 1997), often they do not, or can result in a negative perception (Wright, Aron, McLaughlin-Volpe, & Ropp, 1997). In addition, prejudices and discrimination one might feel toward another group might continue despite a positive interpersonal relationship one might have with a member of that outgroup, because that outgroup member is perceived as an exception rather than typical for that group (Gudykunst & Gumbs, 1989; Rothbart, 1996). Studies by Pettigrew (1997, 1998a), however, offer encouragement that interpersonal relationships, in particular, intercultural friendships, can help reduce prejudice among groups (see also Dovidio, Gaertner, & Kawakami, 2003; Liebkind & McAlister, 1999; Wright et al., 1997). That is why, in most cases, some type of educational intervention—advance learning about the nature and possible challenges of ICC, as well as specific information about the cultural practices and perspectives of the other—is needed to enhance the effects of such IC (ingroup/outgroup) encounters (Horenczyk & Bekerman, 1997; Vassiliou et al., 1972). In fact, Vassiliou et al. (1972: 115) claim that “the degree of training required to avoid cross-cultural misunderstanding may be greater than required to master a foreign language.”

### **3.2 Intercultural Competency Development**

To understand the nature of IC competency as it relates to this study, some foundational concepts must be defined, none of which have garnered firm agreement among researchers and theorists in this field. For example, consensus has not been reached among communication scholars regarding how to define, conceptualize, or provide a framework for the interconnectedness of IC and ICC competence (Bradford, Allen, & Beisser, 2000; Chen & Starosta, 1996; Deardorff, 2004, 2006; Fantini, 2000; Hammer, 1989). Because myriad disciplines explore facets of IC interactions and behaviors through their own theoretical and methodological lenses (Bradford et al., 2000; Deardorff, 2004; Lustig & Koester, 1996), researchers must clarify their own perspectives on the terminology.

#### **3.2.1 Intercultural, or Intercultural Communication, Competence?**

In a review of the literature, Bradford et al. (2000) and Chen and Starosta (1996) found a variety of terms used as synonyms for IC competence, although researchers often try to make clear distinctions in their use of terms. ICC competence and ICC effectiveness were the two most frequently used terms in

the literature. Bradford et al. (2000) found through their meta-analysis of research studies, however, that these two terms are, operationally, roughly similar and that *ICC competence* seems to be gathering the largest consensus. However, the literature shines very little light on distinguishing the difference between intercultural competence and intercultural communication competence.

Many researchers in the field do not define nor distinguish between IC and ICC development, practices, or competency; the reader must gain understanding of the usage through the context of the document. In many cases, the selection of one or the other reflects the researcher's field of interest. As a result, researchers interested in aspects of language use (e.g., Giles & Franklin-Stokes, 1989), language teaching (e.g., Byram, 1997), or elements of social interaction either within one culture or between members of different cultures (e.g., Ericsson, 2000; Martin & Nakayama, 1997; Turunen & Leppäaho, 1998) are more likely to focus on ICC competency. Meanwhile, those involved in interpersonal development or education (e.g., Bennett, 1988, 1993, 1998a; Hammer et al., 2003; K. Korhonen, 2002; Matinheikko-Kokko, 1999; Paige, 2003b), adaptation (e.g., Gudykunst & Kim, 1992), and the implications of value orientations or cultural perceptions that lead to behaviors (e.g., M. Berry, 1998; Boyle, Nackerud, & Kilpatrick, 1999; Kealey & Protheroe, 2000; Klak & Martin, 2003; Spencer-Rodgers & McGovern, 2002; Stier, 2003, 2006) in the intercultural arena are more likely to define IC competency. And some researchers focus on both aspects in a single study or in different studies (e.g., Hammer, 1989; Y. Y. Kim, 2001) depending on the nature of their research; use the IC term when they are actually talking about communicative/behavioral activities (e.g., Lustig & Koester, 1996); or use the terms interchangeably (Fantini, 2000). Finally, some researchers define competency in terms broader than either IC or ICC (e.g., Otten, 2003; Passaseo & Calleja, 1999; Straffon, 2003; Ting-Toomey, 1999).

Byram (1997) is one of the few researchers providing a distinction between IC competency and ICC competency. He states that IC competence comprises host individuals interacting with dissimilar others within their own country/culture and often within their own language, but drawing on knowledge and skills, interests and attitudes that may have been created through prior language learning, while ICC competence results from a person interacting with dissimilar others in a foreign language and country/culture other than their own,

negotiating modes of communication acceptable to both parties, and mediating between peoples of dissimilar cultural origins (p. 70–71). Therefore, in Byram's view, the relationship between IC and ICC competency is a matter of degrees of complexity and a person's ability to manage well a wider range of interaction situations, with the latter demonstrating more capability than the former (p. 71). This view is supported by researchers who feel that IC competency is a subset of ICC competency (e.g., Deardorff, 2004, 2006; Lehtonen, 1998, as cited in K. Korhonen, 2002). However, Bhawuk & Brislin (1992: 428–429) point to the fact that language learning has little impact on intercultural sensitivity, writing "It is difficult to explain why knowing more than one language has no significant impact on sensitivity. Perhaps language learning and sensitivity are quite different concepts...." This would lend credence to the perspective that IC and ICC competency are in fact distinct constructs.

While coherent definitions of IC competency are lacking, multiple and fairly consistent definitions exist for intercultural communication competence. However, when one looks more closely, it becomes clear that many researchers have quoted, repackaged, or expounded on one particular definition—Spitzberg and Cupach's (1984) definition of relational competence—although they often used alternative terms, such as interpersonal competence (Ramsey, 1998) or behavioral competence (Martin and Nakayama, 1997). Spitzberg and Cupach were not addressing intercultural relations specifically, but IC theorists have recognized that much of the research in intracultural studies on communicative competence can apply in the intercultural setting. Relational competence is defined conceptually as the extent to which objectives functionally related to communication are fulfilled through cooperative interaction appropriate to the interpersonal context; thus competence is achieved if communication is appropriate and effective (Spitzberg & Cupach, 1984: 100).

Ericsson (2000) rightly emphasizes the equality of the three terms involved in intercultural communication competence, as each influences immensely the outcome of the exchange. As noted earlier, culture—its internal perspectives and its external expressions—affects both parties in the exchange. The communication process is complex; misunderstandings can take place even when both parties share symbolic meanings and language, and thus can be expected to be more likely when interactants do not share meanings, communication styles, or

expectations of what constitutes appropriate behavior. Finally, competence is not only difficult to define, but it is often difficult to assess. What constitutes competent behavior in one context might be completely incompetent in another. Therefore, interactants must have certain knowledge and skills to manage well.

Yet such definitions for ICC competency reflect a skewed perspective on the competency concept, as only the external manifestations of competency are emphasized. Equally important, perhaps even more so, are the internal elements of competency, such as knowledge, understanding, attitude, and motivation.

### **3.2.2 Competency conceptualized**

In general, the word *competency* refers to the skills to do something, and the ability to do the skills, which involves a level of preparedness in motivation and knowledge. But it also means a level of sufficiency: good enough to manage the skills, but willing to continually develop as well (Salo-Lee, 2006). Delineating what this succinct definition means in IC practice, however, is a bit more complicated. Over the years, IC scholars and theorists have tried to clearly define the parameters of the concept—including what constitutes ability and in what situations; how one develops, integrates, and applies knowledge; which skills are most effective and in what situations; and how one assesses the appropriate level of preparedness and or development (see also Deardorff, 2004). Universal—or even substantive—agreement on these and other aspects of the conceptualization of competency has yet to be realized.

Perhaps the fundamental discussion facing IC theorists is whether competence refers to knowledge or performance (Chen & Starosta, 1996), meaning whether it is a trait (resides primarily within the individual, and therefore cognitive or dispositional) or a state (resides in situations involving the individual, and therefore relational or behavioral). Related to this primary question is whether competency is innate or can be learned (Ibid.; Fantini, 2000) and whether it is general or specific (Deardorff, 2004).

Lustig and Koester (1996; see also Bradford et al., 2000) identify four approaches used in studying IC competence—the trait approach, the behavioral approach, the perceptual approach, and the culture-specific approach—noting that none of them provides the full determination of what constitutes IC competence. The *trait approach* seeks to identify the personal characteristics

and traits a person needs to achieve success and avoid failures in IC interaction. This approach has mixed success in identifying such characteristics and attitudes because of the complexity of the landscape and the uniqueness of each IC encounter. The *behavioral approach* emphasizes what should or should not be done within ICC interaction, but also is complex because many of these “do’s and don’ts” are imbued with specific cultural social norms and expectations. The *perceptual approach* seeks to identify which attitudes or perceptions, particularly motivation and specific emotions, are most related to competent outcomes in ICC interaction. Contrasted with these three culture-general approaches is the culture-specific approach that emphasizes appropriate behaviors specific to the unique dyad interacting.

In the literature, the two most frequently discussed perspectives on competency are whether it resides within the individual or resides within the interaction between individuals. The latter view, the most common, reflects the emphasis on ICC competency, that is, the external expressions and behaviors. Spitzberg & Cupach (1984) point out that since communication is constrained by context, then by default communication competence is as well. This perspective reflects the dynamic and interactive elements of communication (Porter & Samovar, 1997), as well as the determination that competence is formed by the judgment that emerges from within a specific interaction with specific individuals (Gudykunst & Kim, 1992; Imahori & Lanigan, 1989; Lustig & Koester, 1996). This social judgment incorporates the perceptions of both participants within the ICC dyad (Gudykunst & Kim, 1992), often based on the skills and behaviors each exhibits during the interaction, and thus cannot be separated from the relational dynamic of the encounter (Lustig & Koester, 1996). Spitzberg & Cupach (1984), in their model of relational competence, emphasize that motivation, knowledge and skills are the essential dimensions of communicative competence, underscored by the view that competence is (a) perceived appropriateness and effectiveness; (b) contextual; (c) a matter of degree; (d) both general and specific; (e) interdependent in process; and (f) an interpersonal impression of one’s or the other’s behavior. Some theorists (Byram, 1997; Passaseo & Calleja, 1999) indicate that ICC competence involves other competencies, such as sociolinguistic, linguistic, sociocultural, kinesic, proxemic, relationship building, and compliance gaining competencies. These competencies might be considered skills by other IC

researchers. Many of the IC theorists holding this view of competence-in-interaction maintain that while IC (internal) skills are part of the competency equation, they are not the sole factors. Skills and attitudes, in themselves, do not determine or represent competence, but rather increase one's likelihood of choosing competent behaviors and form the basis by which interacting members form judgments of the other (Gudykunst & Kim, 1992; Hammer, 1989; Spitzberg & Cupach, 1984). No set of skills or characteristics guarantees IC-competent behavior in all circumstances (Lustig & Koester, 1996).

The dynamic and unique nature of each interaction is based on, among other things, the relational history of the interactors, the context of the interaction, and the purpose of the interaction (Spitzberg & Cupach, 1984). The competency of the other interactor is also a factor (Gudykunst & Kim, 1992; Imahori & Lanigan, 1989). Ultimately, according to these theorists, competence cannot be measured within a vacuum and no trait is applicable in every IC interaction. Therefore, competence is determined by the individuals within a specific interaction (Gudykunst & Kim, 1992; Imahori & Lanigan, 1989; Lustig & Koester, 1996; Spitzberg & Cupach, 1984). Collier (1989) shifts the perspective away from skills toward the various identities one possesses and the salience of these identities in any given interaction, but concurs that being competent means choosing appropriate and effective means for the salient identities within each unique interaction.

At the opposite end of the spectrum are those theorists who subscribe to the belief that competence resides within the individual and constitutes the overall capacity or capability of the individual to facilitate a successful communication process with dissimilar others. These IC researchers hold that while ICC competence is necessary, it is not the only condition needed for successful IC encounters (Gudykunst & Kim, 1992; Y. Y. Kim, 2001), since an individual's knowledge is a key component for competency (Chomsky, 1965, and Phillips, 1983, cited in Chen & Starosta, 1996). Some individuals possess certain personality traits (some innate, some developed) that make them effective communicators both within their own culture and with people from dissimilar cultures, such as an extroverted personality, an open value system that accommodates difference, high intuitiveness, control over their own visceral reactions, inner security and stability, empathy and open-mindedness

toward others, valuing the goodness in others, and the ability to manage interactions, as well as are astute observers and slow evaluators of unfamiliar behaviors (Gudykunst and Kim, 1992).

Kim uses the analogy of racecar driver (Ibid.: 232) to describe how competent abilities involve much more than what happens on any particular stretch of a racetrack. Perhaps a better analogy is that of a battleship commander. This individual, drifting on the expansive ocean, is continually monitoring a vast number of elements—from the number and abilities of the personnel on and the mechanical components of the ship; the weather; the location of other vehicles above, below, and on the sea—seen and unseen; the nature of any enemy and what its strategies might be; communiqués, orders, and expectations of superiors; prior personal and military experience; and the geopolitical environment, just to name a few. Additionally, this individual has his/her own personality, knowledge, skills, abilities, beliefs, values, and so on. At any given moment, and particularly in times of stress, all of these elements influence the decision-making process. Competence is how well the commander manages these sometimes difficult or conflicting factors to achieve the military objective, and it is possible that he/she might choose poorly, or at least not optimally in any particular circumstance. If things turn out poorly, the investigation will not just explore the outcome as an assessment of his/her competency as a commander but will also factor in all of the extenuating conditions. This same reality applies to our individual communicative experiences, whether with familiar or dissimilar interlocutors and in familiar and unfamiliar contexts. In fact, Matsumoto & LeRoux (2003) emphatically state that no other means of viewing competency or its development are realistic without first addressing the internal foundations for competency: emotional control and cognitive complexity. These rationales are why Y. Y. Kim (1991: 265) states, ICC competency “must be anchored within a person as his or her capacity to manage the varied contexts of the intercultural encounter regardless of the specific cultures involved.”

Such views support the idea that even if one can communicate effectively and appropriately, the successful performance of a skill in a particular does not mean the individual understands why the behavior was competent, why it might not be effective in another situation (McCroskey, 1982, cited in Collier, 1989), or even how to perform it again. Y. Y. Kim (2001) notes that, in looking to the



performance as the indication of competency, one overlooks the fact that the outcome can be affected by many external factors, such as the context, the nature of the relationship or encounter, the other's interest or capabilities, the self-interests of the participants, and so on. The very reasons Spitzberg and Cupach (1984) point to as justification for viewing competency as relational, Kim holds as justification that an interaction is not the sole locus in determining competency. She recognizes that communication is interactional and relational, but these external influences are beyond the ability of an individual to control and thus should not be considered the primary elements of IC competency.

It appears the discussion between the traits and state philosophies—between competency-in-action and competency-in-cognition—may represent, in fact, the difference in perspectives between the ICC and IC constructs. If one emphasizes the ICC process—the external expression of culture and all factors that influence how two people meet and interact within a specific context and relational environment—then certainly one would view competency as relational: One must adapt behaviors to the situation at hand. However, if the focus is on internal issues of culture, such as attitudes, values, and expectations, and the personality traits that are unique to each individual, such as interest, motivation, social temperament, and knowledge, and how each of these traits affect our strategies for, implementation of, and success in interaction, then IC competency is something that an individual develops and applies as needed. Additionally, these facets of IC competency can be pursued outside of interaction: One must continually adapt one's perspectives, characteristics, knowledge, and skills so that situations, when they arise, can be managed.

Many theorists agree that trying to separate these two perspectives is, at the very least, impractical because people bring their unique selves to every IC interaction, and every communicative circumstance is a unique set of contextual and interpersonal variables. In short, people need both well-developed traits and attentiveness within the state because people do judge each other (Chen & Starosta, 1996; Gudykunst & Kim, 1992). States and traits are not mutually exclusive and, in fact, the elements within each of these perspectives facilitate development of those in the other (Byram, 1997; Spitzberg & Cupach, 1984). Citing Wiemann and Kelly (1981), Gudykunst & Kim (1992) point out that knowledge without effective skills is useless and

skills cannot be developed without the cognitive abilities to observe and analyze the constraints and requirements of an interaction context.

### **3.2.3 The building blocks of competency**

The complexity of the construct—whether you’re discussing ICC or IC competency—results in a multitude of factors identified by theorists over the past five decades as components of competency. Even a casual review of the literature can generate scores of facets of competency. While many of these “building blocks” are simply a different way of naming the same element, there also exists a diversity of explicitly distinct factors.

Most of the theorists readily agree with Spitzberg & Cupach (1984) that the primary components of competency are knowledge, attitude, and skills, although they might use different terms. For example, Ericsson (2000) and Lustig and Koester (1996) call these three primary facets knowledge, awareness, and skills. Ting-Toomey (1999) notes that intercultural knowledge, motivations, and skills are required to manage mindful intercultural communications, while Chen & Starosta (1996) use the terms affective, or intercultural sensitivity; cognitive, or intercultural awareness; and behavioral, or intercultural adroitness. Several theorists point to the work by Ruben (1976, cited in Martin & Nakayama, 1997, and Hammer, 1989), who identified seven behavioral dimensions, ranging from orientation to knowledge to tolerance for ambiguity to behavioral displays of respect and empathy.

However, the cognitive, affective and behavioral dimensions are quite general and contain multitude of specificities. A synthesis of these facets is required if one hopes to comprehend the competency construct, and the relatedness of the various facets identified. Table 3.2 provides one such synthesis.

In looking at the elements within the general categories of knowledge, attitude and skills, it becomes quite clear that some of these elements are personal traits or talents, some are realized strictly in interaction, and other have both individual and relational facets. Therefore, I initially attempted to group the scores of components into areas of internal (intrapersonal, thus IC), external (communicative/behavioral, thus ICC), or both. The natural line of demarcation seemed to be that elements of attitude and knowledge primarily fell strictly within one’s complete control, and thus can be considered *individual* (internal), while skills can exist only within

**Table 3.2** Synthesis of Noted Components of IC/ICC Competency.**INDIVIDUAL (Intrapersonal)****Attributional Preconditions**

**TEMPERAMENT:** one's unique internal traits that impact both the internal and external elements of IC interaction, such as optimism, an openness to new or difficult situations, internal security, a nonjudgmental and tolerant posture, intuitiveness and sensitivity, curiosity and motivation, a sense of personal responsibility, flexibility, the ability to trust, an interest in learning and in others, the motivation to interact or learn, and the autonomy and self-confidence to act and grow, among others. One's position on these continua of personality components may be innate, but can be developed with experience.

**TALENTS:** one's naturally endowed or learned behaviors, which often are external expressions of one's temperament. However, they also can be derived from experiences. Such talents include problem-solving skills, the ability to observe and to listen, the ability to be attuned to and clear in one's expectations, the willingness and ability to learn experientially, creativity, and sociability.

**Affective**

**ADAPTATION COMFORT:** the motivation and ability to adapt to situational demands of a new (cultural) environment with few negative consequences for self or other, and a general ability to feel at ease and content in unfamiliar surroundings/interactions.

**EMOTIONAL MANAGEMENT:** possessing good control of one's emotions in order to choose appropriate strategies; involves methods to address anxiety, insecurity, and frustration, the ability to manage stress and to reconcile differences in values, as well as an understanding of and means to cope when one is culturally stereotyped by others.

**RELATIONALITY:** a multifaceted component involving issues of how one views oneself in relation to others; one's attitudes about the nature and value of others and a positive regard toward others; the social distance one feels toward dissimilar others; attitudes towards the issues of respect, identity (and its flexibility), and one's role in interaction within context; and a willingness to adapt to create harmony in interaction with others.

**EMPATHY:** the emotional connection beyond the cognitive understanding of another's experiences, built upon the psychological and emotional acceptance that one's reality is just one among a multitude; the refraining from using one's own perspective/culture as the absolute guide for what is "real," "good," "worthy," or "right"; and the emotional movement along the continuum from ethnocentricity to ethorelativism.

**Cognitive**

**COGNITIVE AWARENESS:** the alertness to and understanding of cultural, social, and historical influences and distinctiveness on individuals' behavior, as well as an understanding of the complex interdependent international systems and the current state of the world that facilitates a personal transformation toward enlightened global citizenship.

**ORIENTATION TO KNOWLEDGE:** one's dispositional attitude toward knowledge and the pursuit of knowledge, involving the recognition that what one knows is individual in nature and is not neutral, as well as the ability and desire to gather information (the enjoyment of discovery) about others and the environment.

**PROCESSUAL KNOWLEDGE:** an understanding of how cultural conventions affect individuals' (own and others') thoughts, expressions, behaviors, interaction, knowledge processing, argumentation, etc.; an ability to identify which behaviors and patterns are guided by underlying cultural assumptions and practices; and an awareness of cultural dynamics in action. [*Often considered culture-general*]

**FACTUAL KNOWLEDGE:** knowledge about the defining characteristics of one or more specific cultures and how that affects a member's thinking and behavior; a deep knowledge about one's own culture and how that affects one's worldview, observations, thought processes, emotions, and behaviors; and the ability to cognitively recognize similarities and differences between one's own and the other's cultural influences. This component would also include academic competency (theoretical skills, knowledge, etc.) and knowledge about subject matters appropriate to an IC interaction. [*Often culture-specific*]

**COGNITIVE COMPLEXITY:** one's natural disposition toward adaptation, such as the ability to learn from new information and experiences; the ability to adapt to varying communication or learning styles; the ability and skills needed to think critically and comparatively, to analyze and interpret events and happenings, and to recognize and process information based on patterns and structures.

**CRITICAL OBJECTIVITY:** the ability to be an astute, non-critical observer of one's own and others' behaviors and culture; possessing self-knowledge about one's own culture, temperament and talents, strengths and weaknesses as a communicator, and categories one uses to judge and interpret events and behaviors; the ability to distinguish between description, interpretation, and evaluation of own and others' behaviors and events in context, to suspend/withhold judgment, and to avoid using own cultural norms and patterns as assessment of others' behaviors; and the capacity for significant and objective self-monitoring, self-assessment, and reflection.

### **Cognitive & Affective**

**OPEN-MINDEDNESS:** a general disposition of non-judgmental recognition, appreciation, and acceptance of different views, ideas, experiences, & processes, as well as a positive expressiveness toward dissimilar others and unfamiliar contexts.

**MINDFULNESS:** openness to new information and experiences; awareness of more than one perspective in every situation; attentiveness within interaction to one's own and others' behaviors and particularly one's emotional state and willingness to expand, flex and adapt one's frame of reference (perspective) to align with coactors' perspectives/worldviews; the ability to create new categories in processing stimuli; and analytic thoughtfulness in post-event reflection.

**AMBIGUITY ENGAGEMENT:** the ability to recognize signs of one's reactions to ambiguity, to implement cognitive and behavioral steps to reduce its negative effects, and to manage well in situations of ambiguity.

## **RELATIONAL (Communicative/Behavioral)**

### **Communicative**

**COMMUNICATIVE PREDISPOSITION:** willingness to engage in communication with, as well as a willingness to listen to, dissimilar others.

**COMMUNICATIVE REALISM:** an awareness of limitations of language, the willingness to expect problems in communication, and the ability to negotiate meaning within conversation (meta-communication), making repairs when necessary. [For hosts, this would include the accommodation or alignment, preventatives, and repairs necessary to assist sojourners.]

**LINGUISTIC KNOWLEDGE:** implicit and explicit knowledge of other's language or the lingua franca to allow one to communicate effectively and appropriately with minimal loss in or distortion of intended messages, and how to avoid violating communicative rules.

**SOCIOLINGUISTIC KNOWLEDGE:** an awareness of relation between language and meaning in societal contexts and the ability to negotiate the social implications of communicative events.

**NONVERBAL ASTUTENESS:** awareness of and ability to discern meanings of nonverbal behaviors and paralinguistic elements of communication.

**LISTENING SKILLS:** hold no prejudices that prevents nonjudgmental listening and accurate perceiving of another's needs and thoughts, as well as to produce actions that indicate to others that they have been heard. Skills can apply to observation in interaction.

**BEHAVIORAL FLEXIBILITY:** the willingness and ability to modify one's communication and behaviors, and to co-orient and coordinate verbal and nonverbal communication with dissimilar others.

**COMMUNICATIVE EXPRESSION:** the ability to produce appropriate (clear, truthful, considerate, responsive) communicative acts in an expressive, supportive, and conversationally competent manner, and to use descriptive (nonjudgmental) feedback of others' behaviors.

### **Interpersonal**

**INTERACTION POSTURE:** one's attitude toward interaction, demonstrated by responding in a nonjudgmental, descriptive manner; the ability to avoid automatic responses; and ability to accept rather than reject dissimilarities. It would also involve the use of a "third-culture" perspective (psychological link between own and other culture) when interpreting others' behaviors and to construct alternative cultural experiences, a sense of immediacy (an approach/affiliation orientation), and a focus on similarities rather than differences with the other in interaction.

**INTERACTION MANAGEMENT:** executing appropriate turn-taking, greeting, and departure rituals; deriving reasonably accurate assessment of needs and desires of others; an attentiveness to social contexts, social cues, and others' expressions as adaptation guides to situationally appropriate behaviors; the ability to conform to normative expectations of a situation harmoniously, appropriately, and effectively by choosing symbols and behaviors appropriate for the context; and the ability to take on relational or situational roles appropriately, such as the appropriate choice of behaviors used to communicate nonverbally a stable personality; friendliness and politeness; perseverance in the relationship, and the ability to speak with candor and hopefulness, as the situation may require.

**OTHER-ORIENTATION:** includes displays of attentiveness; interest in, respect for, and adaptability toward others and other cultures; an extroverted personality or, minimally, an extroverted expressiveness (i.e., the degree of involvement); interpersonal sensitivity, such as sensitivity and openness toward the expressions and self-presentations of others; affiliation/support of other; flexibility in thought and action; and reliability and self-reliance; as well as the ability see other as a person first and a representative of a culture second, and to socialize on the basis of cultural universals.

**IDENTITY SUPPORT:** the ability to discern multiple identities of self and other salient in an exchange, to affirm and confirm the salient identities of others in fostering a favorable impression, and to support the face of others.

**RELATIONSHIP DEVELOPMENT:** the ability to form and maintain meaningful personal relationships with dissimilar others, as well as cordial social (non-friendship) relations with multiple host nationals or associates; includes the knowledge and application of culture-appropriate self-disclosure.

**TASK COOPERATION:** the ability to communicate in a way that results in an effective exchange of information, that earns respect, trust and compliance, and that encourages cooperation toward mutual achievement of goals; involves one's capacity to perform appropriate task/role behavior (particularly as it relates to group problem-solving behaviors).

### Personal

**SOCIAL ABILITY:** the ability to experience social relaxation (anxiety management) in action, to control and modify one's self-presentation, to accomplish social functions, to engage in behaviors unfamiliar in own socialization, and to be able to express one's feelings, thoughts, wishes, and desires in contextually reasonable and appropriate ways.

**TASK ORIENTATION:** one's personal ability (including technical skills) to complete the task and to achieve one's goals to some degree, the internal process of choosing strategies that are culturally appropriate and effective in achieving desired personal outcomes, and the ability to meet one's personal aesthetic needs by coordinating with dissimilar others.

**CONTENTEDNESS IN IC ACTION:** the sense of enjoyment or contentedness one feels in carrying out one's duties in another culture or in collaboration, relationship building, or living with dissimilar others; also the capacity to adapt one's professional/academic skills to local conditions and constraints.

Note: This synthesis was drawn on research by e.g., Barna, 1998; Bennett, 1993; 1998a; M. Berry, 1998; Bradford et al., 2000; Byram, 1997; Chen & Starosta, 1996; Collier, 1989; Cupach & Imahori, 1993; Deardorff, 2004, 2006; Ericsson, 2000; Fantini, 2000; Goleman, 1998; Gudykunst & Kim, 1992; Grove & Tornbiörn, 1993; Gudykunst, 1995; Gudykunst & Kim, 1984, 1992; Gudykunst & Matsumoto, 1996; Gudykunst & Shapiro, 1996; Gudykunst & Ting-Toomey, 1988, 1996; B. Hall, 2001; E. T. Hall, 1976; 1998; Hammer, 1989; Hammer, Bennett, & Wiseman, 2003; Hecht et al., 1989; E. Hoffman, 1999; Holden, 2002; Hoppe et al., 1999; Hubbert et al., 1999; Imahori & Lanigan, 1989; Jandt, 1995; Kealey & Protheroe, 2000; Koester, Wiseman, & Sanders, 1993; Y. Y. Kim, 1991, 2001; K. Korhonen, 2002; Langer & Moldoveanu, 2000a; Lloyd & Härtel, 2003; Lustig & Koester, 1996; Mak & Buckingham, 2007; Martin & Nakayama, 1997, 2004; Matsumoto & LeRoux, 2003; Matsumoto et al, 1989; Mezirow, 1991; Paige, 2003b; Penington & Wildermurth, 2005; Porter & Samovar, 1997; Ramsey, 1998; Salo-Lee, 2003, 2006, 2007; Spencer-Rodgers & McGovern, 2002; Spitzberg, 1997; Spitzberg & Cupach, 1984; Stephan & Stephan, 1995, 1992; Stewart et al, 1998; Stier, 2003, 2006; Traffon, 2003; Taajamo, 2003; Taylor, 1994; Teekens, 2003; Ting-Toomey, 1989, 1999; Ting-Toomey & Chung, 1999; Triandis, 1977; Ward, 2001; Weaver, 1993; Wiseman, 2001; Yerushova et al., 2000.

interaction and context, thus involving others, and therefore fell within the *relational* (external) category. For those elements with both internal and external aspects, I assigned them to the category where the majority of their focus was located. This means, for example, an element such as motivation, which is an internal process that results in some sort of external action, was placed in the internal category, while listening skills, which have roots in internal abilities but cannot exist absent an interaction, was placed in the external category.

Hammer et al. (2003) separate such intrapersonal versus interpersonal factors into the categories of “intercultural sensitivity” (thus individual; see also Bhawuk & Brislin, 1992) and “intercultural competence” (relational). While this terminology supports the separation of the factors into internal or external groupings within my synthesis, their terminology can be problematic since both of those terms are used frequently in other contexts and with multiple definitions. Thus, in this synthesis, the terms Individual and Relational form the two broader categories, and reflect Stier's (2003) “knowing how” aspect of IC

competency that encompasses both intrapersonal and interpersonal competencies, or the psychological and communicative domains (Spitzberg & Cupach, 1984). This approach is also supported by Y. Y. Kim (1992, cited in Deardorff, 2004), who advocates addressing the culture-specific construct of “cultural communication competence” separately from the culture-general construct of “intercultural communication competence,” the latter being applied consistently across IC situations no matter what particular cultures are involved.

Even within the general categories of Individual and Relational, however, the ability to group the elements required further synthesis. The debate over trait versus state leads one to consider that perhaps there are some aspects of competency that come naturally to certain people, but which may also be developed for those less gifted. Thus, the Attributional Preconditions (such as one’s Temperament and Talents) can be considered as foundational for any IC development or ICC interaction.

While several theorists believe that attitudes form the second large category for competency, the literature points to other affective elements that would be equally important. For example, Matsumoto and LeRoux (2003) indicate that emotion regulation is essential for complex thinking and, by extension, good choices in applying knowledge and behavioral strategies. In examining the multiple factors surfaced by theorists that are neither cognitive nor behavioral, most of them fall within the Affective realm, which would involve attitudes, emotional dispositions, and values. In grouping these various factors, the areas Emotional Management and Relationality to others surfaced, as did Adaptation Comfort (i.e., the strictly intrapersonal ability to adapt to unfamiliar environments) and Empathy, collectively appearing to sufficiently cover the various affective factors identified as part of IC competency.

The term knowledge also seemed narrow in application for competency, as cognitive processes are needed to not only manage knowledge, but to manage one’s interaction and perceptions. Therefore, the Cognitive construct was selected as the higher-order category, under which Cognitive Awareness and one’s Orientation Toward Knowledge would fall. Knowledge itself was separated into Processual Knowledge (i.e., the means and manners in which knowledge is understood and applied) and Factual Knowledge (i.e., the details and concrete bits of information that one uses in decision making and

interaction). Finally, Cognitive Complexity and Critical Objectivity surfaced as ways to describe the strictly internal processes that affect how stimuli are perceived, analyzed, assessed, and then form the foundation for learning and development. Those with the ability to think with more complex mental processes have more options available to understand and act on diverse, perhaps contradictory, events experienced in IC relations and, thus, are more likely to choose the competent action (Y. Y. Kim, 2001; Lustig & Koester, 1996; Martin & Nakayama, 1997). One's objectivity in observing, analyzing, and interpreting events and behaviors that involve dissimilar others, as well as oneself, provide ongoing opportunity to choose accurately the appropriate perspectives and behaviors in which to respond to the events and behaviors one experiences.

In sifting through the various elements of the internal category, several elements did not fit neatly under either the cognitive or affective headings, but rather drew on a little of each. Therefore, a separate heading for Cognitive & Affective elements was created. Within this special category are three groupings that exercise both emotion and knowledge in their expression. Open-mindedness is both a cognitive process and an emotional process that results in a disposition and display of nonjudgmental interaction and positive expression toward dissimilar others. Mindfulness requires the individual to create new mental categories for processing new information and perspectives and an attentiveness within experiences, but also requires one to be able to monitor and adapt one's emotional state and reflect thoughtfully upon circumstances and behaviors. Finally, Ambiguity Engagement involves not only recognizing the emotional stress that surfaces when interacting in unfamiliar terrain or with dissimilar others but also the proactive process of implementing steps to reduce any negative implications of the anxiety that such situations can create.

The Relational elements of competency also appeared more complex than simple appropriate and effective communicative behavior. While many of the factors articulated by theorists in fact support successful ICC, some also would be the result of that activity. Therefore, a separation of Communicative elements from Interpersonal elements seemed to be in order. In addition, several theorists noted personal benefits from such ICC activity, which did not fit neatly into either of these external categories. While these elements might be considered intrapersonal, they were grouped within the external category (as Personal)

because they require interaction to be realized, and thus were less applicable to the intrapersonal categories that were presented within the Individual categories.

One's communicative competency is based on one's Communicative Predisposition: If one is not willing to engage in ICC, one cannot become competent in it. This predisposition is informed by one's Communicative Realism, that is, what one knows about and expects from the less-than-exact process of communication, particularly with dissimilar others. From these foundational elements, the more typical elements are built: Linguistic Knowledge (verbal, paralinguistic, and nonverbal) of the other's language or a lingua franca, Sociolinguistic Knowledge in how language is applied within social settings, Nonverbal Astuteness in comprehending and applying appropriate nonverbal and paralinguistic communication, and one's Listening (and observation) Skills in interaction. Interestingly, the works of Chen & Starosta (1996) and Fantini (2000) seem to imply that the issue of second language use does not necessarily require that one know the host language, but that sufficient knowledge of *any* language other than one's mother tongue creates the essential mindset regarding how language intimately impacts IC interaction. A separate point about Listening Skills is that these can be used outside of one's personal interaction, as they can be practiced in observing/listening to others in exchanges in which one is not participating. Finally, one's Behavioral Flexibility to changing situations and the nature of one's Communicative Expression impact how the dynamics of ICC transpire.

Related to the actual communicative skills are those of the interpersonal factors of IC and ICC competency. One's Interaction Posture (i.e., one's skills in avoiding automatic reactions and in establishing rapport and an environment mutually conducive for effective communication) and Other-Orientation form the basis for one's Interaction Management. These three elements, then, support one's ability to achieve the three other elements of this category: Identity Support (i.e., recognizing and affirming the salient identities of the interlocutors), Relationship Development with dissimilar others, and Task Cooperation (i.e., effectively exchanging information that leads to cooperation, trust and the mutual achievement of goals). It is important to note, however, that Task Cooperation reflects not only the achievement of specific goals each has for the interaction, but also the general success of interacting successfully.



The Personal elements are those gained from ICC interaction but which are directly related to the individual and his/her benefit. These subcomponents are termed Social Ability, which includes social relaxation and the ability to express oneself appropriately and fully; Task Orientation, which involves one's ability to get one's own goals met, irrespective of the nature of the interaction, and therefore is distinct from Task Cooperation, and to address one's own aesthetic needs through coordinated activities with dissimilar others; and Contentedness in IC Action, which reflects one's enjoyment and happiness in IC interaction and the effects of such interaction on professional/personal development.

The purpose of this synthesis was to not only create a more comprehensive look at the various elements of competency presented by theorists, some of which are similar constructs but with different names, but also to see more easily the relationships between these elements. Overlap occurs within categories because very few skills are truly independent. Often, an ICC (relational) component has a strong internal component, and an IC (individual) component requires an external component to reach its full potential.

Such a synthesis also provides a framework in which to explore related skills or traits within broader categories, or perhaps surface currently unnoticed factors. It also allows for expansion of subcategories and definitions, as well as the elimination of confusion created by theorists who discuss competency components by citing factors of interpersonal action when in fact the element under discussion reflects primarily an intrapersonal process. Perhaps most importantly, it demonstrates how complex the competency construct really is. The often-cited competency components of knowledge, emotion, and skills do not provide enough depth to allow researchers to fully explore the multiple subcomponents of competency and/or to create programs to facilitate competency development, nor do they provide clear direction for individuals who seek to analyze and develop their own individual abilities on the competency continuum.

Caution must be stated regarding the presentation of such a synthesis. First, its compactness can belie the complexity of the competency construct, as noted above: IC competency and ICC competency cannot be reduced to a stable or static list of factors or characteristics that one can possess or perform, but rather must be understood as a dynamic process (Ramsey, 1998). One's personal competence continually evolves, just as the definition of what

constitutes IC competence is shaped and reshaped by the natural processes of exploring culture (Deardorff, 2004). Moreover, there is no one single way to behave competently (Lustig & Koester, 1996), and thus no single way to pursue its development. How the multiple factors of competency are expressed will vary according to the individual, his/her experiences and abilities, the IC context, and the specific choices one makes. Thus multiple paths may be available to achieve a competent communicative exchange, and many ways in which an individual can display an interculturally competent demeanor.

Furthermore, awareness of—or even demonstration of—the various elements of competency does not immediately make someone competent. Using a metaphor of thick and thin ice to describe cultural difference, Michael Berry (1998) explains that developing ICC competence is more than simply learning to skate well with others on their culturally different thick ice. More importantly, he notes, is the ability to recognize where the thin ice begins and, if one finds oneself on thin ice, to have the resources to return to the thick ice. This underscores that IC competency is not achieved through “objective knowledge” (i.e., concrete knowledge gained through simple academic study of another culture that allows the prediction of a dissimilar other’s behavior), but through “phenomenological knowledge,” in which one’s experiences are the process through which IC capabilities are developed, interpreted, and understood (Klak & Martin, 2003) and which allow one to recognize the IC quality taking place within a communicative exchange (M. Berry, 1998) that one is participating in or observing.

Finally, as Deardorff (2004) points out in her study of components of IC competence, a key criticism of existing definitions of the components is that they are too general in nature. Each of the subelements of the competency construct, as synthesized in Table 3.2, needs to be further specified to be of concrete use in the research, assessment, and development process of IC competency.

### **3.2.4 Measuring or assessing competency**

The calls for establishing a comprehensive and accurate definition of competency and the components it encompasses is more than just a sound exercise in academic pursuit. Such consensus is essential for the creation of measurement instruments so that teachers and learners can determine progress and depth of knowledge, or pinpoint areas needing improvement.

Competency is a process, not an end point; it is a continuum—and never fully realized. This continuum is conceived differently by various researchers, such as between interpersonal and intergroup relations (Gudykunst & Lim, 1986, in Wiseman, 2001), or between inadequacy and competency (Lustig & Koester, 1996; Ting-Toomey, 1999). Everyone is incompetent in some interaction and there are many paths to competency (Lustig & Koester, 1996). The multifaceted nature of competency results in an “ongoing and lengthy—often a lifelong—process” in which one is always in the state of “becoming,” even for experienced IC communicators (Fantini, 2000: 29). Each of these realities, and particularly taken together, complicate the process of creating competency assessment tools.

While embracing Spitzberg and Cupach’s (1984) chief criteria of competency as effectively fulfilling one’s goals for interaction in a way appropriate for the context and the individuals involved might seem simple enough to manage, achieving such success requires participants to be able to recognize the multitude of factors at play in their immediate communicative environment and to be able to manipulate them and assess them on an ongoing basis to obtain their goal, a significant challenge indeed, even if the communicators are able to identify their actual goals (Wiseman, 2001). Much of this work involves internal thought processes and capabilities aimed at an external action. Measuring only the interaction ignores all of the internal work while giving emphasis to external factors over which the individual has no control, and sometimes not even influence.

Because of this reality, Y. Y. Kim (1992, cited in Deardorff, 2004) cautions that IC competence should not be assessed on the basis of performance outcomes because all IC encounters involve a dynamic process among two or more people and multiple contextual factors, all which codetermine the outcome of the communication. It is not possible to isolate just one of these elements as responsible for success or failure in the communicative process. Further, Kim notes, by assessing IC competence based on performance—whether subjective or objective—the domain of competence then “floats” within the contextual and relational conditions unique to each IC encounter, and cannot contribute to defining a construct that is consistent across the myriad types of IC encounters. Therefore, Kim believes, IC

competence should be assessed on a person's overall ability to facilitate the communication process with dissimilar others.

Some components, such as knowledge and skills, are often quantifiable, and can be assessed concretely via quantitative instruments (Byram, 1997; Fantini, 2000), although it is important to not simplify the complexity of competency just to be able to conduct objective measurement. Equally—if not more—important in IC interaction toward competency are attitudes and awareness, which are more difficult to assess (Fantini, 2000). Thus, theorists are challenged with finding measurement tools that measure the complex components of competency, yet are clear and coherent (Byram, 1997).

The call for more evaluative instruments that sufficiently assess the complexity of the competency construct in action has been raised frequently (Byram, 1997; Chen & Starosta, 1996; Deardorff, 2004; Fantini, 2000), in addition to a call for the use of more diverse methods. Deardorff (2004) concludes from her review of the literature that, although a diversity of qualitative methods could be used to measure competency, the primary means for assessing IC competence is through self-report instruments. Other methods of assessment include questionnaires, case studies, peer evaluation, staff/teacher evaluation, third-party observers, interviews, portfolios, professional analysis, document analysis, and essay writing (Byram, 1997; Chen & Starosta, 1996; Deardorff, 2004; Fantini, 2000; Finkelstein, Pickert, Mahoney, & Barry, 1998). Bennett (2004) emphasizes that any measurement of experience must be phenomenological, using qualitative or non-parametric quantitative methods (such as content analysis).

In some cases, self-report instruments are used in combination with a second measure (Chen & Starosta, 1996; Deardorff, 2004) to provide more valid and reliable outcome assessment results, although any discrepancies between self- and other-report measures would be difficult to reconcile with currently available instruments (Chen & Starosta, 1996). Therefore, evaluation processes undertaken should be holistic to allow for the assessment of complex skills (Byram, 1997), explore both discrete and global knowledge and skills (Fantini, 2000), and identify any transformation in participants' thinking about cultural difference, which facilitates subsequent learning (Finkelstein et al., 1998).

Furthermore, assessment outcomes should not consist of a single score, which is static, but rather present a “thick” description of achievement (Byram,

1997). In addition, because competency is a process, it is best assessed using multiple methods at multiple assessment points; one specific measurement is not sufficient in assessing IC competency (Deardorff, 2004; Fantini, 2000).

Byram (1997) advocates the use of threshold levels in creating assessment structures for learners, providing attainable goals to which learners can aspire, but which might be different for various learners or components of competency. Further, he recommends that, for individual learners, sequential thresholds for the same component can be established, gradually raising the competency level of the learner over time. Thresholds provide an adaptable way of viewing specific strategies and processes for IC competency development, or can accommodate the personal stages of cognitive development and readiness for IC development (Orton, 1999). Such thresholds and multiple assessment points also can help stave off any discouragement that learners may feel, particularly in the subjective state of evaluation based in dyadic ICC.

Yet the literature raises criticism of the competency methods currently used. Straffon (2003) rightly criticizes that much of the research on IC competence, ICC competence, and IC sensitivity has been based on adult populations, international exchange students, and sojourners. Bradford et al. (2000) concur, noting that older subjects, in particular, possess more interpersonal and intercultural experiences that can skew data regarding perceptions of competence. Furthermore, little research has focused on IC competencies in members of a host culture as a participant distinct from the sojourner or immigrant.

Klemp (1979, cited in Deardorff, 2004) notes that components of competency are typically measured as individual constructs when, in reality, multiple components are in play simultaneously during IC interaction. Deardorff suggests competence needs to be measured as a whole rather than as separate elements.

Finally, the nature of competency assessment is influenced by cultural values. Members of various cultures may hold distinctly different perceptions of or attitudes toward the components of competency, the process of competency development, or the use of assessment instruments (Chen & Starosta, 1996). This is particularly important in that many of the competency development programs and assessment instruments are based on Western cultural norms, practices, and expectations. In addition, the very design of the

instrument can affect the interpretation of the data in regard to what constitutes competence and how it is perceived (Bradford et al., 2000).

### **3.2.5 Competency defined for this study**

If nothing else, the previous subsections have demonstrated the complexity, fluidity, and current lack of clarity on the concept of and terminology on competency in IC situations. Many theorists define ICC competency as appropriateness and effectiveness in interaction with dissimilar others, although many go on to supplement this simple definition with factors and issues that demonstrate the complexity of this multifaceted construct. It is a disservice to the concept of IC competency and to researchers, trainers, and practitioners to define the construct in general and vague terms. If the concept is presented as easy to achieve with little effort or thought, then the construct is meaningless. If it is presented as too complex or difficult to achieve, the construct is impractical and discouraging. To benefit all involved in the IC field, the concept of IC competency must be clearly defined, sufficiently complete, holistic, and usable. While my hope is that theorists in the field can work more consciously toward standardizing terminology and concepts for the benefit of research, education, practice, and assessment, that is not a reality now. Therefore, until this vision is fulfilled, it is essential that researchers delineate their vision of the competency construct to guide their research.

In creating my conceptualization of IC competency, I operate from several assumptions, based on the literature:

- 1) One's communicative (ICC) competence is a construct distinct from IC competence, although both are frequently in play simultaneously (Y. Y. Kim, 1991). ICC competency is the external expression of one's internal (IC) competency. Therefore, it is assumed that communication between dissimilar individuals is an aspect of IC competency—certainly an essential element—but a subelement nevertheless. This view is supported by Saville-Troike (1982: 23, cited in Collier, 1989: 291), who argues, “Communicative competence must be embedded in the notion of cultural competence, or the total set of knowledge and skills which the speakers bring into a situation.” ICC competency naturally assumes that it is affected and enhanced by (and affects and enhances) one's own IC

competency. Indeed, it would be a unique individual who could communicate competently interculturally without some level of IC competence. But the distinction is important because it can affect how one views, develops, and assesses competency.

- 2) IC (internal) competency embodies the broader construct for several important reasons: (a) While development of ICC competency requires interaction with others (one cannot communicate in isolation), one's internal IC competency development can take place, on some level, outside of interpersonal interaction—through observations, reading compelling documents or literature, or observing media, and then reflecting on these; (b) Intercultural issues involve a good number of emotional issues that one must master that either assist in or detract from one's ability to interact well with dissimilar others. While interaction may bring these emotions to the fore, one's own internal work helps discover and resolve some emotional issues outside of interpersonal interaction; (c) The only control one really has in any given situation is over oneself. How one manages externally is driven by what one thinks, knows, feels, believes, intends, and desires internally; (d) Most IC theorists accept that competency is a process and not an outcome, and thus an ongoing learning process. Gauging IC learning only by the behavioral outcome overlooks the essential other elements of learning, such as the thinking, feeling, and perceiving processes of competency; and (e) At any given time in an IC interaction or observation, a multitude of stimuli are being experienced that must be acknowledged, evaluated, prioritized, and reacted to (even if that reaction is to disregard, defer, or downgrade them). Some stimuli are self-created and unconnected (other than within the mind of the actor) to the interaction at hand. How we react to these stimuli impacts our strategy selection or external behaviors (positively, negatively, or neutrally); the process to address them is strictly within ourselves.
- 3) The conceptual domain being considered here is that of competency—the process of development—rather than competence, which is a state (Teodorescu, 2006). The choice of competent strategies and practices is a goal, of course, but actions absent the cognitive and emotional processes do not suffice in making an individual competent, as it might

be simply a case of good luck. One must understand what is being implemented and be able to self-assess the complete process, and thus IC and ICC competences are the measurable steps one takes to progress along the IC competency continuum.

- 4) IC competency is conceived as a multifaceted, complex, ongoing process that develops over time with the benefit of knowledge, attentiveness, experience, and self-evaluation. It is not a single point or goal, but rather a never-fully-achieved continuum, and cannot be reduced simply to assessment of between-coactor judgments (see Gudykunst & Kim, 1992; Y. Y. Kim, 2001). While individuals may reach a state on the continuum in which they regularly choose strategies that are effective and appropriate in their ICC interactions, no one ever achieves perfect competence in all situations. Additionally, there are multiple means for learning and behaving in a competent manner, even in similar circumstances. As unique individuals, we each bring a one-of-a-kind combination of knowledge, experience, personality traits, emotional pre-conditions, and so on, to each unique IC exchange.

The goal of this study is to determine if individuals can develop their IC competency through social interaction with dissimilar others. This is assessed not only through what the subjects report they perceive and know but also in how they explain adaptations within their behaviors that could reflect what they learned. Therefore, because of the lack of consensus on the definition, but drawing on the bountiful research, I propose the following definition that guides my research and my analysis: *Intercultural competency is a fluid process in which an individual from one culture has developed sufficient capabilities in a number of individual (attributional, affective, and cognitive) and relational (communicative, interpersonal, and personal) components to understand the pervasiveness and impact of culture on the thinking, perceiving, interpreting, reacting, and behavior of oneself as well as on members of other cultures. Moreover, the individual is able to use this knowledge to adapt internal and external processes toward, and to select and implement appropriate choices for, a successful outcome when interacting with dissimilar others. Finally, the individual possesses the ability to evaluate and learn from experiences of self and others on an ongoing basis, so as*



*to continually improve both internal and external abilities and knowledge.* This definition is supported by the variety of components that work together to develop one's IC capabilities (see Table 3.2) and, in a cyclic manner, one's IC competency.

Finally, most of the research detailed in the literature, as well as the models, theories, and competency components identified by IC theorists over the years, have been drawn from situations in which an individual enters and lives for a period of time in a culturally dissimilar environment. Few of the studies have focused on the experiences of host nationals who interact with incoming dissimilar others. It remains unclear whether the process of developing IC competency while remaining within one's home culture is different in any way than for those living in a dissimilar culture, which IC competency components an at-home individual can develop—and to what degree—and what factors facilitate or detract from the development of competency at home, as compared to in a host country. Perhaps the difference between IC competency developed via abroad versus at-home communication lies not in outcome but in the journey toward competency.

### **3.2.6 Issues in intercultural skills development**

Research studies in recent decades on a concept called “contact hypothesis” (e.g., Allport, 1954; Amir, 1969; Brewer, 1996; Gaertner, Dovidio, & Bachman 1996; Pettigrew, 1997, 1998a; C. W. Stephan & W. G. Stephan, 1992) have indicated that interethnic and IC encounters do not automatically result in the development of IC competence. In fact, if critical incidences occur that are not evaluated and reflected upon at the cognitive, affective, and behavioral levels, then stereotypes and prejudices can be reinforced (Otten, 2003). In addition, neither age/maturity nor prior travel (Bhawuk & Brislin, 1992; Orton, 1999), nor even competence in a second language (Bhawuk & Brislin, 1992), necessarily guarantees learning success or the development of IC sensitivity. Programs offered for cultural enrichment or intercultural awareness, while they may contribute to developing participants' curiosity about how dissimilar others live (Barnlund, 1998) and perhaps allow the opportunity for some change in IC attitudes (Klak & Martin, 2003), do not cultivate skills that are applicable to successful IC interaction with members of the cultures studied (Barnlund, 1998). For IC learning to be fruitful, IC contact must be facilitated to some degree (Pusch, 2004; Teekens, 2003;

Ward, 2001) and involve reflection upon the experiences with dissimilar others (Brewer, 1996; Gaertner et al., 1996; Teekens, 2003).

Effective learning requires training programs that address the full spectrum of the IC competency construct: affective, cognitive, and behavioral knowledge and skills (Paige & Martin, 1996), and can be facilitated through working support that focuses on a IC novice's unique learning process and self-perceptions (Matinheikki-Kokko, 1999). Cognitive learning can be conducted theoretically or experientially, such as with the use of case study analysis (Saunders, 1997), and ideally would involve some level of understanding of a target culture's history, political structure, arts, language, and popular culture (Barna, 1998; Byram, 1997; Paige & Martin, 1996). Cognitive development also involves, among other things, expanding the learners' critical thinking (Yershova et al., 2000) and nonjudgmental observation and investigative processes of events and behaviors around them, such as by developing skills in description, interpretation, and evaluation (DIE, Martin & Nakayama, 1997; see also Barna, 1998).

Behavioral and cognitive skills can be developed through games, role-playing, and simulations within the classroom or, more productively, through experiences in interaction with dissimilar others. The goal here is to provide learners with an ability to perceive their assumptive world and that of members of another culture, to be able to identify the norms that govern their interpersonal relations, and to function in a social system that is different but no longer incomprehensible (Barnlund, 1998). The learning in behaviors/skills development is furthered through deep discussion of experiences, debriefing following simulations, or through assessment methods, such as learning diaries, essays, group presentations, and the like, that facilitate self-awareness, self-knowledge, and self-acceptance, which in turn lead to other-awareness, other-knowledge, and other-acceptance and tolerance (Ting-Toomey, 1989: 361).

Equally important are the affective elements of IC growth, although they are often overlooked because they are both difficult to effectively present, particularly in a class setting, and to assess (Boyle et al., 1999). Yet, IC sensitivity and true IC competence requires that one fully understand what it means to be the "other," a feeling that usually includes discomfort, disorientation, stress, or frustration (see, e.g., Boyle et al., 1999; Y. Y. Kim, 1991, 2001; Lustig & Koester, 1996; Martin & Nakayama, 1997), to truly understand themselves and to

gain sensitivity and empathy toward the experiences and emotions of dissimilar others. Learners must also understand that strong emotional reactions are natural and to be expected (Lustig & Koester, 1996) but also need to be controlled and channeled to serve effectively as motivators and regulators in social perception and interaction (Matsumoto, Wallbott, & Scherer, 1989).

Whether through formal training or facilitated experiential learning, changes in knowledge, perceptions, skills, and attitudes can be developed. The goal, ultimately, is a transformation in the meaning one draws from experiences (Mezirow, 1991; Taylor, 1994) in interacting with dissimilar others.

### **3.3 Theoretical Foundation for Study**

Theories guide research by providing frameworks through which we can observe, measure, and interpret a phenomenon, as well as providing a means by which we can compare and integrate new research findings with other studies (Wiseman & Van Horn, 1995). Polkinghorne (1983, cited in Wiseman & Van Horn, 1995) emphasizes that no single theory could guide the entirety of human inquiry, and so diversity in approaches in studying a phenomenon contributes to the overall understanding of that phenomenon that is refined during empirical testing, verification, and replication.

A theory, therefore, should (a) provide an explanation, (b) provide a prediction for the social phenomenon, (c) help control social behavior, (d) be heuristic, and (e) serve as an inspiration for further understanding (Wiseman & Van Horn, 1995). In the field of IC communication, and competency in particular, there are a growing number of theories and models. While many address specifically the defining of the concept, others address the processes involved in developing the construct or applying it. This section presents several theories that have relevance to this particular study. The theories are then critiqued regarding their direct applicability to the specificity of this study.

#### **3.3.1 Contact hypothesis**

Drawing on a diversity of studies, Allport (1954) concluded that prejudice between groups could be reduced through interpersonal contact, provided four conditions were met: (a) there was equal status among group members within the contact situation, (b) the group members were pursuing a common goal, (c) a level of intergroup cooperation existed (i.e., members perceive an

interdependent effort toward the common goal rather than competitiveness), and (d) the group had institutional support (i.e., the laws, customs, or the local authorities or environment support and encourage the group formation and efforts). This finding has become known as the *contact hypothesis*.

Amir (1969), also in a review of multiple studies on interethnic interaction, confirmed Allport's findings but found that the nature of the contact (intimate vs. casual, pleasant and rewarding vs. unpleasant and stressed) affected the level to which the prejudice was reduced, noting that unfavorable conditions can strengthen prejudice. Amir also questioned, among other things, whether the positive attitude change was a result of the contact or was a precursor, that is, were the subjects whose prejudice decreased more open to intergroup contact as compared to those who experienced no change or did not participate in the studies? Pettigrew (1998a), in his own review of intergroup research, echoed this and additional concerns, particularly regarding the processes by which contact changes attitudes and behavior, and whether and how positive effects of contact generalize beyond the immediate contact situation.

In 2000, Pettigrew and Tropp (cited in Dovidio et al., 2003, and Pusch, 2004) conducted a meta-analysis of more than 200 studies investigating the contact hypothesis (47 of which focused on international contact; cited in Pusch, 2004). Their analysis found a reduction in intergroup bias was demonstrated for both majority and minority participants (cited in Dovidio et al., 2003), particularly when the four conditions stated by Allport (1954) were met, and that the reduction in prejudice typically generalized beyond the immediate participants and situation to members of the "other" group; a larger reduction in the manifestations of prejudice existed when there was interethnic contact among friends and within optimally structured programs; and that the dynamics of intergroup contact appeared stable across a variety of demographic groups (cited in Pusch, 2004). From this research, Pusch (2004) suggests that the contact hypothesis can result in a small but significant reduction in stereotypes in a variety of contact situations that do not meet fully the four conditions articulated by Allport, but the effects are larger when all four conditions are met, and that negative factors, such as anxiety and threat (see also C. W. Stephan & W. G. Stephan, 1992), can heighten prejudice as a result of intergroup contact.

Much of the literature on the contact hypothesis focuses on how situational contact generalizes to the broader outgroup, and specifically the role of identity in intergroup interaction. While some theorists advocate making existing group membership categories (identities) less salient in intergroup contact so that personal rather than group identities are the primary in how group members perceive each other (see, e.g., Brewer, 1996; Nesdale & Todd, 2000), other theorists recommend that membership identities remain salient in the contact setting, but that the contact situation should encourage the creation of distinct but complementary roles through which group members contribute to achieving shared goals (see, e.g., Brewer, 1996; Brown, Vivian, & Hewstone, 1999; Brown & Wade, 1987; Nesdale & Todd, 2000), or encourage dual identities (Gaertner, Mann, Dovidio, Murrell, & Pomare, 1990; also, e.g., Brewer, 1996; Gaertner et al., 1996; Nesdale & Todd, 2000). Each of these perspectives has specific philosophies in how the positive effects generalize to the outgroup. Pettigrew (1998a) suggests that these three models are not contradictory, but rather represent a sequential process of generalization, with each model reflecting a specific relationship of the group members over time.

Six studies in intergroup contact seem particularly related to my study. First, Pettigrew (1997) studied nearly 4,000 Europeans in four countries, finding that friendships with outgroup members hold a special significance in the reduction of prejudice, as well as in generalizing the positive effects of intergroup contact to a wide variety of out-groups beyond the immediate contact outgroup. The change in attitude appears to be a two-way cumulative process, meaning that intergroup friendship reduces prejudice and reduced prejudice increases the likelihood of additional friendships with dissimilar others. While positive progress regarding prejudiced attitudes was found for other groups measured (coworkers and neighbors), the effects were considerably smaller than for friendships. Pettigrew interpreted the results to mean that intergroup contact effects can create affective ties in addition to accurate cognitive understanding of the outgroup.

Pettigrew (1998a) also raised the possibility that such positive effects of intergroup contact can be experienced vicariously, that is, that members of the ingroup who are not personally involved in the contact situation can acquire a reduction in prejudice as a result of an intergroup friendship of their ingroup friend or relative. Wright and colleagues (1997), who investigated the issue in

relation to anxiety within intergroup contact, drew on the research of W. G. Stephan & C. W. Stephan (1985) to propose the *extended contact hypothesis*. This model parallels Pettigrew (1998a) regarding positive attitudes toward members of the outgroup based on an ingroup peer's friendship, and thus the perception of "my friend's friend is my friend" being extended to mean that "my group member's friend's group is my friend" (Wright et al., 1997: 76).

In a related study, Voci and Hewstone (2003) found that frequent, high-quality interaction among members of dissimilar groups decreases the level of intergroup anxiety in situations where group membership was salient, while high levels of intergroup anxiety predicts negative outgroup attitudes and subtle forms of prejudice. Meanwhile, Levin, van Laar, and Sidanius (2003) conducted a longitudinal study with 2,000 White, Asian, Latino, and African American students at an American university, finding that students who exhibited higher levels of ingroup bias (the difference in degree of positive feelings toward one's own group and that of dissimilar others) and anxiety in interacting with dissimilar others at the end of their first year at university had fewer outgroup friends and more ingroup friends during their second and third years and a more negative attitude toward members of other ethnic groups at the end of their college career. Alternately, students who had multiple outgroup friendships and fewer ingroup friendships during their second and third years demonstrated lower levels of ingroup bias and intergroup anxiety at graduation.

Finally, Nesdale & Todd (2000) conducted an IC intervention involving two Australian multicultural residence halls. Their results indicated that Australian students in the experiment group (receiving orientation, hall tutorials, and multicultural recreational activities) had significantly greater IC contact within the residence and on campus than did the control group of Australians, although they found no difference in the level of contact by the international students in either hall. They conclude that proactive intervention is necessary for the generalizability of favorable attitudes toward dissimilar others.

### **3.3.2 Model of intercultural expertise development**

Theory informs practice (Paige & Martin, 1996) by functioning both as predictive and explanatory components of action (Bhawuk & Triandis, 1996). Drawing on previous research that indicates people transfer knowledge gained

in training to their work environments and that study participants who had learned a related theory performed better than those who were uninformed, Bhawuk & Triandis propose the model of intercultural expertise development. This model reflects a progressive learning process toward expertise, as outlined by Anderson (1990, cited in Bhawuk & Triandis, 1996).

Individuals go through three steps to develop expertise: (1) the *cognitive stage*, where they learn the procedures (“declarative” knowledge) but need to make an effort to recall and apply learning; (2) the *associative stage*, at which they can convert the knowledge and learn new tasks as they perform the steps in order (use of “procedural” knowledge); and then (3) the *autonomous stage*, where the skills become more automatic and rapid because the learners can now use broad principles to complete the task and to solve other problems with the same information. Further, Anderson (Ibid.) distinguishes between *tactical learning*, where individuals recognize the common elements in a particular problem-solving process and, as they become more proficient in applying these elements, they develop a tactic that allows them to solve the current problem and other related problems more quickly, and *strategic learning*, where individuals use principles and theories in solving problems. Larkin (1981, cited in Bhawuk & Triandis, 1996: 18) found strategic learning is what distinguishes experts from novices. Byram (1997: 106) supports this finding, noting the field of cognitive science makes a distinction between novices and experts: They “differ from each other not just in ... the extent of their knowledge, but also in the types of models they have constructed for themselves, the types of conceptions and understandings they bring to a problem and the strategies and approaches they use.” But this expertise does not come easily, as Henderson (2004) notes, because even very bright students struggle with the idea of how theory applies to professional problem solving.

From this theoretical background, Bhawuk and Triandis (1996: 19) categorize people into four levels of intercultural capability:

1. A *lay person* possesses no knowledge of another culture, although they acknowledge that since most people around the world have been exposed to dissimilar others, this category is most likely an ideal.
2. The *novice* possesses some degree of IC knowledge, developed from either one’s extended period of living in another culture without any

formal IC preparation, or a formal IC (culture-specific) training program. This level relates to Anderson's cognitive stage.

3. An *expert* is a novice who has acquired the knowledge of cultural theories that facilitate more meaningful cognitive organization of cultural difference and improved classification of issues and events related to unique IC interactions. Because of the ability to interpret and apply knowledge more broadly, experts are in the associative state.
4. The *advanced expert* possesses the theoretical knowledge and enough practical experience in IC interaction to be able to perform IC tasks automatically, which corresponds with Anderson's autonomous stage.

Bhawuk and Triandis (1996) emphasize that the nature of the IC training makes a difference: Cultural theory-based IC training will make a person an expert, whereas training that does not use theory will result only in novices. Similarly, the advanced expert must have behavioral training and/or significant experiential opportunities to make their theory-informed behaviors habitual.

### **3.3.3. Transformative learning**

The concept of transformative learning as presented and understood here draws on the extensive body of research on experiential learning, which is extended into the unique processes of adult learning and intercultural competence development. Although the literature is brimming with information and models on experiential learning, David Kolb's (1984) model of experiential learning is by far the most widely cited (J. O. Brown, 2002; Saunders, 1997).

Kolb's (1984, 1993) model drew heavily on the works of Lewin, Dewey and Piaget, as well as Freire, in laying out the cyclical nature of learning, in which new knowledge, skills, or attitudes are developed through the interplay of four distinct learning abilities: *concrete experience* (able to be involved fully, openly, and without bias toward new experiences), *reflective observation* (able to observe and reflect on experiences from various perspectives), *abstract conceptualization* (able to create logical and sound theories from observations), and *active experimentation* (able to use derived theories to make decisions and solve problems). These four abilities are actually two polar dimensions, with concrete experience and abstract conceptualization creating one dimension, and reflective



observation and active experimentation the other. Learning, then, takes place as one moves along the dimensions, from one pole to the other.

Learning is the major adaptive process of humans to the surrounding physical and social environments (Kolb, 1984), and thus is a continuous process rather than an outcome. Experiential learning derives from an emphasis on the immediate concrete event as the means for observation and reflection, the outcomes of which are then assimilated into a “theory” that the person forms. This theory becomes the foundation for deducing new implications for action that are tested either immediately or at the next opportunity. The testing provides feedback that allows the person to make new observations, reflections, and theories.

Learning also occurs through the confrontation of one’s expectations and actual experience, which often do not correspond. Through reflection upon this gap, and then acting on the outcome of that reflection, one transforms the world as one sees it (Kolb, 1984, 1993).

Jack Mezirow (1991) delved deeper into the purpose and outcome of transformation, motivated by the findings from psychological studies that indicate it is “not so much what happens to people but how they interpret and explain what happens to them that determines their actions, their hopes, their contentment and emotional well-being, and their performance” (Ibid.: xiii). Furthermore, because conception determines perception—and reality becomes so only by an individual acting on it, whatever one’s current interpretation of reality—it is always subject to revision or replacement (Mezirow, 1991).

Noting that childhood learning is culturally based, and thus one’s perspectives are shaped by one’s language, culture, and personal experiences, Mezirow advocates a concept of adult learning that defines new meanings and develops new perspectives independent of one’s cultural socialization. Transformative learning, therefore, involves reflective assessments of the underlying premises of thinking—identifying and judging these presuppositions—and then transforming distorted, inauthentic, or invalid premises into new meaning schemes (Ibid.).

Meaning is an interpretation of events and objects (which include the actions of others); each person construes daily experiences and tries to make these interpretations coherent within their individual meaning structures. But the

suppositions used for categorizing these meaning schemes are suspect, based on one's prior socialization. Transformative learning, however, interprets old or new experiences from a new set of expectations, thus giving new meaning to an old experience (Ibid.). This is accomplished through the process of reflection.

“Reflection is the central dynamic in intentional learning, problem solving, and validity testing through rational discourse. Intentional learning centrally involves either the explication of the meaning of an experience, reinterpretation of that meaning, or application of it in thoughtful action” (Mezirow, 1991: 99). Mezirow, however, makes a distinction between reflection and thoughtful action (the concept that many theorists attach to the term reflection). While thoughtful action requires the higher-order cognitive processes for analyzing, performing, discussing, and judging, the process invariably draws on prior learning and categories to make inferences, generalizations, discriminations, and assessments. Reflection, however, critically assesses the content, process, or premise(s) that are foundational to experiential interpretation and meaning. Content and process reflection are the mechanisms through which beliefs, attitudes, opinions, and emotional reactions (meaning schemes in Mezirow's terminology) are changed—created, extended, confirmed, negated, or viewed as problems. However, premise reflection is a much deeper self-reflection, an exploration of the how and why of the often social-, cultural- and language-bound assumptions and presuppositions that form the criteria for construing meaning and deriving expectations of events and objects that constrain the way one perceives, understands, and feels about the world. In-depth assessments allow one to develop more inclusive, discriminating, and integrative perspectives, and to act on these new understandings.

Furthermore, perspective transformation can occur either incrementally, through multiple transformations in meaning schemes that result from dilemmas or other significant actions, or suddenly as a result of some epochal event. But Mezirow (1991) also notes that a “disorienting dilemma” could be a conversation, book, media event, or the process of interacting with another culture—anything that challenges one's presumptions about reality.

Edward Taylor (1994) applied Mezirow's vision of transformative learning to the field of ICC, to create a learning model for becoming interculturally competent. He notes that the dissonance that an individual experiences when in

an unfamiliar environment requires that he/she begin to look at the world from a different perspective. But an inclusive or integrated perspective does not come about naturally or effortlessly. It requires a learning process of doing and reflecting, involving both one's mind and emotion and which elicits a personal response to the events or people observed or interacted with (Ibid.), as well as a willingness to be personally involved in the exchange (Wilson, 1982).

Taylor (1994) notes that Mezirow's theory of transforming one's perspective and worldview as a result of confronting incongruent experiences in a new environment readily applies to what sojourners and immigrants must do in order to become interculturally competent, and who would benefit from the context of a structured learning program (Boyle et al., 1999). IC competency reflects the characteristics, skills, and abilities of a person, as well as the manner in which they perceive and think about others (Taylor, 1994).

Three elements (precondition to change, the process of change, and the outcome) are linked with the learning process to achieve intercultural competency in Taylor's model, emphasizing the essential integration of theory and practice. Taylor (1994: 404) notes, "critical reflection alone will not lead to a perspective transformation; it needs to take place in conjunction with action and discourse. It also means seeking out new skills and knowledge" to lead the individual's reinterpretation of meanings of old and new experiences, which develops IC competency. This view suggests, minimally, some sort of formal learning environment, such as a course or training period, that involves the learner's cognitive, affective, and behavioral development and, for the full benefit of experiential learning, exercises that draw together all four phases of Kolb's (1984, 1993) learning cycle (Kreber, 2001). Eyler (2001) emphasizes the need for the reflection process to be continuous, course content or other cognitive processes connected to the experience, learning situations challenging so that students must confront their assumptions, and teachers remaining vigilant toward the many difficult issues in competency development.

Attention to the affective responses, which can be discomfoting or feel threatening, must be part of the process so that participants can grow through the experiences and gain better self-understanding and new sensitivities (Boyle et al., 1999). However, experiential learning, in particular the reflection process, may be deeply affected by dimensions of

cultural variability. Experiential learning and self-directed reflection may be compatible with many Western (individualistic, low-hierarchy) cultures, but such processes may not be as effective in collective cultures, particularly those with traditional (teacher-centered) education systems (Speece, 2002).

### **3.3.4 Mindfulness**

The construct of mindfulness, posited in 1984 by Ellen Langer (Langer & Moldoveanu, 2000a; see also Mezirow, 1991; Ting-Toomey, 1999), has undergone a great deal of scholarly investigation and criticism (King & Sawyer, 1998), and has been applied in various fields, such as business, intergenerational interaction, education, and communication studies (Langer & Moldoveanu, 2000b). Ting-Toomey (1999) makes mindfulness a critical element of her identity negotiation theory.

In its most succinct definition, mindfulness is the process of drawing novel distinctions (Langer & Moldoveanu, 2000a: 1). However, this process has the additional outcomes of keeping one attentive to the present; making one more aware of the context of action in which one is immersed and one's perspective on events, consequently helping a person to be more open to the information available within the environment; and more willing to seek multiple perspectives as explanations for what is transpiring (Ibid.).

Often, mindfulness is seen as the polar opposite of mindlessness, which Langer & Moldoveanu (2000a) defined as relying on rules, routines, and categories from past experience, irrespective of the uniqueness of the current situation (Ibid.). Ting-Toomey (1999: 46) describes the state of mindlessness as one operating on "automatic pilot," without conscious thinking about or reflection on one's behavior, being reactive rather than reflectively proactive in interaction, while Mezirow (1991: 115) defines this state as "clinging to a previously formed mind-set when we encounter a similar but new situation" and thus uncritically using prior labels for new events or behaviors. Mindlessness is associated with errors in judgment, perception and interpretation; simplistic attributions; reactive or defensive emotional responses; and stereotyping and prejudice; as well as feelings of anxiety or boredom and reduced potential for growth (Langer & Moldoveanu, 2000a; Mezirow, 1991; Ting-Toomey, 1999).

However, some scholars take exception to mindless behavior being indiscriminately cast as an evil, when there can be positive benefits of acting mindlessly (Burgoon, Berger, & Waldron, 2000; King & Sawyer, 1998). First, individuals can draw novel distinctions even when one's mind is running communication subroutines automatically (Burgoon et al., 2000). Second, the need to pay full attention to multiple stimuli can be cognitively draining. Mezirow (1991) points to psychological research indicating that people try to reduce their cognitive load by relying on familiar schemata and minimal cues to guide their actions. Therefore, when applied appropriately, some automated behaviors not directly relevant to the intricate meaning of the interaction allow more cognitive attentiveness to be applied to the essential tasks (Burgoon et al., 2000). In fact, trying to focus on too many things can negatively affect the overall interaction (King & Sawyer, 1998). Moreover, some communicative skills and processes can be rehearsed or habituated so that they can be enacted without the need to consciously think through the steps (Burgoon et al., 2000; King & Sawyer, 1998), or can be run at a lower level of consciousness until one perceives the need to attend to that particular element of the communicative exchange (Burgoon et al., 2000). Finally, competent communicators often have a planful direction for the exchange. Even if they are not consciously planning each specific step of the interaction, they are proceeding in an overall mindful way within an arsenal of flexible communicative skills, and are alert to unusual aspects (Burgoon et al., 2000; King & Sawyer, 1998) or to new information that would vary one's position or reaction (Langer & Moldoveanu, 2000a).

What cannot be automated, however, are the key elements of message production or interpretation, and the evaluation of the coactor or his/her behavior. Mindfulness requires one to be aware of one's own assumptions, viewpoints, and ethnocentric/self-centered tendencies, while simultaneously attending to the perspectives and alternative interpretations of events and the exchange, and operating with a willingness to change methods, if necessary (Ting-Toomey, 1999). Moreover, mindfulness can facilitate the identification of commonalities and dissimilarities that exist among people and groups (Ibid.). The complexity of social interaction offers interlocutors a wealth of potential information—the content, structure, and sequencing of the verbal component, as well as paralinguistic and nonverbal cues, many taking place quickly and

simultaneously—which intertwine with each interlocutor’s cognitive processes, and which impact one’s mindfulness or mindlessness (Burgoon et al., 2000). Yet, even with the myriad stimuli competing for our attention, Ting-Toomey (1999) notes that mindfulness is a learned process of “cognitive focusing” that can be mastered through skillful and repeated practice, particularly through the practice of mindful listening that is “unencumbered by preexisting categories that constrain the attention of the listener to a prespecified set of characteristics of the other” (Langer & Moldoveanu, 2000b: 137).

### **3.3.5 Intercultural adaptation**

Young Yun Kim (2001) proposes a systems approach to IC communication and, ultimately, cross-cultural adaptation. Communication is the means through which a child is enculturated into one’s primary culture, as well as the vehicle through which one acculturates to a new environment. Knowledge about the new culture is not simply added to current knowledge: One undergoes a process of deculturation, an unlearning of some of the rote responses and attitudes from one’s native culture. Through an ongoing interplay between unlearning the old and learning the new, one undergoes an internal transformation en route to assimilation, the highest degree of acculturation into a host culture that is theoretically possible (Ibid.).

This transformation process—a natural struggle between the need to learn and adapt and the resistance to change—causes stress and the emotional upheaval (uncertainty, confusion, anxiety) that one feels in unfamiliar circumstances. Noting that human nature does not thrive with too many variables to manage, Y. Y. Kim (2001) states that the natural internal movement is toward a resolution of some sort, often resulting in growth into a new way of perceiving, behaving, and knowing. Stress decreases as one adjusts to the new requirements for life in the host environment. Kim likens the stress-adaptation-growth cycle to Mezirow’s transformative learning concept, with an outcome this cycle being host communication competence, the overall capacity of an individual to perceive, receive, process, and produce information in ways that are appropriate and effective within a host culture’s communicative system.

Key dimensions and factors affect the cross-cultural adaptation dynamic: one’s personal communication style (which is often culture bound), one’s social communication (which comprises interpersonal communication and mass

communication), as well as the environment and one's predisposition to adapt (Ibid.). Within the area of interpersonal communication falls host interpersonal communication, meaning one's interaction with host nationals, and ethnic social communication, in which an individual interacts with fellow expatriates or other non-natives. Meanwhile, the environment within the new culture forms the sociopolitical context for any communicative activity and comprises the host receptivity (the degree to which the hosts and their environment is open to, accepts, and supports newcomers), host conformity pressure (the extent to which the hosts and their environment expects and challenges newcomers to adopt the normative communicative patterns), and ethnic group strength (the way the ethnic subculture supports or limits one's adaptation to the dominant culture). These three environmental conditions create the "push and pull" dynamic that the receiving society presents to newcomers (Ibid.: 81). The predispositional dimension reflects the unique temperament, experiences, and sensibilities of each newcomer that affect the cross-cultural adaptation process, and involve one's preparedness for change (the unique readiness one has to undertake the adaptation process in a new cultural milieu), ethnic proximity (the degree to which one's ethnic characteristics, including values and behavioral norms, are similar to and compatible with those of the host culture), and an adaptive personality (the innate personality traits or learned behaviors that facilitate adaptation to a new environment). Y. Y. Kim (2001) lists these essential personality traits as openness (open-mindedness, flexibility, and tolerance for ambiguity), strength (resilience, risk taking, hardiness, persistence, and resourcefulness), and positivity (optimistic, and a good degree of self-esteem, self-trust, and self-efficacy).

Further, Y. Y. Kim (2001) states that the three dimensions of internal change (host communication competency, environment, and adaptive personality) in individuals in unfamiliar environments lead to increased functional fitness in engaging one's daily transactions (including the ability to communicate effectively within the local culture's communicative norms), improved psychological health (through increased internal integration that reflects a sense of internal cohesiveness and confidence) in dealing with the new environment, and the movement from one's native cultural identity to a broad, "intercultural" identity (from a monocultural to a multifaceted

character). This transformative adaptation process is a continuum; people move along it to varying degrees and with varying speed.

### **3.3.6 Applicability of theories for host cultures**

There are several deficiencies in the currently available research and theories as they apply to this study, most particularly the research regarding personal changes in intercultural contact. For the most part, current research has investigated three phenomena. The first is the change one undergoes in interacting with a new culture while in that culture, and these changes include adaptation to new communicative styles; the process of expanding or changing one's worldview and perceptions regarding cultural difference and what is "appropriate" and "valued"; and the stress and/or shock involved in experiencing lifestyles and perspectives that are different from oneself, and so on. The second involves the level and nature of contact between host individuals (often students) and their visiting peers. The third is the change in attitude or perception of the other by means of contact, whether the focus of the study is on the host or on the sojourner (or the immigrant/refugee).

The emphasis of this study, however, is on those who do not leave their country. So studies of the first phenomenon above are only marginally related, since, when one remains at home, many of the stresses of adaptation and exploration are nonexistent, or only marginally influential. These at-home individuals remain within the familiar environment, language, patterns of behaving, knowledge of social or organizational workings, and so forth. They still may have some "shocks" from the behaviors of others, but one can presume that such levels of stress are immensely lower since the host can choose to ignore the differences or escape from the stress into a readily available comfort zone. Studies of the second type are also only marginally related. Understanding the level and nature of contact is useful, but the outcome emphasis (IC learning, IC skills development, or IC competency development) is often not part of those studies' focus. Finally, while the information within the third group of studies is more applicable, the information is not quite exact. Certainly this current study is seeking evidence of change in attitude or perception, but it seeks more: This study seeks signs of IC learning and or skills development on the way toward IC



competency development. So change is good, but how the person sees or understands that growth, and is motivated to do more of it, is central to this study.

Regarding the particular theories and constructs selected to inform this particular study, most, if not all, of these models and theories were created with the idea of an individual entering a new and/or unfamiliar environment. However, when studying the concept of internationalizing individuals within their home university culture, some of these frameworks are limited in fitting with my data.

Most of the research on the contact hypothesis addresses interethnic interaction between majority and minority groups. Within the last decade, more studies (e.g., Liebkind & McAlister, 1999; Nesdale & Todd, 2000; Pettigrew, 1997, 1998a; Voci & Hewstone, 2003) have addressed the IC implications of this construct. Furthermore, most of these studies look at the initial existence of prejudice or separateness between groups. I assume that these issues are not prevalent in these Buddy Project informants since they have volunteered to interact with dissimilar others. However, I do share an interest in whether the participants demonstrate any change in perspective or attitude toward dissimilar others, whether IC contact facilitates IC learning and competency development, and if any changes generalize to cultures beyond their direct contact.

Bhawuk and Triandis (1996) describe a process by which individuals could move from IC novices to advanced experts. However, individuals cannot become advanced experts unless they have substantive “practical” IC experience that allows them to act less consciously. Moreover, concerns arise regarding their terminology and lines of demarcation. Bhawuk and Triandis indicate that an individual can become an expert through theoretical training plus time abroad *or* general conceptual understanding of cultural distinctiveness (the qualifications for being a novice). Taken at face value, this means that one could be considered expert without extensive interaction with dissimilar others, either at home or away. While unlikely, this definition could mislead at-home individuals and program creators to think expertise can be developed without deep practical experience, in other words, without the testing of the theory. Additionally, it seems quite a large leap from understanding and applying theory to being able perform IC tasks automatically, just as there seems to be a similar large jump between the novice and the expert (with only theory being the difference). Perhaps recategorizing the steps would address this concern: lay person, novice (only general knowledge of

cultural different and/or significant time in another culture), apprentice (knowledge of theory plus experience in other country or skills training at home), expert (growing expertise in applying theory in practical IC interactions), advanced expert (practical experience so as to be able to interact with dissimilar others at home or away with decreased stress and increase appropriateness and effectiveness) and IC competent (behaving as advanced expert more automatically). Nevertheless, while I am concerned about the very broad brushes in establishing the categories proposed by Bhawuk & Triandis (1996), I do agree that a theoretical grounding is essential for most people in order for them to choose appropriate strategies for IC interaction and to develop IC competence.

The concepts of experiential learning (Kolb, 1984, 1993) and transformational learning (Mezirow, 1991) were not conceived originally as IC processes, although Taylor (1994) and Y. Y. Kim (2001) demonstrate their applicability. Since the participants in my study are in fact young adults, and Mezirow emphasizes that transformational learning is an adult learning process, it seems that these theories hold potential for IC learning toward competency, particularly in an at-home environment.

Langer's concept of mindfulness (Langer & Moldoveanu, 2000a), particularly as elucidated for the intercultural field by Ting-Toomey (1999), has applicability within the IaH environment. Further, it would be enhanced by coupling it with the transformative learning concept. The reflective aspect of transformative learning seems to add value to the mindfulness concept in that it allows not only for the preplanning and in-situ application, but also in evaluating past circumstances for learning opportunities, particularly critical perspective reflection.

Y. Y. Kim (2001), in her introduction to her book *Becoming Intercultural*, notes that her framework could apply to multicultural circumstances within, for example, a national culture. However, in an email reply to my interest in exploring this possibility more closely, Kim emphasizes that her theory applies primarily to situations in which individuals experience a significant level of cross-cultural adaptation (Y. Y. Kim, personal correspondence, March 24, 2005). In this particular study, at-home students are not in circumstances that require their adaptation and, in fact, it is strictly voluntary participation within a familiar environment. Nevertheless, I believe there are elements of her theory that would apply to this study, particularly (a) elements of the cultural learning

(acculturation) and the unlearning rote responses and attitudes (deculturation) in adjusting one's behavior within unique IC situations, which could lead to internal transformation; (b) the stress cycle, with expected decreases over time and with experience, would theoretically exist in some situations, although probably not nearly as strongly as if one were in another culture; (c) the role of the participants as members of the host culture and their adaptation processes of the native language (or lingua franca) to facilitate interaction; and (d) the predispositional issues. While Kim's point about the Buddy Project participants not being exposed to the significant level of cross-cultural adaptation is valid, I do think the fact that these individuals have volunteered to participate indicates, at some level, a willingness to engage the dissimilar other for some benefit, and might suggest that these individuals would be inclined to truly engage the differences and learn from them.



## **4 RESEARCH METHODS**

In initiating this thesis topic, I soon discovered that little research exists regarding the development of intercultural (IC) competencies within the home culture. Although voluminous literature exists regarding the process individuals undergo in adapting to another culture, I was seeking an entirely different perspective. While some of the literature addresses the role of the host culture in the adaptation of others, little research explores how individuals within that host culture feel about their own IC interactions or ways to coexist with the culturally dissimilar when at home. Therefore, my research study seeks, at the very least, to identify a variety of feelings, perceptions, and understandings that, in this case, young Finnish university students—particularly those who have not lived in another culture—see in IC exchanges. This requires a personal exploration of the issues, and thus a qualitative study: Qualitative studies often examine the lived experiences of others in order to understand and give meaning to these experiences (Byrne, 2001: 830).

Several theorists provide a foundation for this research (see Section 3.3). Theories provide an explanation, a way at looking at the world and thus the research, and provide a prediction for how the research will operate, either at a philosophical or concrete level (Creswell, 1998; Silverman, 1993; Wiseman & Van Horn, 1995). Some criteria useful in selecting good theories to guide cross-cultural interpersonal research include the explanatory capability, parsimony and simplicity, logical consistency, the power to inspire the research, as well as validity in the intercultural arena (Ting-Toomey & Chung, 1999). Silverman (1993) emphasizes that, while theories provide the impetus for the research, they are “living entities,” meaning that they can be developed further or be modified by good research. This point is important for this research project since most of the theories used as a foundation were intended for a different subject group. By applying these theories to a new audience, they will be extended further and become useful for individuals with a wide variety of intercultural experiences.

### **4.1 Qualitative Method of Research**

Silverman (1993) states that a methodology is the general approach one takes in research; it establishes how one will go about studying the topic of interest. Depending on the methodology selected, certain techniques are employed. In

viewing the nature of my research questions, it became clear that a qualitative methodology allows me the versatility needed to explore the perspectives and experiences of the Finnish students in their interactions with foreign students.

Through a qualitative approach—and there are a number of choices and traditions within this overarching approach from which a researcher can choose—the researcher tries to build a holistic understanding of the problem or topic under investigation (Creswell, 1998) by looking at, in this case, the words used by the informants to convey their views and experiences. This is accomplished often through an inductive approach and guided by a set of beliefs or assumptions regarding, among other things, the researcher's perspective on the nature of reality and the relationship between the researcher and those being studied (Ibid). Because I am interested in the phenomenon of interacting interculturally within one's home environment, and I wish to understand the experiences as well as the significance and meaning the informants place on these experiences, I took a phenomenological approach to my research.

Succinctly, a phenomenological research method starts from the perspective that individuals' lived experiences of phenomena are reliable data to understand the nature of these events and aims to capture the full experience of the phenomenon and its environment and influences through as accurate as possible descriptions of the subjects' experiences (Groenewald, 2004). Phenomenological studies are approached without a preconceived framework, and since no single method will be appropriate for all research enquiries, design methods are quite flexible in exploring the phenomenon of interest (Byrne, 2001; Groenewald, 2004; Holroyd, 2001). Further, the phenomenological perspective recognizes that the researcher cannot be fully detached from his/her presuppositions, and so this must be acknowledged and addressed specifically within the process (Groenewald, 2004). But through a process called bracketing, the researcher strives to place his/her preconceptions of the phenomenon aside to fully explore the phenomenon through the voices of the informants (Creswell, 1998). Finally, the exploration of the data in phenomenological research is less an analysis (evaluating small bits of data) than an *explication*, in which the elements of the data are viewed in relation to each other, and remain constituents of the phenomenon as a whole (Ibid.; Groenewald, 2004; Holroyd, 2001). In regard to this particular study, I planned for and conducted the data collection with a clear

idea of the areas of the phenomena. I wished to explore through the informants' experiences, although I had no expectations of what I would discover, and was willing to move as the informants felt comfortable.

Fieldwork and qualitative interviewing are the primary means for qualitative research. Although they provide different lenses on a topic, both would have been appropriate for my particular research questions. Observing the informants in natural interaction would have provided data that embodies the "eternal present," whereas intensive interviews provide insight into what the informants say and mean, thereby extending the temporal range of data gathered from the past and into the future (see Warren, 2002). It is this wider range of data that brings more depth to this particular study.

Because the exact variables of the phenomenon were not established before data collection, a qualitative study provided me the flexibility required to explore the topic however was needed for describing the phenomenon and in understanding the relationship between variables (see Creswell, 1998; Groenewald, 2004; Holroyd, 2001; Silverman, 1993). Qualitative studies provide avenues for both deep and broad exploration of the informants' experiences, which was important for this study because the landscape for at-home IC interaction has not been concretized and the phenomenon needed to be studied within the context of the informants' experience. While such a goal might have been achievable through a field study, it was perhaps better attainable through qualitative interviews, because the structural flexibility of the questions drew forth information on the phenomenon that was intertwined with the lived experiences of the informants. The report of a qualitative story reflects the personal nature of the data, allowing the researcher to acknowledge his/her role in the investigative process, and to emphasize that he/she is an "active learner who can tell the story from the participants' view rather than as an 'expert' who passes judgment on participants" (Creswell, 1998: 18). Participants in qualitative studies are viewed as "meaning makers" rather than "passive conduits" of information. The purpose of qualitative interviewing, then, is to derive interpretations from what is said, rather than from facts or measurable data (Warren, 2002).

Of course, there are challenges related to this methodology. First, it is time consuming to gather the data and to process them into a usable form. The data explication process is quite complex and time-consuming as well, because

qualitative research results in large quantities of data that need to be reduced into a few meaningful themes or categories. And since quotations from the informants are useful for illustrating the data, the reports are often longer than a quantitative study. But most important, the combination of a qualitative methodology and social/human research often results in a process that does not have firm guidelines or specified procedures but rather is fluid, evolving, and changing, thus challenging the researcher to confirm how the study will transpire and how others might judge it when it is complete (Creswell, 1998). This also means that while the researcher may develop a plan for gathering data, there needs to be room in the plan to accommodate emerging issues (Ibid).

#### **4.2 The Selection of Informants**

When determining whom to study in investigating the topic of interest, researchers must establish some strategy by which to select the individuals. How those criteria are decided depends on the focus and goal of the research project. Because qualitative interviewing is intended to derive rich meaning on the topic, the researcher may try to either minimize or maximize the differences between the interview informants (Warren, 2002). The number of people to interview also must be decided. Warren states that if one plans to interview the informants just once, but intends to look at a diversity of patterns, then more informants are needed. Boyd (2001, cited in Groenewald, 2004: 11) regards 2 to 10 informants sufficient to reach saturation of the topic. Creswell (1998), who calls the process of establishing criteria and seeking the appropriate individuals “purposeful selection,” recommends long interviews with up to 10 persons for a phenomenological study.

Because I was interested in whether and how individuals who will never live abroad can develop intercultural competencies or skills, my primary criterion was that the individual had not lived abroad longer than a month, moved up from my original intention of no time abroad because many of those participating in the Buddy Project (BP) had taken brief language studies abroad, usually lasting 2 to 3 weeks. However, it is hard to see this change in a vacuum, so I decided to interview a few individuals who had lived abroad longer (and assumed to have developed some IC competencies in the process). For the most part, I interviewed individuals who participated in the Buddy



cohort group of autumn 2003. However, an opportunity presented itself for me to be able to interview all four Finns from a single group from the previous year (autumn 2002 and spring 2003), and I thought that opportunity might bring some interesting perspectives and/or comparisons, since all of these individuals interacted with the same foreign students.

To find the informants from the 2003 group, I initially sent out an exploratory questionnaire to the e-mail list established for that BP cohort shortly after the program kick-off in late September 2003. The exact number of participating Finns is not known because some people registered but did not attend the kick-off and some attended but did not register (and therefore were placed into groups on the spot by the organizers). However, there were 38 groups, with 4 to 5 Finns per group, meaning somewhere between 152 and 190 Finnish students participated that semester. In the e-mail questionnaire, I explained my research interest and asked individuals to respond with the following information: name; sex; year of study and number of credits earned; field of study; if they have lived abroad for 3 months or longer and, if so, where and for how long; and if they had not lived abroad that length of time, do they want to and, if so, when and where. Again, I have no idea of how many students received this message, but 40 responded (a response rate between 21% and 26% based on the 152 to 190 Finns who attended the kick-off). Of that group, 19 had not lived abroad, 5 had lived 3 to 6 months abroad, and 16 had spent between 6 and 12 months in another country.

I then sent a message via e-mail to all of these respondents explaining again the nature of my researching and asking if they would be willing to be interviewed. Four people responded: One person had never lived abroad, one had lived abroad less than 6 months, and two who had lived abroad longer than 6 months. I arranged interview times with all of them. Then I sent a message to the entire BP list, and was able to book interviews with a student who had lived longer than 6 months abroad and three who had not lived abroad. During the course of the interviews, I applied the “snowball” process, and gathered four more informants, only one of whom had lived abroad for more than 6 months, for a total of 12 informants from the autumn 2003 cohort. Some of these individuals also had participated in Buddy cohorts prior to the autumn 2003. With the “alumni group” Finns, the total number of informants came to 16.

In summary, my interview group involved 12 individuals who had not lived abroad yet (4 of whom comprised the alumni group) and all but one was interested in living abroad at some point, and 4 individuals who had spent at least 6 months abroad. However, there was technical problem with the interview of an informant who had not lived abroad, so her responses were not included in the analysis. The data, therefore, were drawn from 15 interviews.

Questions arose regarding how representative this group is of their peers in the autumn 2003 Buddy cohort, of all buddies, or of University of Jyväskylä (JyU) students in general. In addition, there was concern that only one interviewee fits the profile (had not lived abroad and does not intend to) of my research interest. Hammersley (1992a, cited in Silverman, 1993) presents three methods that can be implemented to generalize the analysis from a small number of individuals to a larger population. One can use a quantitative study comprising random sampling of cases to find comparisons; one can conduct multiple coordinated ethnographic studies; or one can compare the data from the smaller study to the analyses of larger samples to establish a sense of representativeness. In my case, I cannot provide such means of generalizing the data, so, as a result, the analysis will apply only to these individuals. However, the results do provide material for supposition and contemplation of possibilities for a wider sample.

### **4.3 Themed Interviews**

Multiple stages of the interviewing process have been identified by Steiner Kvale (1996, cited in Warren, 2002), ranging from thematizing (deciding the focus of the research topic and how it fits with the interviewing method), to designing the research plan, interviewing, transcribing, analyzing, verifying, and reporting. While the actual interview can take one of many forms with accompanying styles, methods, benefits and limitations, all with the goal of building the “common cultural wisdom about people, places, manner, and contexts,” ultimately each no better than the person using that particular form (J. M. Johnson, 2002: 103).

In the context of this study, I conducted themed interviews, established within broad topic areas related to the experiences of the Buddy Project and IC interaction. The goal in creating the questions was to cover a variety of topics to allow the informants the freedom to emphasize aspects of their experiences and to reflect on what these experiences could mean for them interculturally.

Knowing that the responses to these questions would provide the material from which I would draw “cultural inferences” and “thick descriptions of a given world analyzed for cultural patterns and themes” (Spradley, 1979, quoted in Warren, 2002: 85), I asked questions from six broad themes (demographics, their personal Buddy experience, the nature/structure of the BP, perceptions of culture-in-action via the BP, the processes regarding intercultural relationships, and their expectations and outcomes regarding their IC learning/experiences), designed to obtain background, general experiences, and thoughts on and feelings about their IC interaction, all presented before the focus of my particular study was explained. Then, after providing the informants with a synopsis of my research goals, I asked a series of questions that addressed my specific interests, particularly their interest and experiences in learning about intercultural issues.

The questions represented my desire to understand the meaning of the respondents’ experiences (Warren, 2002), and therefore were intended to be open-ended and flexible (Creswell, 1998; Warren, 2002), allowing for emergent ideas and issues (Charmaz, 2002). Therefore, the questions within the themes were not necessarily presented as a block to the informants, but often were mixed. Not all questions were asked of every individual. Additional specific questions that addressed unique issues presented by the informant but not necessarily related to the themes were included as warranted. As a result, the exact form of the themed questions evolved throughout the interview process, meaning that while all interviews were based on a foundation of similar questions, specific additional questions were formulated for those with special reasons to be included (i.e., the alumni group, those who have lived abroad). In addition, questions were added or reformulated as the interview process proceeded because I learned much from the first interviewees that influenced the quality of the interviews toward the end of the process. The latest versions of the themed questions are provided in Appendix C.

The interviews were scheduled via e-mail at a convenient time for the subject (in November or December 2003 or March 2004) and held in a workroom within the university’s main library, except for one that was held in an office in the university’s Agora building. Interviews were audiotaped with the permission of the informant; each individual confirmed verbally on tape and by a signature on a written consent form (see Appendix D) his/her permission for

his/her words and meanings to be used as part of my current and future research, with the condition of anonymity (see Creswell, 2003). The questions were then posed in a relatively systematic manner, within the desire to allow the informant to work with me in understanding his/her experiences and perceptions. I tried, as Charmaz (2002) recommends, to strike a balance between hearing the participants (and, by extension, sharing their recollections and meanings) and probing. The length of the interviews ranged from 50 minutes to more than 2 hours (over two appointment times). The informants were encouraged to add additional topics or thoughts as they felt appropriate.

Martin and Nakayama (1997: 26) emphasize that scientific research of other peoples “is never entirely separate from the culture in which the researchers are immersed.” This reality means that I, as the researcher, must understand the Finnish communication style and how that, and my own U.S. American communication style, affected the interview process and the meaning of the words used. In addition, since qualitative interviewing can be characterized as a “guided conversation” in which the researcher listens carefully the meaning behind the words conveyed (Warren, 2002: 85), I needed to be sensitive to how my own culture, assumptions, and perspectives could affect the understanding of the informants’ meaning (Charmaz: 2002; Warren, 2002).

Ryen (2002) points out that rapport in intercultural interviews can be influenced by differences within how each culture views the process. While I did not perceive a great difference in what I as a U.S. American interviewer and they as Finnish interviewees perceived, expected, and accepted as the nature of the interview process, there was a major imbalance in regard to the language of the process. The interviews were conducted in English, my mother tongue and a second language for all of the informants. While none of the informants claimed to have a problem with this, the fact that the individuals had to express themselves in a second language could affect their meaning (see Teekens, 2003).

My intention with the interviews was to gain an authentic understanding (Silverman, 1993) of the informants’ perspectives and experiences regarding the Buddy Project specifically, and culture and cultural learning in general. But I recognize that because these were self-reported recollections, the data gathered do not necessarily reflect the reality of the interactions between the Finns and their international buddies (see Silverman, 1993).

#### **4.4 English as the Lingua Franca of the Buddy Project**

The issue of language use has implications for this study, as it does for the Buddy Project, the internationalization of teaching and learning, and any IC interaction at JyU. Although the language used for the majority of degree programs and courses at JyU and the mainstay of official communication on campus is Finnish, English has become the most frequently used alternative language for teaching and learning, particularly when foreign students are present. This reality is by no means unique to JyU—or even to Finland (Altbach, 2004a; Bollag, 2000; de Jong & Teekens, 2003; Nilsson, 2003). English is, by default, the language of the Buddy Project. While the BP does not insist on English as the lingua franca for the program, all of the correspondence, announcements, and orientation are presented in English. The individual groups can decide their own lingua franca, and the option to request special interests, including language, theoretically increases the likelihood of such. In practice, however, English serves as the communication medium for the BP.

The implications of this on my study are two-fold. First, Ting-Toomey (1989) reports that individuals secure in their ethnolinguistic identities—how their feelings about their native language affect their self-concept and ethnic/cultural identity salience—more willingly engage in active information-seeking regarding the behaviors of those culturally different and are more likely to cultivate deeper levels of intergroup relationship than do those with insecure in their ethnolinguistic identities, for whom conversations in which role identity or personal identity have salience oftentimes become strained or awkward. This could mean that Finnish students with strong ethnolinguistic identities are more likely to consider participation in activities with foreigners such as the BP. Meanwhile, Gudykunst and Gumbs (1989) cite work by Giles and Johnson (1981) regarding language as a vital aspect of the identity of members of ethnic groups. While this most directly applies to one's mother tongue, it seems logical that it could also apply to one's second language, particularly if one has been studying it for a long time and one is in the role of host (as would apply to the Finns in this study). Therefore, a Finnish student with less confidence in his/her English language skills may refrain from joining an activity, such as the BP, that is built around conversation in English. This would mean a smaller percentage of Finnish students willing to engage international students in social activities.

The second issue related to language is that the Finns who do indeed join the activity will be communicating in a second language with their BP peers, who also most likely will be speaking English as a second language. Gudykunst et al., (1989) note that language cues often activate stereotypes, while Giles and Franklyn-Stokes (1989) indicate that how one views the language characteristics of one's co-communicator can profoundly affect the assessment of that individual, as well as the attributions of his/her intent. Both of these issues can deeply impact not only the nature of interaction, but also the motivation of the Finn to continue long-term in the activity. This is compounded by the fact that any given group could include individuals from several cultural backgrounds. In short, the use of English—or any language other than Finnish—can negatively affect the Finnish student's motivation to initiate participation or to continue participating in the BP once it is in process.

All of these issues, therefore, also affect this study. Because I, as the researcher, am not able to manage a conversation in Finnish to any substantive depth, the interviews with the Finnish students were conducted in English. It is impossible to know for sure, but it seems probable that by asking in English for Finnish volunteers to participate in this study, those who felt insecure in their ability to communicate their thoughts adequately in English might have declined the opportunity to participate, even though they most likely would have experienced the program within the English *lingua franca* and their experiences and perspectives might have enriched the data. And even those who did self-select as interview participants were challenged to understand the full meaning of the some of questions posed and to express themselves, often regarding abstract concepts, without the benefit of their mother tongue. Despite assurances from the interviewees, it is most likely that data is less rich, less complete, and less representative than if the interviews were conducted in Finnish.

#### **4.5 The Data Interpretation Process**

When undertaking a qualitative study, the interpretation process involves multiple steps, encompassing all of the efforts following the collection of the data. These steps represent intimate elements of the analysis, as each plays a role in creating a picture from the data and in assuring the validity of the study.

This study focuses on the explication of the content of the words spoken in the interviews, focusing on *what* was said by the informants regarding their BP and IC experiences, rather than *how* it was said (see Poland, 2002). As will be described more fully below, the interpretation of the data followed a modified grounded theory process (see Creswell, 1998), meaning that the process of the grounded theory approach was followed in general, but that the end product was not intended to be a theory but rather a greater understanding of whatever progress the informants made regarding their IC learning or skills development.

#### **4.5.1 The post-interview process**

At the conclusion of the interview, the content of that informant's audiotape was converted into digital form. This was done by playing the tape and recording the sounds into the AudioCorder software program on an Apple Macintosh computer. This allowed for the ability of a time code to be assigned to utterances, which would result in easier identification and retrieval of quotes from both the audio and transcribed versions at a later date.

The next step was the transcription of the spoken interviews, all of which were completed by the researcher. Beginning with the first transcription, a "clear and consistent syntax" was created to note pauses, laughter, interruptions, and paralinguistic information (see Poland, 2002: 637) so that these elements could reflect as much accuracy and realism as possible of each informant's interview. Hesitations, pauses, and fading words, as well as notations on specific body movement, were indicated to try and capture on paper the paralinguistic and nonverbal information that supplements the actual words used (see E. T. Hall, 1998; Lustig & Koester, 1996).

Once the transcription was completed, the spoken interview was listened to at least twice more to assure as much accuracy as possible. This was essential since the informants used English as a second language and some spoke more clearly than others. However, the pursuit of accuracy was tempered by Silverman's (1993) caution that there is no such thing as a perfect transcript of a tape recording. In addition, because many of the elements of interpersonal communication—specifically the nonverbal communication—cannot be captured on an audiotape, it was understood that the audiotape itself, and its subsequent transcription, could never be a verbatim record of the interview (see Poland, 2002).

Ethical issues surfaced regarding the transcription process. As Poland (2002) points out, spoken dialogue usually appears disjointed, sometimes inarticulate, and perhaps even incoherent when presented in written form—particularly when care was taken to make clear the pauses, incomplete sentences or thoughts, interruptions, and so forth. Therefore, the potential exists for respondents to appear less articulate or polished on paper than the same content would be perceived when spoken. In this study, even though the informants were not native speakers of English, transcriptions of their utterances did not seem incoherent. Still, when necessary, I as the researcher added within brackets clarifying words to convey the perceived meaning and to assist in the readability of the quotations.

In addition, attention was paid to removing identifying information in the informants' comments, which included elimination not only of their names, but also any other information that might allow others to identify individual respondents by way of the inclusion of certain facts. This was difficult in some instances because the interviewees included multiple individuals from the same group. Removing too much information might compromise my and future researchers' ability to contextualizing the respondents adequately within data analysis (see Poland, 2002).

Finally, ethical issues can result from unintentional misunderstandings or misrepresentations of the informants' meanings, resulting from transcriptions errors that substantially alter the intended comments (Poland, 2002). Poland suggests providing a copy of the transcript (or initial analysis) to the respondents so that they might verify the accuracy of the interpretation. I concurred with this suggestion, particularly because of the use of English by nonnative speakers in this study; I wanted to be assured that what the respondents said was, in fact, what they *intended*, and not just that I transcribed their utterances correctly.

Sending the transcript to each of the informants for their review and comment not only allowed me to validate that the transcription and its intended comments were correct from the interviewees' perspectives, but it also allowed me to probe for more information. Respondents were encouraged to add additional—or alternative—comments to the now-written responses that comprised the interview data, since they now had additional time to think more about the issue than they did during the interview. And, in almost all circumstances, I asked for additional information. For some respondents, their comments begged for clarification or



additional probing, opportunities I missed during the actual interview. For others, I asked new questions, often the result of a conversation with another subject that elicited curiosity regarding how others might address that issue. All of this helped improve the trustworthiness of the transcript data (see Poland, 2002). However, not all informants took the opportunity to confirm the transcripts or to offer clarifying or additional information.

Poland (2002) makes two more important points regarding the nature of transcribed data from audio interviews. First, he emphasizes that these data present information about an interviewee at a moment of time that, at best, reflects a unique encounter between that individual and a particular researcher, rather than expressing a “window” into the life of the person researched (p. 644). His second, more important, point is that no matter what finally rests on the paper as the data from the interview, that information is open to “multiple, alternative readings, as well as reinterpretation” with every reading, and therefore the data present the potential for “contested meanings and divergent interpretations” of the significance of what is said (pp. 635–636).

#### **4.5.2 Data review, coding and further interpretation**

As noted earlier, my approach to data interpretation was a modified grounded theory process, which involves an initial attempt at developing categories that illuminate the data, seeking to “saturate” these preliminary categories with appropriate cases that illustrate their relevance, and then developing these categories into more general analytic frameworks that hold their relevance outside the setting of this particular study (Silverman, 1993: 46). However my modified grounded theory effort comprised only the first of the analytic processes in my study. My interpretation process involved various elements of data coding, of quantifying any perceived movement in the related activity of the informants, and a comparison of my work with other theorists. This reflects Creswell’s (1998) point that qualitative data analysis is a custom-built process, devised to accomplish one’s vision for the research topic.

The first step of my data interpretation involved multiple readings of the data over several months, in line with the grounded theory process (see Creswell, 1998). The purpose was to allow the general ideas and points made within the 15 interviews to percolate and to begin to form categories naturally.

These categories, their descriptions, and related thoughts were captured in notes, observations, suppositions, and questions. The goal of this process was to inductively allow the particulars of the responses to compose specific categories (Ibid). The categories were not created from any expectation or directive from literature, but rather from the concepts, perspectives and experiences of the informants. This parallels the interviewing process in which a multitude of questions on various themes were asked in order to elicit as much potential as possible from the participants.

Eventually, an initial list of themes, identified by verbal codes, was created from the relationships among the various categories (see Appendix E). The transcripts were then read again, with an eye toward applying verbal codes to the words that represented the categories within the themes. This process of classifying the data involved “taking the text...apart” and looking for categories or dimensions of information that embody the content (Creswell, 1998: 144), as well as seeking relationships among the categories that embody the phenomenon as a whole. Use of the codes helped sort the texts more clearly for further explication (Ibid), as this pivotal first analytic step moved me from description toward a conceptualization of these descriptions by distilling the meanings of the data without compromising the essential properties (see Charmaz, 2002). Over time, as the classifying continued and the nature of the categories was refined, several quotes shifted within categories or into new codes. This refining involved studying not only how various themes and related comments fit together but also what did not fit, what if anything was not reflected in the data, what seemed irrelevant, and what seemed interesting simply by its existence (see Silverman, 1993). All of this work led to the ability to present the data in some digestible form that addressed the research questions at the heart of this study.

The second phase of the interpretation was to use the qualitative data to somehow quantify any demonstration of IC learning or skills development by the informants as a result of their BP experience. Silverman (1993: 204) recommends that it is sometimes useful “to use certain quantitative measures, however crude they may be” in order to establish a certain feel about the data. In this study, such a process was conducted through the selection of specific skills from the larger set that reflect IC competency, as surfaced by various theorists, some of which are provided in Table 3.2, as well as a new construct that

seemed to arise from the data, and the assigning of a rating on the selected skills for each interviewee. All informants were involved in this type of quantification in order to see how those who have lived abroad 6 or months rate compared to the at-home students.

Finally, the literature was explored to find researchers who have presented typologies for individuals who are most likely to either benefit from IC interaction or to be effective in their assignments in other cultures. Two typologies were selected. The categories that surfaced inductively from the comments were applied to the categories of these theorists to see if there were any similarities or differences. In particular, I was seeking whether my informants reflected the results of previous studies, or perhaps offered new aspects worth further study.

#### **4.5.3 Validation of data**

The issues of validity (the extent to which a report accurately represents the social phenomenon it studied) and reliability (the degree of consistency in the categories that would be named by different researchers or by the same researcher on different occasions) of one's data and findings is an appropriate concern no matter what one's theoretical orientation, methodology, or use of qualitative or quantitative data (Silverman, 1993). Various researchers offer validity and verifications procedures (see, e.g., Creswell, 1998; Silverman, 1993). Of these procedures proffered, this study attempts to address the issues of validity and reliability through triangulation (various means of processing the data, some based on the studies of other researchers; Creswell, 1998; Silverman, 1993) and rich, thick description and use of quotes in the data presentation, which will allow the reader to decide the transferability of the data (Creswell, 1998).



## **5 COMMENTS & OPINIONS OF FINNISH BUDDIES (DATA)**

The categorization and review of the interviews resulted in 764 individual comments of significance from the 15 informants who comprised the data set. Through the explication process, these comments were grouped into 65 coded terms within 10 categories (see Appendix E). These were further explicated in 15 themes within four areas of emphasis, which are presented here.

This chapter presents data in two topic areas. First, I report the informants' comments as themes within four areas of emphasis: the individuals' experience of the Buddy Project (BP); the BP as a intercultural (IC) learning process; other avenues of IC interaction for the informants; and the impact of English as the lingua franca for the BP and this study. The categories of the interpretation process do not directly parallel the elements discussed in the themes because not all categories have been included in this report and others reflect blended data. The second area addresses a rough quantitative assessment of the IC development of the informants as compared to IC traits raised by other researchers.

The quotes drawn from the informants' interviews may have been edited (designated by ellipses for omitted words), but their words, including hesitations and pauses, are presented (see Section 4.5.1). Obvious misspellings (from written responses) have been changed only if the original spelling affected the comprehension of the text. A series of commas at the end of a quote signifies the speaker's voice trailing off, perhaps without completing the thought.

Each quote is accompanied by a code that reflects basic information about the individual. The code includes, in this order, the age of the informant at the time of the interview (numeric), the sex of the individual (F or M), whether the individual has or has not lived abroad for 6 months or longer (Y or N), whether or not the individual intends to live abroad at some point in the future (Y or N), and the order of the interview (numeric). Thus, informant 22FNY09 is a 22-year-old female who has not yet lived abroad for more than six months but intends to, and was the ninth interview of the series, while 24MY15 is 24-year-old, male, has lived abroad more than six months, would like to live abroad again, and was the final interview.

### **5.1 The Informants' BP Experiences**

In understanding how the BP worked for the informants, several themes became apparent: the motivation for participating in the BP, the level and nature of the BP

activity by the individual and/or the group, the informants' recognition of IC expression, factors that affected IC relationship building, and IC relationships and friendships. While not all themes applied to all informants, patterns did surface.

Nearly all of the at-home informants had participated in at least one buddy group cohort prior to the one during which the interview was taking place. The comments from the informants that follow (except the alumni group buddies, whose experiences were from autumn 2002 and spring 2003) are based not only on the respective groups from autumn 2003, but also on the informants' prior or subsequent buddy experiences (referred to in the e-mail follow up). Some comments, when appropriate, express their experiences beyond the BP.

### 5.1.1 Motivation

For the most part, the informants joined the BP for primarily two reasons: to meet international students (out of curiosity, with a desire to learn more about other cultures, and/or to expand their worldview) and/or to practice a language (often, but not exclusively, English). The notable exceptions were those who had already lived abroad 6 or more months: 3 of these 4 informants (and all who had gone on an organized exchange program) wanted to interact with exchange students because they knew what it was like to be a "stranger" in another culture and, because they had such a personally rewarding time during their exchange period, they wanted to experience more of it. Additionally, informant 24MY15 sought to learn more about the exchange students' experiences of living in Finland. A few of those who have not yet lived abroad (referred to here as at-home informants) expressed interest in preparing for their own exchange period. A typical response to why they joined the program is this:

...I've always been very interested in, like, intercultural and international stuff and I wanted to meet the exchange students. Well, um, one reason was that I wanted to practice my English. And I thought that would be a very nice chance for it. [20FNY10]

In probing their interest in meeting exchange students, a few informants noted that they sought experiences of things that are different from what is familiar in Finland [24FYY01, 23FNY04], especially because of the feeling that "the world is getting smaller all the time" [22MNY05]. Two noted their interest in other cultures since childhood [20FNY07, 19FNY13]. A few, such as this individual, made the point of expressing interest in the people, not just the culture: "I want to know them and

know how they are, what kind of people they are. And I would be interesting--interested to know how they live, and something like that" [19FNN12].

While 3 of 15 informants had no firm expectations of what their BP experience would be ("Okay, let's see what is going on [giggles]" [19FYY06]), most had a range of expectations, from improving their language skills [20FNY10], to making friends [23FNY04], to having fun [24MY15], to having an international culinary experience [22MNY05]. These expectations, more likely than not, were left unmet or not realized to the individual's vision. For informants who participated a second time, their expectations often remained the same, except in two circumstances: (a) if they realized they had unrealistic expectations the first time, they modified them to be more attainable [22MNY05]; and (b) if they were quite successful in making international friends, they were less likely to be as excited and/or involved in their second group [23FNY04; 19FNY13].

### **5.1.2 Level and nature of activity**

Clearly, the logistics of the BP groups, in practice, were not that reliable. For example, in establishing the groups, the organizers try to factor in individual preferences (personal interview with Milla Haapala, chairperson of the ESN Jyväskylä subcommittee, December 12, 2002); in actuality, however, most groups represented in this data set were not interest based. In addition, if the workings of these informants' groups are typical, many groups never fully form or remain fairly inactive following the kick-off.

The informants in this study represent members from six buddy groups—five from autumn 2003, and all of the Finnish members (the alumni group) from one buddy group that met first in autumn 2002 and again in spring 2003. Of the groups from 2003, by the informants' reports, only two could be considered successful in that most members met regularly throughout the semester, and neither remained in its original configuration. These two groups from 2003—as well as the alumni group, which also did not form as the organizers arranged—ultimately became self-created groups, formed through the combining of two smaller groups, through personal invitations to international students to join, or through the later placement of international students by the BP organizers. This process of rebuilding the buddy group is significant because it was accomplished through the efforts of some members within the group who were dissatisfied

with their less successful original configuration. The remaining groups in this study maintained their original configuration but are not considered successful because they struggled to arrange meetings on an irregular basis or the group atrophied and there was little depth to the relationships within the group.

### **5.1.3 Recognition of cultural expression**

Most informants said they did notice and/or learn some specific things about the cultures they were interacting with that were different from their experiences with the Finnish communication style, and a few provided quite specific detail about the people they met from various cultures [23FNY04, 19FNY13]; five informants admit that they did not learn much but wished they had. Perhaps the most frequent observations about cultural differences dealt with interpersonal space (proximity of interlocutors to each other), touch (hugs, touching while talking, and cheek kisses), and the expressive use of hands. Many informants noted they conversed with foreign students about specific aspects of life in each other's countries, such as holiday traditions, food, and university life. In the case of two informants, their comfort in expressing themselves in the predominantly southern European communicative style sometimes was misapplied to Finns, resulting in misunderstandings [19FYY06, 20FNY07].

Most informants acknowledged that they had some preconceptions about the cultures of the foreign members of their buddy group, but the specificity of such images varied. Interestingly, two informants insisted that they did not possess any preconceptions about other cultures, primarily because they had never met people from those cultures before [22MNY05, 19FNY13], and apparently had no impressions from the media either. For most informants, they noted that, at least in some form, their images of a particular culture came to play—either through the representative from that culture confirming the preconception or not confirming it (although not necessarily disconfirming it, since the informants acknowledged that they did not know if *this* individual behaved in the “typical” way). But from their responses, none of the informants gave indication that they either held blindly to their preconceived ideas or stereotyped the individuals they met. Most noted something such as, “...well, usually I just have, like, ... all this stereotypes about other countries. But I, well, usually when I meet people then those ideas change totally, and,, [laughs]” [19FNY11], or “I have ideas, but I’m always trying to avoid the



typicalities” [20FNY07]. A few informants, such as this one, noted that they did not feel they knew much about a culture from meeting just one representative:

I don't know if I could make any real conclusions on how a nation or a culture is based on the experience I had got interacting with one individual. I think that's what I thought after those interactions. And also, they were all more or less some kind of “world citizens”, especially [Russian Buddy] and [French Buddy]. Coming from a metropolitan like St. Petersburg or Paris, and they both had already been living abroad for long periods even before coming to Finland. So, I don't think my thoughts on the Russian or French culture changed so much interacting with them. When it comes to [Hungarian Buddy], however, she and her brother and the other Hungarians I met through her, gave me at least some kind of a picture of how the Hungarians are.... And with her, I believe we used to talk quite a lot about these things. We used to compare lots of things in Hungary and in Finland. [23FNY04]

Others emphasized that they did not apply these images when interacting with members from those cultures: “But to be honest, when I get to know new people, I don't pay much attention to their cultural backgrounds or things like that. The importance is in the person, not in his/her culture or home country” [19FYY06].

This attention to the individual caused several informants to consider how much of one's behavior is related to culture and how much to personality. Said 22FNY09, “...if you watch TV so or something and, of course, you have an image what are people in Italian, but then when you meet an Italian, then it's different. Of course, it's always different from their personality because of course everyone is not the same,...” later noting that it is easy to forget the personality component when you only meet one representative of that culture. She then related a story of about a woman she had once met from Russia, who behaved quite temperamentally. She concluded that Russians are temperamental, until she had a Russian man in her buddy group who was not temperamental at all, but was “pretty much like us Finns...” She said she then understood what part of her impression of Russians was misattributed because of the woman's personality.

So what is personality and what is culture is not so black and white [24MY15]. “I can see the difference if I have two Italians. If they don't act exactly the same then, of course, that is personality” [19FYY06]. One informant emphasized the personality element when her Finnish friends comment on the differences in the behavior of her international friends: “I've been saying that to my friends, ‘It's not like they're international, but they are like that,’ because there are a lot of different international people, of course” [20FNY07].

#### **5.1.4 Factors that affect IC relationship building**

Throughout the interviews and in various ways, factors that can either help or hinder relationship development with dissimilar others were discussed. Some factors related to the informant, some to the actions of others, and some to the working of the groups. These factors can be summarized in four categories: time constraints, competing interests, personality/temperament and group dynamics, and commitment to the group.

##### **5.1.4.1 Time constraints**

This took many forms, from causing hesitation in people considering participation in the BP [19FYY06, 19FNN12], to the difficulty in getting meetings scheduled [19FNY03, 22FNY09, 20FNY14], to others not coming to meetings [24FYY01, 20FNY14]. One informant who had lived abroad [24FYY01] observed that part of the problem is that the host students often have more responsibilities in addition to their studies (work or family) than do the exchange students, whose only requirement is their studies. These time constraints are compounded by other factors, such as competing interests, personality/temperament, lack of commitment, and group dynamics.

##### **5.1.4.2 Competing interests**

These interests are quite varied, and include one's attentiveness to studies. Sometimes students, particularly those new to university studies, overestimate their time availability and register for more activities than their schedules can allow [22FNY09]. The university also offers a wide variety of activities that students can pursue, including music, sports, computer groups, and student government [23FYY02]. Finally, students have—or are establishing—a network of friends with whom they wish to spend time. This means that international students and Finns may more likely remain within their networks [22MNY05, 19FNY13] and are less likely to make the effort to meet “strangers” [23FYY02].

##### **5.1.4.3 Personality/temperament and group dynamics**

Several factors related to how the individual feels about himself/herself and or about the others in the group can affect relationship development. Some individuals do not put energy into much other than their studies [23FYY02]. Some “prefer the Finnish way. And, hmmm [pause], I think they're like, they don't get the thing, and they're not so interested or enthusiastic about being with foreign

students” [20FNY07]. Some are quite nervous about venturing into unknown and potentially awkward or difficult interpersonal situations [24FYY01, 24MYY15] and therefore may not participate fully in the group or avoid the program altogether.

This can be compounded by one’s confidence or proficiency in English, or lack thereof [20FNY07]. Or perhaps the foreign student’s English language level was not so high [24FYY01, 22MNY05, 19FNN12, 24MYY15], making the conversation difficult to maintain, and perhaps stunting the relationship.

The expectations that one brings to the group can also affect the interaction outcome. Informant 22FNY09 astutely observes that if group members have different expectations of what the groups can/should be, then it can negatively affect the interaction among members. Some expectations are related to the number and cultural backgrounds of the international members of the group [19FYY06, 19FNY11, 19FNY13], the lingua franca of the group meetings [22MNY05, 19FNY13], appropriate activities [20FNY07, 20FNY14], or the behavior/intentions of other members [23FYY02, 22MNY05]. In at least three of the groups, unmet expectations regarding the number of foreign students resulted in Finnish members taking it upon themselves to find more international buddies to join their groups [23FNY04, 20FNY07, 20FNY08].

Finally, how the members of the group felt about each other also impacted the success of the group and any friendship development. Many informants noted issues surrounding personal chemistry among the group members and shared interests [24FYY01, 19FYY06, 20FNY07, 20FNY10, 19FNY11, 19FNN12], with the assumed correlation that groups who had more of both were more likely to succeed. Age difference (4–5 years) between the members can affect how buddies interact [23FYY02, 23FNY04, 20FNY07, 20FNY10]. Interpersonal attraction and/or group compatibility are an issue in the BP particularly because these groups are arbitrarily assigned. Noted 20FNY07, “It was our group of friends, ... working as well as the buddy program can work. Because it’s, anyway, uh, people, like, put in the group and they didn’t choose each another....” Informant 24MYY15 rightly noted that even if shared interests are lacking among members, it does not necessarily mean the group will fail; it will just take more effort and determination by the members to build the relationships. But when the chemistry among the members and the group dynamic was positive, the energy within the

group continued to feed its development [20FNY07], as the groups engaged in a variety of activities [22MNY05; 19FYY06] and discussions [20FNY08, 23FNY04].

#### **5.1.4.4 Commitment to the group**

One primary factor distinguished successful buddy groups from unsuccessful or failed groups: commitment to meet. Informants spoke about how their group members agreed to set regular meetings, even if every member could not come every time [22MNY05, 19FYY06]. Informant 23FNY04 spoke of the commitment among group members in this pointed way, “It’s almost like a marriage: It’s very much about consciously willing to be together.” However, several informants stated that, from their experience or what they know of other groups that struggled, the international buddies more frequently than the Finnish buddies did not readily schedule meetings and, if they did agree on a meeting time, often did not attend [19FNY03, 20FNY10], sometimes even at the first meeting [19FYY06, 22FNY09].

This commitment and the overall working of the group is facilitated or undermined by the management of the group. Since each group is responsible for its own organization, informants noted that the success of the group depended upon some members assuming the role of organizer [23FNY04, 20FNY07, 19FNN12, 19FNY13], without whom the groups often floundered or failed. The responsibility of organizing often fell to the Finns in the group, because they were the hosts [23FYY02], and served as “a kind of ‘Finnish heart’ in this group—these people who live here and know the places” [22MNY05]. The weight of this responsibility might also cause some Finns to hesitate or decide against participating in the program [19FYY06].

The outcome of these factors depends on, of course, whether it helps or hinders the interaction among the group members and, by extension, impacts the development of relationships. Informants noted several negatives when the groups had difficulty meeting, no matter what the cause. Disappointment because things did not work as expected or hoped was the predominant comment [24FYY01, 23FYY02, 19FYY06, 19FNN12, 19FNY13]. This disappointment often arose either from recognition of the missed opportunity [19FNN12] or from frustration that others did not value the program’s potential as the informant did, particularly foreign students who registered but then did not attend the meetings [22FNY09].

Several informants expressed frustration over the loss of a possible IC friendship because they did not have enough time to meet and get to know their foreign buddies. Unless there was immediate interpersonal chemistry, as there was in some situations [23FNY04, 20FNY07, 19FNY13], informants noted that they needed time to get to know their international buddies [23FYY02, 20FNY08, 20FNY10], something that is often in short supply even if the group is meeting regularly [24MY15]. The group dynamic, then, can be strained in the beginning but becomes easier as the individuals grow to know each other, and through practice [19FNY03, 23FNY04, 22MNY05, 20FNY14].

### **5.1.5 IC Relationships and friendships**

One of the driving forces behind the BP from the Finnish participants' perspective is the hope of making international friends. As the informants noted, this is not such a simple—or assured—process. Many factors come into play in relationship building, yet many of the Finns remain optimistic that, “Even though I didn’t manage to develop any close friendships last time, I still think it could be possible to do that in the future, in another group” [19FYY06].

Several informants indicated that they made very good friends with some of the international buddies in their groups [23FNY04, 22MNY05, 20FNY07, 19FNY13]. It is important to note that these four individuals were in groups that “worked,” meaning that they met frequently and actively. They often met with their international friends outside the buddy group meetings as well. Others Finns developed more casual friends from their groups, or “hello buddies” [24FYY01], people with whom they could eat lunch or chat when they met on the street but did not develop deep or long-lasting relationships [24FYY01, 23FYY02, 19FYY06, 20FNY08, 19FNY11], at least at the time of the interview. These informants were members of groups that either met frequently but not all of the members shared an interpersonal attraction, or were from groups that met sporadically. Finally, some did not make friends, but wished they had [19FNN12, 20FNY14], and belonged to groups that rarely met. Some of these people did become close friends with international students, but not from their buddy group.

The development of international friendships outside of the BP reflects the special circumstances that are ingrained within the concept of the BP. The program’s basic goal is to provide an organized way for Finns and exchange

students to meet each other, and “I think it does work quite well, the way it’s supposed to work” [20FNY10]. But, as 19FNY13 pointed out, “...it’s not very natural to, we try hard to put two pers—people and, like, ‘Now attract!’ [laughs] and get them more close.” While the BP allows Finns to meet people that they might not meet otherwise because of their different fields of studies, interests, and personalities [19FYY06, 19FNY13], “...It was kind of artificial, like organizing these meetings and trying to get to know each other, like, that was something we were supposed to do” [20FNY10]. Several informants explained that when they met international people outside of the BP, it was based on shared interests and natural attraction and resulted in continued interaction [19FYY06, 19FNY13] because “they were more like the kind of people I would hang out [with] anyway, like you meet the kind of—‘your kind of people’” [20FNY10]. This natural way of meeting people is important especially if the Finns already have an established network of Finnish friends; they are less likely to put effort into an artificial relationship when they can have genuine ones [24FYY01]. This “natural versus artificial” friend commitment can also keep individuals from participating in the BP, for fear that they may really not like the people assigned to their group, and be “kind of forced to interact” with him/her [23FYY02, also 19FYY06]. So, even though some have participated in the BP in the past, they have become more focused on allowing “personal connections and on unorganised friendship” [22MNY05] and “interaction between Finnish and foreign students in ‘normal’ happenings, all around university” [22FNY09, also 23FNY04] to guide their future relationship building with foreign students.

In establishing their relationships, several informants noted that it is clearly easier to meet international students than fellow Finns. First, they note that foreigners are fairly eager to meet people of their host country [22FNY09, 19FNN12, 19FNY13]. More importantly, however, Finns feel that foreigners are more approachable than other Finns [19FYY06, 19FNN12], as explained by 19FYY06: “I think I can be more of myself with them at first, when I get to know people. Because, because they’re not looking at me, like, ‘Okay, well, why does she come here? I don’t know her!’ [giggles]. They are just, ‘Okay, Hi! It’s nice to get to know you.’ And they’re very open with that.”

As a means to assess the depth of these relationships, informants were asked if they were planning to or are already in contact with international friends who

had returned to their home countries. Only two Finns were still in close contact (in writing and in person) with repatriated exchange students [20FNY07, 19FNY13] from any of their groups. Several Finns expressed interest in keeping in touch with friends and buddies or were having occasional email contact [23FNY04, 22MNY05, 22FNY09], and regretted that it was not more regular for a variety of reasons, not the least of which is that one cannot possibly keep in contact with everyone they meet [19FYY06, 24MYY15]. A few hoped they would get pen pals or keep some correspondence going from the experience [19FNY03, 22MNY05, 20FNY08], but their tone of voice did not sound hopeful.

Most people experience a sense of loss when a friend leaves, and that reality apparently had an impact on how some of the Finns approached the friend-making process within the BP. The thought of making friends with foreigners who “were gonna leave anyways” [23FYY02] without “any, um, hope of continuing in it” [23FNY04] led these two informants to indicate that they did not invest concerted effort in building relationships with some of their international buddies. The latter of these two informants arrived at this position after she lost contact with the repatriated buddies from the earlier semester. But others recognized that one could just enjoy the moment with these people, without the burden of trying to force an emotional bond. “But, of course, sometimes when people leave Finland and you’ve made friends, and it’s quite—it’s, um, *ikävä*,, [Q: sad?] It’s quite sad, yeah, ...we just, we knew that it will going to end and we just had fun” [22MNY05].

One final point was raised by individuals who had developed deep friendships with exchange students. It seems they reached a point in which the relationship—or rather, their perceptions of the relationship—changed. Informant 20FNY07 states this point clearly: “...I don’t think that they’re international. It’s just my friends. And they differ—are a little different but you need something to relate it to culture, but it’s like you’re Portuguese and with you I’m in the different way. It’s just a group of the international people that I’m friends with.”

## **5.2 Buddy Project Participation as Learning Process**

While the stated goal of the BP is to get Finnish and international students together, with the hope of friend making, my research question focuses on whether it also can be a tool for learning about IC issues and help Finns develop

IC skills and competency. In this section, I look at how the informants view the IC learning potential within their BP experiences within the following subheadings: Feeling prepared to interact interculturally, IC learning from the BP, Understanding the need for knowledge and skills, BP as a preparation for a multicultural Finland, and BP as a tool for IC competency development.

### **5.2.1 Feeling prepared to interact interculturally**

Before exploring more directly the concept of the BP as a learning tool, I asked the informants if they had felt prepared to interact with the foreign buddies in their group. Of the at-home interviewees, five felt that they were prepared because of their language skills or previous interaction with dissimilar others [23FNY04, 20FNY07, 20FNY10, 19FNY11, 19FNY13], two felt they were unprepared [22MNY05] or unsure [19FYY06], and five noted that they did not need preparation or were unsure of how to go about preparing [19FNY03, 20FNY08, 22FNY09, 19FNN12, 20FNY14].

Then I described a hypothetical preparatory program that could be offered to Finns prior to the kick-off of each buddy cohort. It was first described as an option, as interviewees were asked if they were interested and how they think it might have helped their BP experience.

In looking at the responses for all but the three informants who had gone on a formal exchange period, the answers fell into two categories: 7 individuals were interested or very interested in such an opportunity, and 5 were either tepid toward the opportunity or questioned its necessity. In this latter category, some of the comments included, “But it, it doesn’t sound so natural, uh, to teach us how to be with foreigners. Uh, it would sound a bit stupid” [19FNN12]; “Well, uh, I guess I could have taken it. But I don’t think it would have been a necessary thing to do” [19FNY11]; “It’s kind of hard to say, but, hmm, perhaps [laughs]. ... But I would find it kind of hard to imagine that things I would have learned from some course, you know?” [20FNY10]; and “Well, I can’t say for sure, but, but, of course, [it] sounds very useful, and I don’t think it would have done any harm at least...” [19FYY06].

But the other 7 were not at all ambivalent. In fact, one informant answered a lukewarm “Um, yes. I think so” during the interview, but when she reviewed the transcript, she wrote the following: “I don’t know what I’ve meant by answering



yes... maybe that I would have been even more interested in the program in that case” [20FNY14]. Meanwhile, 22MNY05 was quite enthusiastic about the potential of such a course: “Yes! Yes! ... Well, it would have given some theoretical basis, but I think this situations, you just have to face these kind of things alone. But this theoretical background would have helped facing these, yeah.” A concrete vision for such a course came from 23FNY04:

Yes, I think I would have taken it, because I feel, and I’m sure I felt the same way then, that you can’t learn too much about these things. You still always make mistakes. But, I must say, that I would have hoped the introduction or course to be something else than video show about cultural stereotypes, etc. Maybe some kind of rehearsals with role-taking, conversation, debate...

Still, several of the respondents (including all three exchange veterans) raised a caution flag about such a concept, noting that other Finns might not come. Some of this cautionary talk came from a follow-up question about whether having such a course required before participation would have changed the person’s plan to participate in the BP. “I don’t think it would have kept me from doing it, but..... Of course, when there’s always this some kind of, you know, ‘must,’ then it is a little bit negative thing,” noted 19FYY06. More informants, however, pointed to their own concern about scheduling conflicts, [23FYY02, 22MNY05, 20FNY08, 22FNY09] and how others might be discouraged from attending because of some requirement [19FNY03, 20FNY07, 19FNY13]. It is difficult to judge if these concerns surfaced because the Finns actually have so many responsibilities, or if instead they reflect a fear of commitment or some other affective reason. Informant 24FYY01 presented a possible explanation this way:

So, I think it’s the sin of the Finn, we have, always too much stress. And so, so, this was the most common comment also in our group: “No, no—that’s too bad, I have so many exams. And I have to do so much homework. And, blah, blah, blah, ....” And then when you go and say to these persons, do want to come to this one-week lecture, they would say no, even though it would be interesting.

In addition, the interviewees were presented the concept of an end-of-the-semester reflection opportunity, in which the buddies could gather and collectively reflect on and discuss not only their experiences, but also on those of other members of their groups and perhaps all participants. Of the 9 at-home informants who responded, 5 of them thought the idea was interesting and/or useful [23FNY04, 19FNY11, 19FNN12, 19FNY13, 20FNY14] and 20FNY07 said she

would come to such an event only if she had time. Informant 22MNY05 felt the concept was problematic because he would feel uncomfortable talking in public about the relationships he had with his friends. Finally, 19FNY03 and 20FNY08 felt that any learning opportunity would be more useful prior to interacting with the buddies than afterward.

Most of the informants could see benefits from having preparation regarding IC issues prior to meeting their international buddies. This is particularly because many Finns have not taken IC courses and “most Finns aren’t really experienced in meeting with people from different countries” [19FNY03]. For those who could foresee the benefits, they saw that such preparation could help them become more aware of and analyze their own actions and thoughts [20FNY07, 22FNY09, 19FNN12]—particularly by becoming more reflective [24FYY01, 19FYY06]—and the behaviors of the dissimilar others [19FYY06, 19FNN12, 19FNY13], which would have led to better, deeper relationships because cultural misunderstandings could be decreased [22MNY05, 19FYY06, 19FNN12]. These thoughts were best captured by the comment from 19FNN12:

Probably I’d have thought about these kind of things, which I didn’t do so much now before coming to buddy. So I’d have been more conscious of my own interests and skills. That could have made the buddy meetings more interesting and I’d have got more deep experiences. I could have seen many things in me and the others that I didn’t notice [until] now [the interview].

Many noted that having such knowledge would have helped them make better decisions, particularly during stressful moments, and bolstered their confidence in interacting with dissimilar others [24FYY01, 23FNY04, 22MNY05, 19FNY13, 20FNY14, 24MYY15], with the possibility that some people might be encouraged to join the BP because they would receive such preparation [20FNY07]. This confidence would come from an understanding of “how it goes” that those who have taken an exchange period have developed while abroad [24FYY01], as well as from understanding that others have shared similar experiences [24MYY15]. Two informants noted that they and others they know want to take the IC courses offered on campus anyway, but that the demand was too strong for the limited number of such IC courses, meaning those in unrelated majors are unlikely to be able to register for the course. So a preparatory course prior to the BP would allow individuals interested in international relationships some theoretical and practical knowledge in IC issues outside the formal education [24FYY01, 20FNY07]. Finally,

some noted that they would have approached the IC interaction process differently if they had had such preparation, perhaps even setting a goal or planning how to interact [23FNY04, 19FYY06, 20FNY07], although the latter two individuals noted this as much a negative perspective as a positive:

I don't know. I just—I haven't thought about the whole program as [pause], as uh, you know—[pause] I haven't thought about it as a process, that learning process. I've just thought about, uh, really this having fun, and getting to know people and making friends and things like this. .... I just, I just, uh, don't feel I have any need to analyze this, these relations—these relationships. Well, of course, it's interesting. Now, I've noticed many things myself, when I'm talking about this and you're asking questions that I've never even thought about. But, um, but maybe if it was, like, um, I don't know, maybe, at least for me, it's not necessary to have this kind of thing, to talk about, of course it's nice to talk about these experiences, but to analyze them very thoroughly, I don't think it's [laughs] very important. [19FYY06]

Well, maybe I would have taken the buddy program more formally, because now it seems just to be for having fun, but then it would have sounded more like really intentionally learning about cultures or something. I think I would have thought more about the ways I act with the international students, if I would have been taught for that before. But I don't know if it would have been a good thing if it went that way. Then it would not have been creating real relationships, but more like something for learning and using methods. Maybe that would also have made the Finns think that the foreign are very much different, because we even need special skills for being with them. [20FNY07]

### **5.2.2. IC learning from the Buddy Project**

Because the focus of this study is on IC skills development and, more fundamentally, IC learning toward IC competency, informants were asked if, what, and how they learned about intercultural issues within their interactions with their foreign buddies. When asked specifically what they did to build relationships with foreign students, 7 of the 15 informants said they did not change their interaction process for foreigners as compared to meeting Finns; in most case they said they simply behaved as themselves and let things happen.

Four informants indicated that they changed some of their behaviors or processes, and the remaining four indicated that they changed their normal Finnish behaviors noticeably since the foreigners have different needs and communication styles than do their Finnish peers. Many noted, of course, that speaking in a different language changes the process, and because second language usage was required to participate in the BP, that factor was not assessed when determining how the informants may have changed to build a

relationship with a dissimilar other. Some of the interaction tactics these Finns undertook included asking questions about the others' country, culture or interests [24FYY01, 23FYY02, 19FNY11], informing/explaining about Finnish elements of life [23FYY02], making one's interest in the other explicit [24FYY01, 20FNY07], exchanging information about self and interests [24MYY15], making oneself talk more than normally with a Finn [23FNY04, 19FNY13], and thinking in advance how to act or speak [23FNY04].

One individual, who had developed a very close relationship with two students from southern Europe, explained that she did not have a process for developing a relationship because the friendship developed so quickly. These exchange students became close friends, and "they are not exchange students or foreign people anymore, they are just friends. So, when I spend more and more time with them, they were just normal friends. And I, yeah, I just, I, uh, stay with them, like you stay with friends" [19FNY13]. She also presented these international students in the same way to her Finnish friends: "They are my friends [laughs]; they're not something special."

When asked what IC learning, if any, they derived from interacting with these international buddies, again, the answers were mixed, although most thought that just the experience of being with others was beneficial. Some pointed to the concrete knowledge they gained about other cultures and/or its behaviors and norms [23FYY02, 20FNY07], improvement in their own verbal and nonverbal skills [22MNY05, 20FNY10, 19FNN12], confidence in their future abilities to interaction with dissimilar others [23FNY04, 22MNY05, 19FYY06], a broadened worldview and a better understanding of others [24FYY01, 19FNY03, 20FNY10], exposure to people quite different from themselves and who they probably would not have met on their own [19FYY06, 19FNN12], and furthered interest in IC issues and internationalism [20FNY10].

Part of understanding the culture of others involves understanding one's own culture (E. T. Hall, 1998; Lustig & Koester, 1996; Martin & Nakayama, 1997). So informants were asked what they learned about themselves or their home culture from interacting with culturally dissimilar others. Informants noted that the Finnish style of communication was quite clearly different from that of the exchange students, specifically as it related to how politeness is expressed and the ability to state clearly one's feelings toward another [22MNY05, 20FNY07, 19FNN12]

or easily touch or hug another [19FNY13]. In addition, most acknowledged that many of the Finnish expectations of appropriate behavior for communication were confirmed—that Finns are quiet and almost standoffish [23FYY02, 19FNY03, 23FNY04], and must have a reason to speak to each other [19FYY06, 19FNN12] or participate in a conversation [22MNY05], elements of conversational style that did not exist with the exchange students. Some of the informants noted that they had difficulty accepting or abiding by these Finnish cultural standards, or did not consider themselves “typical Finns” [19FYY06], and were slowly incorporating new ways of interaction into their personal communication patterns [22MNY05, 19FYY06, 20FNY07, 19FNN12, 19FNY13]. Of course, circumstances arose when the informants were questioned about practices and attitudes that were unconsciously exhibited by Finns, and the informants found it difficult to explain the hows and whys of Finnish behavior [20FNY08, 19FNY13], or were pleasantly reminded of the good things about Finland, “all the things that work here so nicely” [23FNY04].

The participants were asked if they believed they could develop IC skills simply from conversing with culturally dissimilar others, and although the responses were mixed, none felt that it was impossible to do so. Those who agreed that such potential existed noted that chatting with others is perhaps the most natural and efficient, and certainly the most interesting and fun, way to develop IC knowledge and skills [24FYY01, 23FNY04, 19FYY06, 20FNY08, 20FNY14], particularly because some skills cannot be gained from books [22FNY09] and just have to be experienced to be learned, such as “how to give cheek kisses or things like that” [20FNY07] and “that in order to make yourself seen and heard [when speaking with three Spaniards], you have to speak up and be expressive” [19FNY13]. Such interaction is often the “safe first step for making deeper connections and making friends” [22MNY05], and forces one into the process of listening and comprehending others [20FNY08, 22FNY09], as well as practicing meta-communication skills if misunderstandings occur [20FNY08].

However, 19FNY03 felt the BP alone is not an efficient way of IC learning, noting, “you might have to expand it a little or maybe, maybe do those, uh, education classes or something like that.” Informant 24FYY01 noted that how effective chatting is as a tool for IC learning also depends one’s personality and motivation: “Only motivated people can develop their competencies. You have

to have this want and need to participate; you must be active and so on in order to gain some new competencies.”

Yet, these potential learning experiences must be kept in context. While the BP “is a great way to meet people from many different countries and cultures all at once,” informant 19FNY13 said, “I never thought the Buddy Project as a way to gain intercultural skill; it was more of a friendship project to me.” And, in comparison to other ways of IC learning, the BP might not be as effective. “I think I gained more intercultural skills on my trips when I was actually in the middle of the local culture” [19FNY13].

It seems the depth of the relationship can affect the level of IC learning. Certainly one must be engaged with dissimilar others in order to learn [24FYY01], but deep relationships can change the nature of the learning process. Noted 20FNY07, “Actually, last year in the buddy program, we were talking more about those [cultural issues]. And now when I’m with the international students, we’re not talking so much about the differences. We have our own things here....” A more pointed explanation comes from 23FYY02, who met a dissimilar other through another activity on campus, and a friendship grew.

When I compare this relationship with the more casual ones I have, there is a big difference. ... [In] the casual relationships I learn more about the other person’s culture and country. And when I met this French girl she also told me lots of things about France, but after we got closer and our relationship grew deeper and more confidential; it’s not a friendship between a Finn and a French girl anymore. It’s a relationship between two people—the nationalities doesn’t matter. We don’t discuss about the differences between Finnish and French culture, we discuss about all the things close friends talk about: relationships, love, future, parents, what we feel and what we think. So I’m not learning anymore about France and French, since our relationship is deeper than just on the level of small talk.... When you have a best friend relationship with a person from another country the cultural boundaries collapse, and it would feel hypocritical to talk about superficial things.

These comments demonstrate how, for these informants, IC learning is normally apparent in the early stages of a relationship, perhaps even in the casual “hello buddies” phase, but can fade into the background once the relationship matures into a genuine friendship. Nevertheless, as both individuals indicated, there was some IC learning at some point in the relationship, and that, in most likelihood, will be the majority experience for Finnish buddies.

In looking at specific IC skills that the participants noted in response to various questions, it appears some concrete IC benefits can be realized. Perhaps

the most noted skill applied falls into the broad category of communicative accommodation or adaptation.

Some informants tried to make their nonverbal communication more in line with those with whom they were interacting, for instance, standing closer to individuals from south European countries [20FNY07, 19FNN12], touching and accepting touch [19FYY06], and participating in cheek kisses in greeting and departure rituals [19FYY06, 19FNY13]. In other cases, there is sensitivity demonstrated in regard to language use, accommodating the language interest of the other [23FNY04], or in speaking a lingua franca so that all felt included [19FYY06]. This extended to the perceived need to adapt one's communicative style to match the other's level of self-disclosure:

...I just have to be open. And, yeah, with the, with the Finnish people, it's okay to sit quiet and listen, and listen [laughs] and then, when you have something to say, then just say it [laughs]. But with, uh, the people from other cultures that are used to talk more, then I have to think that, "Okay now, I have to be more open, um, to talk more. To say my opinions [laughs]." [19FNY13]

Her sense of adapting what is necessary for polite conversation in the Finnish context was voiced as well by others. The two points in particular involved turn taking, since some cultural styles involve overlapping speakers [22MNY05], and being more expressive regarding feelings for the other than would be expected in Finnish conversations [20FNY07, 19FNN12].

Several informants indicated actions that demonstrate a type of mindfulness in advance of an interaction. In most cases, this involved thinking about how—or if—something should be said [23FNY04, 19FYY06, 22FNY09, 24MYY15]. In particular, informant 19FYY06 explained that she had to learn to be more careful in the manner of joking.

I have very ironic and sarcastic personality. And I've noticed that maybe, maybe sometimes the foreign students, especially if they don't know the language really well, they don't understand the irony in that [laughs]. So, I've been a little more careful with that because it's, it is frustrating to start to explain, "Oh, I really didn't mean that!" [laughs].

Informant 23FNY04, however, was mindful of much more in her interaction processes. These ranged from being attuned to the language being used, to how her actions and statements might be interpreted, to the issue of closeness, "...how close physically and how close, also, mentally, can I go, how intimate questions I can ask, and when..." She noted that while many of these actions are the same she would go through when meeting unfamiliar Finns, the exchange students do

not act like Finns, and so the process is different. She also emphasized that such circumstances require a more concerted effort for listening.

Learning is a complex and multidimensional process (J. O. Brown, 2002) that uses prior interpretation of experience to construe a new or revised interpretation of the current experiences (Mezirow, 1991). Therefore, IC learning apparently would require active thinking, as well as other learning tools, such as discussion and reflection on observations or experiences. Informant 20FNY07 explained this process in this way:

With foreign people you have to always choose the best way to act, the best that you yourself think is for that situation. You just can't do it the way you've used to. You have to criticize and questionize your acting. That's challenging.

This critical look at events and actions is useful even when circumstances seem unproductive. Informant 24FYY01 noted that there is a real potential for frustration and giving up by Finns who have unsuccessful buddy groups, but that, with reflection, even people who do not know “how things go” can see the bigger picture of how intergroup dynamics work. She additionally pointed out that, “for me, it would be intercultural competence, eh, so learning, anyhow, even if it doesn't work out. So I would do that myself. I would think about and analyze these things.” But she acknowledges that she has taken IC courses and is familiar with such processes, an advantage that many people in other fields of study do not have, and so they may not benefit from natural IC experiences around them.

While training people to mindfully observe and reflect on their own experiences and the actions of others would seem to help many individuals, some people seem to have a natural propensity for such activities.

I think it is my personality. Yeah, I, I, I've noticed myself that when I'm with, it doesn't matter if they are Finnish or foreign, I observe a lot how people act. And, with the foreign people, it's much more interesting because they are very [laughs]—and I learn a lot myself. ... [S]ometimes I think that all people do that, but then I realize that it's not really so. And [pause] I don't know if it can be taught. Because for me, it's so natural way.... And we [her Finnish buddy] often, we talk about these things, like what the, some people are like and why they do these things. [19FNY13]

Interestingly, a few informants [19FYY06, 20FNY07, 19FNN12] noted that they found themselves reflecting as a result of this study's interview, which provided them questions and helped them probe their own perceptions, recollections, and suppositions on why, or even if, things are as they seem. In fact, informant 19FNN12 wrote in a self-initiated email that added depth to her



interview responses (the only informant to do so), “Hmm, interesting, I wouldn’t have thought about these without you!”

Finally, two informants noted that they changed opinions of another culture because of their BP experience, a mindfulness process involving revising one’s mental categories (see Langer & Moldoveanu, 2000a, 2000b). In both cases, their prior feelings about the culture and people were negative: One was based on a historical relationship between Finland and Russia, the other based on a family’s bad experiences in Spain. Through discussions with her Russian buddy, 20FNY08 learned about the current life and practices in Russia, which upgraded her feelings about Finland’s neighbor and its citizens. A favorable impression of her Spanish buddy, and her Spanish buddy’s friends, led 23FYY02 to put her bad experiences into perspective, feeling more comfortable with the Spanish people and country.

These types of experiences, when the Finnish buddies applied IC skills—knowingly or not—led to the question about whether the Finns themselves felt they had grown because of their BP experience. Many of the at-home Finns did not think they grew much because, as 19FNN12 noted, “the relationships were so superficial.” But two informants who had more developed relationships with their foreign buddies (and their buddies’ friends) thought they had changed, and both saw themselves becoming more international [23FNY04, 20FNY07]. But perhaps more interestingly, a few raised the point that although they saw some growth in themselves, they wonder whether it was from something like BP, or whether it was from a combination of things: university experiences, living away from home, or maturing [23FNY04, 20FNY07, 19FNY11, 20FNY14].

Whether they thought the BP is useful in regard to IC learning, nearly all agreed that the program offers something useful, even if it is something as simple as language practice and communicating with dissimilar others [23FYY02, 20FNY10, 19FNY13], particularly with people they might not have met otherwise [19FYY06] or when few opportunities are available within the normal classes for the Finns to meet exchange students [22FNY09]. And many saw a benefit for their future, particularly if they take an exchange period [19FYY06, 20FNY14] or if they travel [23FNY04, 19FNY13], because experiences such as the BP not only help Finns learn about other cultures, but also provide opportunities to learn how to present one’s own culture to others [22FNY09]. This general knowledge and

experience gathering, rather than specific details, was what many informants felt was essential, and perhaps was stated most astutely in this comment:

I don't think it's the particular differences between certain cultures, but I think it's about, um, learning to understand just cultures that are different from ours. Even—it doesn't matter in which way they are different, but just to understand that there are different cultures and to accept them, and to, to— uh what is it? [pause] to enlarge this point of view. [19FYY06]

### 5.2.3 Understanding the need for knowledge and skill

The insights that many of these informants had, as demonstrated by the quote immediately above, resulted in questioning informants about the type of people who participate in the BP, and how much knowledge they have regarding the nature of culture and the skills necessary to interact well with dissimilar others. This question is important, particularly since only one person, 24FYY01, had taken any IC courses before participating in the BP.

Despite the many protests about how difficult the request for them to define *culture* was, the answers were quite informed, and some even poetic. Most recognized that culture involved people's behaviors and habits, and some were able to add more specifics such as language, history, literature, and politics, art, music, food, religion, and environment (“...like everything has to do with culture” [19FNY11]; and “They [the people] belong together” [19FNY13]). Most recognized that the construct is partly abstract and partly tangible and is “everything that connects people with other people” [23FNY04], that it includes a particular group's expression and what is allowed and not allowed in regard to expression [24MYY15]. They noted that there are similarities in cultures as well as difference (“Basically, for example, all young people have the same problems and same thoughts, even if they are different, somehow” [20FNY08]), and that it involves worldviews (“[W]hat's important to Finns... is in our culture. So maybe we understand the world a bit different way than the others. And of course, we have a lot of our own habits, and, and our relationships with others are different than maybe foreigner peoples” [19FNN12]). Informant 22MNY05 recognized the similarities of human needs and the differences in meeting those needs as culture:

I think that culture is something that the way people are doing things, the way how they are decorating their homes, or, or making special food, or decorations in the party, or the way they are speaking in some situations. ... Because I have seen that, uh, and in every culture, people are doing same things: they are getting in love, or making food, or they want to live in some kind of house, and these basic things that are together, the same

in every culture. But, but these small differences—how they are making their house, or act in different situations—that’s the culture.

A few of those who provided definitions of culture credited the BP, at least in part, for firming their concept. For example, 23FNY04 said, “...I can’t say that I didn’t have any understanding what is culture and this sort of importance was before. Maybe this, um, understanding of different cultures and how they worked together, that’s what I got from the buddy program.” And 22MNY05 noted, “I think that it is partly because of Buddy Project, because you can get the knowledge in theoretical way of reading it in books, but it’s not the same as really seeing it in practical way, like this making tea issue [an incident when he and his French buddy had a large disagreement over how to make tea], or something like that.” And conversations within the BP can even help modify one’s opinion of culture. In a discussion about drug use, informant 20FNY07 learned that what would be considered bad in Finland is not considered so negatively in the culture of her Argentinean buddy; thus she recognized that what people decide is valued and appropriate differs within cultures.

Regarding what skills the informants thought were needed for making international friends and for communicating and behaving interculturally, it turned out that the responses given to these two distinct questions involved considerable overlap; it seemed in their minds that how one behaves and how one communicates are about the same, whether or not the goal is to have a longer-term relationship. Therefore, the data presented will be treated as responses to what the informants recommend one consider if the goal is to meet and interact pleasantly with dissimilar others.

As might be expected, the types of skills identified by the informants fell into distinct categories: knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors. The knowledge skills, defined here as aspects that can be learned or have a theoretical element, included language competency [23FNY04, 22MNY05, 19FNY11, 20FNY14], as well as the skill of seeking to understand and be understood within a shared language [20FNY08]. Good communication skills [23FNY04, 22MNY05, 22FNY09, 19FNY11] and general social skills [22FNY09], such as “how to meet people, how to talk, joke, negotiate, even argue, with them” [23FNY04], are also valued.

The lists for the attitudes and behaviors were far more extensive. The most noted attitudinal skill was openness, or open-mindedness. Related to open-

mindedness are the skills of tolerance for/understanding of different communicative practices and norms that are appropriate for the others' culture [20FNY07, 19FNN12], such as touching or kissing [19FYY06, 20FNY08] or behavioral norms, such as members of particular countries often arriving late for events [19FNY13, 24MY15].

Possessing a degree of interest in, or desire to learn about, other cultures and peoples was also highly noted [23FYY02, 22MNY05, 22FNY09, 19FNN12, 20FNY14], as well as interest in the topics and issues of importance to the other [23FNY04, 22MNY05] so that you can engage in meaningful conversation. With this attitude comes the behavioral effort to make that interest apparent through one's mannerism and dialog. Said 20FNY07, "I try to seem interested, like, in everything what they say, because actually I *am* interested [laughs]."

Other interpersonal attitudes stated were demonstrating care and concern for others and for the relationship, and showing it consistently [20FNY07], being other-centered rather than self-centered [19FNN12], accepting that you'll be meeting people who can be dramatically different from yourself [19FNY13], being dedicated (committed) to the program or person so that you will participate fully [23FNY04, 22FNY09, 19FNN12, 19FNY13] and making time to be with them [20FNY14], or simply deciding that you will make friends and have a good time, no matter what [19FNY13].

The final group of attitudinal skills can be better classified as personality traits that perhaps can be enhanced. These include patience [20FNY08, 19FNY11], optimism (particularly when things are not going as hoped or planned) [24FYY01, 19FNY13, 24MY15], ability "to stand some social difficulties and disappointments" [22MNY05], respect for the people and the customs that you meet [20FNY08], and the courage to go and talk with dissimilar others [19FYY06]. While several persons recommended that Finns adapt their attitudes and interaction styles, 20FNY07 put it quite bluntly: "like not being so Finnish, but international."

The skills related to behavior were much more specific, and pointed. One can assume that many of these come from personal experience or observation, an almost "just do it!" perspective. The first of these is that one must put oneself into the situation in which a meeting might actually take place. "And go to places and, uh, join these programs and things actively. ... Because if you just stay at home, [laughs] no one will grab you there, and *there*" [her hand demonstrated a picking

one up and dropping in another space, 19FYY06, also 24FYY01]. And once there, be outgoing [23FNY04] and social [24MY15], get involved in the conversations [22MNY05]; and talk a lot, “for example, in the lunches, you have to talk and not to eat” [20FNY07]. She clarified the point in the email follow-up: “You have to eat and not to talk, in Finland.” The informants noted that the ability to converse well and comfortably is particularly important for Finns.

Well, [pause] Europeans and, I think, Americans also, eh, they appreciate much more conversation skills. As in Finland, we’re much, much more, like—we like do some things alone, and not talk much. So this, how to make a good chat, that’s something you have to learn. [22MNY05]

Along with these conversational skills, one needs to be alert, be “able to listen and watch closely; I think that really helps in many, even the oddest, situations” [23FNY04] and to use listening skills [22FNY09]. In addition, nonverbal skills are needed, such as having a body posture that communicates that you want to meet others [19FYY06], and visibly demonstrating your interest in the other [19FYY06, 20FNY07]. This involves participating in their special nonverbal communicative styles [20FNY07], and treating the dissimilar others more like peers than guests. Informant 20FNY07 sagely advised,

Speak more what you think and the way that you would speak to Finnish persons. Because if you only ask, “Do you like Finland?” and “What’s different about Finland?” and “Do you miss home?” and everything, it’s boring and it’s what they hear all the time, and it’s not making friends. So you have to be yourself with the international students, and not to consider them as international, or foreign, or different. ... They don’t want to be here international and foreign. They want to get in the Finnish culture.

Exercising care and attention to one’s behavior was recommended [23FYY02, 19FYY06], as was “not to judge them before you know them” [19FNY13]. Nearly all of the skills noted here for establishing a connection with a dissimilar other are quite similar to how a Finn might go about interacting with an unfamiliar Finn [23FNY04, 19FNN12]. And, as 23FNY04 further noted, “A good thing in interacting with people with other cultures is that even if you need many skills, you also get constant practice in many!”

One final comment about an informant’s attitude and practice of skills was raised. As noted above, 20FNY07 encouraged adjusting nonverbal interaction styles to be more like the people one is trying to establish contact with: “So if he wants to stay close, I will, like, “Okay, then you stay close.” She later explained:

I’m not usually comparing to Finnish culture, but I’m just being with them as people. So, I don’t, like, if we do something and it’s not so Finnish or

something that I'm used to, I don't think that it's not Finnish. I just think, with this group, I do this.... And it's nice because I know that I'm more close with them if I do the same with them.

#### **5.2.4 Buddy Project as preparation for a multicultural Finland?**

During the interviews I perceived the ease in which some of these individuals talked about interacting with their foreign buddies. Yet, in studying the makeup of the BP groups associated with these individuals (over multiple cohorts), 40 of the 53 foreign buddies were from European countries (75%). When North Americans (USA, Canada) were included, the total rises to 45 (85%); when the Russian buddies and the one Japanese buddy were included, the total becomes 50 of 53 (94%). Just three buddies in 13 group configurations came from non-Western, non-Russian countries (Armenia, India, and Thailand, although the Thai girl had to return to her country after the first meeting). Clearly, the Finns are interacting predominantly with other Europeans.

So the question arose regarding the IC value of the BP in which the Finns were interacting primarily with other Europeans. While most of the at-home respondents stated that there is diversity in Europe, they acknowledged that the European cultures are more similar to Finnish culture than distinct. This was particularly noted by informant 19FNY13, who had a man from India in her second group. In this excerpted interview exchange, 19FNY13 demonstrates first how the European dissimilarity did not give her any pause during interaction, but the distinctiveness of the Indian culture did:

Q: What emotions do you feel when interacting with people of different cultures? Now you already explained your comfort with the southern Europeans, so let's talk about the people from India and Germany and the Netherlands....

Hmm, with the German boy, it's, well, he's very much like we are here in Finland, so I don't think about it so much. But with the Indian, um, man, I think, he's much older than I am, uh, with him, I don't know how I should act, cuz I have never been to India, I don't know Indian people or culture, so that's weird for me, like, what can I do, and what can I say?

Q: Have you ever spoken to him about that?

Hmm. No. But when we are with the group, and sometimes we talk about it. For example, once, there was this, uh, the Finnish girl is married and we talked about her wedding and the bachelor party before the wedding. ... And the Indian man didn't know what's, what we were talking about. And it was so very strange to him. And it's weird to talk about normal things to us and we have to explain to him, like, what does it mean.

Q: How did that feel?

Strange! [laughs] I, yeah, I've never had to explain, explain these things to anybody. And then you start to wonder if he gets the right picture of this and what does he think about, so,,,

Q: Would you feel comfortable talking to him separately and trying to learn more about him?

Hmm, I think, not yet, cuz I don't know, I should know him better.

Such discomfort in interacting with distinctly dissimilar others is significant in that the majority of the immigrants coming to Finland are not from European countries. As of 2004, only 4 of the 16 countries from which 1,500 or more immigrants have come to Finland are now members of the European Union (Estonia, Sweden, UK, Germany); two others of the 16 are the USA and Russia (Koivukangas, 2005). While the number of foreigners in Finland is relatively small compared to the native population (about 110,000 out of 5.2 million), the number is expected to grow (Ibid). So I asked the interviewees if they felt their BP experience interacting primarily with Europeans helped prepare them to live in a multicultural Finland with many non-Europeans.

Several informants felt that their BP did provide a good foundation for interacting in a multicultural society, primarily for two reasons. First, they had successful interactions—and even friendships—with people who were somewhat different from themselves, even though these buddies were from Europe [23FNY04, 19FYY06, 20FNY07, 22FNY09, 20FNY10, 19FNY13]. Second, they learned skills—particularly skills they could not learn except by interacting with foreigners [20FNY10, 19FNY13]—that they could apply in other situations with more dissimilar others. Additionally, it is equally important to learn about one's own culture [22FNY09, 20FNY10], about how foreigners perceive Finnish culture, which can form a foundation for interacting with more dissimilar others [22MNY05] and that there are similarities among cultures as well, which can help prepare someone to think through options for interaction, knowing that one “can never be prepared [for] everything” [22FNY09]. Informants 20FNY07 and 23FYY02 agreed with this philosophy, noting that once you accept the differences and mannerisms of one culture, you are more open to any unique ways of acting that a third culture might exhibit, and can apply the knowledge of the second culture in trying to decide how best to interact with the third.

Yet 23FNY04 noted that the Europeans she met were all academics, “often from very wealthy backgrounds with just the same or almost the same view on

the world as I have,” and they probably were not representative of the general populations of their respective countries. And, of course, the European cultures are different in many ways from cultures in Asia and Africa. This is perhaps the point that other respondents made when they felt that the BP did not prepare them or prepared them only partially. Many wished that the BP could involve more culturally diverse buddies [19FNY03, 22MNY05, 19FYY06, 19FNY13], for the specific reason that 19FNY13 learned: She did not know much about the Indian culture nor know how to go about interacting with her buddy from India. But the informants seemed to understand the challenges of increasing the number of non-European buddies, as 19FNY03 commented, “people from the developing countries, they are really poor, and, uh, they really can’t become exchange students.” And this lack of interaction can lead to the continued pattern of “negative thoughts about those countries” by some Finns [19FNY11], even though there are immigrants from these distinctly different cultures already living in Finland. Informant 23FNY04 pointed out,

...it’s so much more easier to get interculturally experienced within this kind of activities [BP] than, for example, getting to know the many immigrants that have been living here for around 20 years already. We’re so much more worlds apart with them than we are with these international students that come here.

### **5.2.5 Buddy Project as a tool for intercultural competency development?**

The informants were probed regarding whether they felt that the BP had the potential as a program designed specifically for helping Finns develop IC skills and competency. Through a series of interrelated questions, the answer that emerged is not clear. Rather, the informants raised a variety of concerns, observations, and insights that illuminate the issues.

One benefit of the BP as an IC training tool is that it is a relatively easy step to take for those interested in meeting exchange students. Because university life provides a level of commonality among the students, there are some common topics that present themselves easily. Nervous Finns, then, can use typical university experiences to initiate conversation, topics that would not be available if a Finnish university student was trying to establish contact with a foreigner off campus [22MNY05]. Additionally, by being able to make conversation with people of other cultures, the Finns could come to see the similarities, which can



encourage them in future interactions with representatives of other cultures [20FNY08]. But all of this requires motivation and other skills on the part of the individual Finn. Informant 24FYY01 stated the needed skills as requirements, but these are also benefits that can be developed in the process of interaction, observation, and reflection. But she accurately noted that if one wishes to truly benefit from the BP experience, then the personality traits and interpersonal skills one possesses influence the interaction.

...[T]here's so many things involved and it's very important that they are really motivated, because it doesn't just work out so that you come...and you just have to be there and then you are interculturally competent so suddenly. So, I think it is the preparing, and motivation, and learning and reflecting and everything. So one has to be really active. And uh, it goes with personality too. ... They should be willing to get to know other cultures, speak a language other than their own and so on. They should really be willing to make friends with foreigners and know that things do not necessarily always turn out the way they were hoping—and they still should be willing to at least try their best. I think these people should also have tolerance for traits and ways of behavior that are not necessarily the same as their own. One also needs intercultural competence: flexibility, empathy, interaction skills and motivation! [24FYY01]

She later emailed,

People can always have fears or be afraid of this intercultural spirit, if they don't have any experiences of it on their own beforehand. ... If you do not know the language or are unwilling to use it, you cannot interact with people from other cultures and cannot also gain any intercultural communication competencies. Each and every occasion spent with foreigners helps person to develop his/her intercultural skills, at least at some point. [24FYY01]

Interestingly, all three informants who had exchange periods mentioned the brevity of the BP experience as a concern when assessing whether the program can be a bona fide learning opportunity for most participants. All agreed that the BP was a “good start” [23FYY02]. Yet the groups, even if they work well and meet regularly, probably will meet no more than 10 to 12 times in a semester and “...it's like a scratch to those cultures” [24MYY15]. Therefore, it would take a very reflective personality to achieve significant growth in that short of a period [24FYY01], especially when remaining in one's own cultural environment. But the program can provide an opportunity for Finns without previous abroad experience to “awaken” to the other cultures of the world, “...because, if you think like Finnish culture is a bit isolated, I think. So it helps you see about other cultures, opens your mind” [24MYY15].

Informant 23FYY02 did not feel that simply chatting during such a short period can be IC productive, but that other options for IC growth should be encouraged. She suggested,

...it would be better to have the people actually do something together, not just to get together and hang around and talk—actually to do something very, uh, concrete, like a project or something, and you would get credits for it, or something like that. ... Because then if you work with someone and you have to make a project together, then you have to combine your thoughts and minds and then the cultural differences come.

But ideas such as this and the IC preparatory course raised concerns for some of the informants. First, they think that considering the BP as a learning program is misguided because, "...well, it's just the Buddy Program. I don't think it has such great, uh, great goals to um.... I mean, it's just a way to people to meet people from different countries ..." [19FNY03]. The purpose of the program is simply to have fun and meet exchange students and participants are not expecting to learn anything concrete [19FNY03, 24MYY15], and even if they did, the learning potential is nowhere near the level of an exchange program [24FYY01, 24MYY15]. And, since this program is designed to be managed from within the group, it would be up to the group to pursue any discussion about cultural learning [20FNY10]. Moreover, the cultural learning is complicated by the fact that people are setting off just to be friends, which is a quite different context than interacting in a multicultural environment [19FNY11].

But an equal concern is that if one changes the process or perception of the BP, then the program itself changes and ceases being the BP [24MYY15]. More fundamentally, 22FNY09 felt that adding the learning element to the program may affect the nature of the relationships that are the focus of the BP:

I don't know if it would be for us Finns different than, than those who are exchange students cuz, of course, they think of this as voluntary. And then it will be for us something like we have all these conversations every week [laughs]... For I think it's important for them to know other cultures, like, I'm not making it such a big issue that I am Finnish and then he's from there,... But of course you have to think about it, and it's helpful to think, but I think what is good in this program is that for it is voluntary and free and then you just land, and "They are just like us" in a way that when you are friends. Of course, there are always things, but then you like get over those, and don't think about them.

It might even change how the foreign buddies view the BP, that they are sources of learning rather than potential friends [20FNY07].

The final thoughts on this revolve around the perceptions of the Finns who are not interested in participating in the BP. First, the BP cannot serve as a resource for Finns who are not interested in international issues because many of them do not know what they do not know about IC interaction and cultural differences or, if they are aware, they do not know how useful the program can be to them [24MY15]. To this concern, 24FY01 suggests that such IC learning should begin much earlier in the educational system, as early as primary school, so that individuals grow with an open attitude toward multicultural issues.

### **5.3 Other IC Avenues That Affect BP Learning**

During the interviews, it appeared that some of the interviewees had experiences beyond the BP that could lead to IC learning, and which had implications for their IC learning and skills development within the BP. These opportunities fell into three broad categories: exchange periods, travel, and on-campus avenues.

#### **5.3.1 Exchange periods**

The goal of including individuals who previously had an exchange period in this study specifically was to see if their perceptions and insights about the BP would be any different from those who had not had abroad experiences. They also provided comparative information about the differences in their experiences of the BP versus their time abroad.

The three post-exchange participants [24FY01, 23FY02, 24MY15], but not the individual who had spent time with her family as a young teen [19FY06], had real difficulty separating their BP experiences from what they felt and learned during their time abroad. Their experiences abroad were much longer (a year versus the three months of the BP) and more intense. And, of course, they were not operating from within a familiar culture. In short, an exchange period “was a huge learning experience” [24FY01] that changed them, helped them learn about how to interact positively rather than with negative outcomes [23FY02], and made their BP experience less stressful in comparison to their exchange experience. Additionally, those who have had an exchange period were more cognizant of differences in the very essence of the relationships that form when one is a guest in another’s country as compared to being the host in one’s own.

This deep growth and learning potential is what motivates those who have not been abroad to consider an exchange [19FY03, 22MY05, 20FY07]. But for some,

actually going through with the process is less likely for a variety of reasons, such as finances, work and family commitments, or “I’m too lazy for that” [19FNN12].

In addition, there’s a sense of caretaking that comes with being a host [24FYY01, 23FYY02], a responsibility of sorts that Finnish buddies who have not lived abroad may not realize is expected of them and which can affect perceptions of them by the exchange students. These expectations rise from the fact that the hosts know how things work, can more easily find answers to questions or concerns, and, of course, speak the native language fluently. A final difference between the exchange experience and that of the BP is that when one is on an exchange, one normally is immersed within one culture even though one’s exchange peers are from multiple cultures. But in the BP, the majority culture is already familiar, and one is exposed to representatives of multiple cultures, rather than one primary culture [22FNY09, 19FNY13].

### **5.3.2 Travel abroad**

As noted above, at the time of the interview, all of the interviewees had traveled at least once to another country, and all but two [23FNY04, 22MNY05] had visited at least three different cultures. All informants expressed interest in future travel.

Still, there were several at-home informants who had spent about 3 weeks or so in travel experiences for a language course [19FNY03, 20FNY07, 20FNY08, 22FNY09, 20FNY10], church or community service program [19FNY13, 20FNY14], or because they had developed friendships with individuals of another culture [19FNY13]. In many cases, they had opportunities to interact with the locals, although to what depth was not quantified.

Insights regarding travel, particularly as they relate to the BP, are interesting. For example, 19FNY13 traveled extensively with her family as a child, but did not interact with the locals because she could not speak their languages. Still, she enjoyed when her parents rented a car and left the “tourist areas” for cultural excursions into the countryside. Today she tries to avoid the tourist destinations, particularly those populated with Finnish tourists because, “I really want to see how the people there are like” [19FNY13]. She astutely recognized that,

When you are dealing with foreign people in your own home country, you only see a little piece of their culture, some personalities, details, not the whole. You are the host and the guests are very interested in your culture, so your culture is in the main role. But when you travel abroad, you see the people in their own cultural environment. I’ve noticed that when I’m abroad

I'm more quiet because I'm all the time observing the things that happen around me. Before I travelled to Italy for the first time, I met some Italian people in Finland. They were very curious about Finland. We didn't talk that much about Italy, mostly about Finland and me. I noticed that they were very open, talkative and sociable people and very interested in food and cooking. Some years later on my trips to Italy I lived the normal family life there so I could see their culture better and I understood reasons for their behaviour.

In particular, she's reflective on what she's observing, and has learned to be alert to the tendency to stereotype:

...because I've met so many, like, Italians, for example, during many years, so, I have noticed that they are not all the same. If you go there just for a holiday, you just see, "Oh, they are all just like this." But when you get to know more people and from different parts of the country, for example, you notice that it's not so [sigh] uh, just one way." [19FNY13]

Informant 20FNY07 also is interested in experiencing the authentic cultural lifestyle rather than a tourist glimpse. She insightfully addressed the difference between meeting people through traveling and meeting them through the BP:

...[I]n the buddy program the people are very open and very nice and they are students. ... They are, uh, clever and everything, and they are social. And in the countries, there's all kinds of people. So in the Buddy Program, you just meet people who are nice, and if you, uh, use those skills when you travel, it doesn't work that way because there are people who are not so nice and have bad intentions. And as a tourist, you meet a lot of them. ... So, and also old people, you don't meet here. It's only people from, of your age. So, being a tourist, it's more like all kinds of people and you have to be not so nice also, because maybe they're not all good people. ... [In the BP], it's more calm and more easy to get good friends, like more, hmm, I trust them more.

Most people travel with others, but 19FNN12 indicated that, depending on one's personality, the learning potential from the travels may be limited by the presence of another.

In Paris I never was alone, all the time with my aunt. And now I've realised that because of that I don't remember much of that trip anymore. I didn't need to plan anything myself, not even to look at the map if I didn't want to. I was so passive that I didn't really experience anything special there. ... I hardly spoke to any people, only something at shops and so on. I learned almost nothing during that trip mostly because I wasn't alone.

Because of this realization, she had planned to take a trip alone to the Lapland areas in Finland, Sweden, and Norway. She had specific goals for the trip:

I wish that I could meet different people. I want to hear old people telling their stories, adults telling theirs. I want to share a room and food with new friends. See who they are. I want to see children playing freely and join them myself. I want to see how is it in a small Norwegian village, for example. I wish to see real life.

Finally, travel experiences can augment—and even change—perceptions of cultures. This is particularly true if one goes to a distinctly dissimilar culture from one's own or from prior travel destinations. Informant 24FYY01, in the follow-up email, provided a case in point.

So I told you about a year ago that it does not make any difference whether you come from Austria or Poland—it is a matter of personalities that makes a difference. I still think that is true, but my traveling to Latin America showed me that there do exist a lot of cultural differences when you move from Europe to US and Costa Rica... it was a huge learning experience for me, and now I have this feeling that Europe is by no means enough for me, I want to see the whole world!

### 5.3.3 On-campus avenues

The University of Jyväskylä (JyU), like many universities, offers many activities and courses to meet students' needs and interests. At JyU, students can participate in for-credit projects, such as Each One/Teach One, where often issues of culture and communication can be discussed during the language learning [20FNY07], and courses, where the mingling of Finnish and foreign students beyond superficial pleasantries is not guaranteed [20FNY14]. The Student Union offers social activities through their ESN planning, such as Stammtisches, Café Lingua (where games are played in various languages), student government, and international dinners. There also are subject-related events, as well as sports, music, and art. Not all of these latter activities, however, necessarily bring the Finns together with international students.

From this study, it seems the most popular event through which to meet exchange students was the Stammtisches, which are large parties often organized by groups of exchange students. Compared to the BP, these parties are quite informal, and that can provide a nice contrast to the organized meetings of the BP:

I like these events, like Stammtisch nights, that there are very many foreign people, and I can just, you know, go from persons to another, so I don't have to stand and talk with the same people all the time.... I know very many foreign students even without this buddy program. ... I've been in every Stammtisch, [laughs] so, I know very many students from abroad. [19FYY06]

But not all Stammtisch attendees felt they benefited interculturally as much or even at all. Most felt these events are just fun parties with the chance to meet and talk with people from other cultures [24FYY01, 20FNY08, 20FNY10, 19FNY11, 20FNY14]. Sometimes, the Finnish buddies meet the friends of their foreign buddies at the Stammtisches, and developed a wider, although not necessarily

deeper, network of international friends [20FNY07, 19FNY13], which also allowed the BP relationship to grow outside the scheduled group meetings [23FYY02]. Developing casual friends through such avenues is quite acceptable to many of the informants and it took the pressure off during the relationship development, as compared to the BP's aim of making friends [23FNY04], especially if there was little interpersonal chemistry among the group members.

Most informants would probably agree with 22FNY09 that the preferred way to develop relationships with international students would be through the natural happenings around the campus, rather than a formal program to bring the two groups together. Meeting through unstructured events could allow Finnish students a less-stressed opportunity to practice their language skills and gain confidence in IC interaction. Indeed, classes provide such opportunities, if group work or other aspect of the course encouraged mixed groups of students to interact. However, some barriers to such natural interaction exist, whether they be scheduling conflicts [24FYY01, 23FYY02], fear or lack of interest [23FYY02, 20FNY07, 20FNY14], the small number of foreign students on campus or in particular majors [19FNY03, 22FNY09], or the distance some students live from campus or the student village [19FNN12], where many social events take place.

In addition to the events that take place on campus, opportunities to meet dissimilar others can take place near campus: at restaurants or, more commonly, at the local bars where university students gather. Informants 19FNY03 and 19FYY06 met foreign students in other avenues with whom the relationships became very deep and significant beyond the IC learning potential.

## **5.4 English Language Use**

Since the BP almost always operates within a language other than Finnish, issues related to how the use of a second language affected the informants' perception of their interactions were explored. Further, the concern about the interviews being conducted in English—particularly about the informants' ability to accurately describe their thoughts and feelings on their BP experiences was addressed.

### **5.4.1 Use of English as a lingua franca in the Buddy Project**

Before addressing the use of English as the lingua franca within the informants' buddy groups, it is important to point out that not all of the informants were pleased with the default language. Most of the informants had studied at least one

foreign language other than English, some two or three additional languages, and would have been happy to practice them in their buddy groups. In fact, six of the informants joined the BP with the hope of speaking either French or Italian, some specifically requesting native speakers of their preferred language for their group. The experience of informant 20FNY07 in a previous buddy group is a case in point: “[I]t was like all the people spoke a little French. It was, like, made that way.... I wanted to learn French last year in the group, but we were always talking in English. But I could have started talking in French, I know,,,” Although disappointed, the informants, such as 22MNY05, resigned themselves to the need for one language that allowed for interaction with people from different cultures:

Hmm. In the fall, I, I was sometimes a bit bitter because I would have, of course, I would like to speak French more, and but, but this French guy, he was more interested in speaking Finnish, and he had taken Finnish courses. And when we were together, we spoke English, because everyone could do some. But, hmmm, after all, I was quite satisfied of this, that I had, that I know these people. And in the spring, because I knew these situations better, it was much easier from beginning to end.

There is also the balance of language interests with the foreign students who wished to practice their Finnish. Two groups had foreign buddies who were at least conversational level with their Finnish language skills, and the Finnish buddies tried to accommodate this whenever they could. “And, in the autumn term, with these two guys who spoke Finnish, we spoke quite a bit Finnish also, especially when the girls weren’t around” [20FNY10].

In regard to their own use of English, the informants did not view this as a problem, although several acknowledged that their language skills were not so fluent. Even those skilled in conversational English noted difficulty at times with finding the words to express themselves [19FNY03, 22MNY05, 19FNN12] and the need to explain, and perhaps re-explain, in different ways what might not had been understood [24FYY01, 23FNY04, 20FNY08], recognizing that some concepts simply do not translate well [24MY15], or using body language to help communicate [24FYY01]. This difficulty applied not only to the Finnish informants, but also to the foreign buddies, some of whose English speaking was less skilled [23FNY04, 19FNY11, 20FNY14], which challenged the Finns further. For some BP participants, the struggle with a second language can sabotage their participation. Informant 20FNY07 noted that her Finnish roommate was instrumental in her joining the program, but, “Um, she wasn’t so good in English



and she was all the time afraid of speaking English. So, it was--she didn't feel like going to the meetings because she were scared of speaking English." In general, however, the informants reported that, whether they felt they had good English skills or not, their language usage improved as the buddy group met over the semester. In some cases, it was simply an attitude change toward one's use of a second language, as 22MNY05 learned:

Well, I suppose I'm more open now, because of this experience. Because I saw that it's not so—it's not so important to speak, you know, correctly, but it's more important to be open and discuss with people. I think that is something I've learned and changed in my, in my habits.

Two informants noted how their use of English, which they had believed was quite sufficient prior to their participation in the BP, was affected by the use of the lingua franca by other non-native speakers. Informant 20FNY07, related how she found herself speaking non-standard English after ongoing interaction with foreign students doing the same:

Like making questions with intonation, like "You *go*?" [laughs] It's not English. [laughs] With long sentences, you use very strange ways, like, "You have a lot to *eat*?" [laughs] .... And I don't know, it's somehow getting used to those wrong ways. Because I start to do it too, and when I start to think about it, it's, "Oh, why I do that?" I know it's not that way, and I wouldn't write it this way.

This experience is much in line with 24FYY01's use of German during her exchange year in Austria.

It was, everybody was laughing at us, those Austrian people. They didn't understand a word! "What are you speaking?" We were speaking "German"! And me, and the American guys and the Swedish—we all understood each other perfectly! It was perfect German and both Austrian, and [laughs] it was no language, so, it's just full of mistakes and we all make the same mistakes when we spent time together, and we all speak very badly [laughs].

But the point here is that, mistakes and all, the use of a second language did not negatively impact the interaction among dissimilar others if they were somehow able to communicate, took the mistakes in stride, and viewed the lingua franca simply as a means to connect with a dissimilar other. It also demonstrates the nature of language as a flexible process.

Interestingly, many of the informants were happy that there were no native English speakers in their group. Rationales for not wanting a native English speaker are varied, but related. Informant 19FNY11 commented, "Because if someone would, uh, speak English as their first, first language, then, I don't

know, then it would be, well, it wouldn't bother me, but it would be weird to know that, okay, this person knows the language better than all the rest of us." The absence of non-native speakers helped with the confidence level of the informants, because they did not have to be conscious of how they were speaking when everyone was on about the same English language level and no one could be assessing their skills [22MNY05, 19FYY06, 22FNY09, 19FNY13].

#### 5.4.2 How the use of English affected the interview process

It was clear during the course of the interviews, and became even more so during the transcription, that conducting the interviews in English was causing difficulty for some of the informants to express themselves. All informants had some problem in the use of English for the interview, and some had greater problem than others. Most informants simply laughed off their difficulty: "Or, like, they were more like, [pause] it's not spontaneous, but like they--- [pause] um, I don't know how to say it [laughs], but, uh, but they had their own style, somehow [laughs]" [22FNY09]. Usually, they simply rethought how they wanted to make their point: "Umm, I sometimes heard some---[pause] some [audible frustration]—okay, I read a bit about this, a bit! But, well, to think myself, that uh, what's important to Finns, Finn, so maybe it's, uh, [sigh], well, like, what is in our culture" [19FNN12]. Sometimes, it was just an immediate word retrieval in English, and they simply inserted the Finnish word: "They had more, hmmm, *kokemus*, [pause] experience in speaking English, so it was much easier for them" [22MNY05], and "Well, maybe, I thought that French were a little bit more like Italians and Spanish, but they're a little more—how do you say? I don't know the word in English—well, they're not so, so, um ,, [Q: reserved?] Yeah! They're a little more reserved than I thought" [19FYY06].

Several individuals were quite frustrated when they could not find the right words to express themselves, demonstrated by contorted faces and frequent sighs, sometimes quite forceful. "But, uh, I think, uh, that Finns have, like, a very big, uh, uh, what's the word again?--Uh, uh, like we are, we think, uh, we are more ---[makes a sound]. I can't find the right words!" [19FNY11]

Conceptual questions seemed to cause more frustration and difficulty: "[long pause, then laughs] These are such difficult.,,, [laughs]. Um, maybe I [pause] I'll have more, like, tolerance. Because it is, in Finland it is, there--[sigh] Oh, I don't

know to explain this! But ,,,” [20FNY08], and “Oh, it’s really hard. I think you always learn something when you meet new people. Because everybody’s different somehow. [Q: But you can’t name the things?] No” [20FNY14].

Concerned that the informants were not able to be as expressive or clear as they wanted in recalling their BP experiences and discussing complex issues such as culture, relationship building, and IC competency, I asked in the e-mailed follow-up how they perceived the use of English affecting the interview process. All of those who responded to the e-mail answered this question, and all of them felt that they were able to communicate what they wanted, and that their answers would not have been different had they answered in Finnish, although all agreed it would have been easier. However, several of them pointed to the richness, or depth, of the answers being affected by answering in a language other than their mother tongue: “The idea in my answers would have been the same but I could have explained things more specifically” [19FNY13]. One respondent had a particularly interesting observation about why being interviewed in English, despite his belief that his language skills are not proficient, would not have mattered: “In some answers I had an uncomfortable feeling that I couldn’t express myself clearly enough, but somehow, maybe because of the reason that all my intercultural conversations are held in English, I think that my intercultural thoughts are grown in an English-speaking context, and so to speak changing the language to Finnish again wouldn’t change my answers lot” [22MNY05].

That richness in the actual interview was lost was best demonstrated by informant 20FNY14. Her interview responses were frequently disjointed, seemed strained, involved a struggle for words, or simply resulted in an “I don’t know.” It seemed so difficult for her that I even asked her during the interview if some of her answers were affected by her use of English rather than Finnish. During the interview, she assured me that she was communicating what she wanted to. However, her written answers to the follow-up e-mail indicates that there was something lost in her spoken interview in English, but was present in the detail of her written English:

[Q: What is it about other cultures that interests you?] I don’t know, just, people are, well, people are kind of the same, but they have different habits and traditions and everything, and different kind of way of thinking about things, maybe. [Q: So it’s more a curiosity, or is it something else?] Hmmm, [long pause] hmmm. I don’t know. Maybe a little curiosity, but not only that. It’s hard to say, to explain. [20FNY14, from the interview]

[Q: What is driving your interest in other cultures?] I think it has something to do with the interest/willingness to understand what's going on around the world; talking with people from other countries or cultures gives you new perspective about many things. And secondly, I like to meet new Finnish people as well; it's always a great surprise to see how many great people there are everywhere around us, near and far .... [20FNY14, written response]

She also offered a particularly insightful comment that cuts to the very core of the study methodology: "But I don't think that it [the language] would have had a great influence on my answers; some of the questions were really difficult to answer without thinking about them beforehand, and I couldn't have answered them any better even in Finnish!" [20FNY14].

### **5.5 Assessment of Informants' IC Abilities**

This research study attempts to discover whether people, in this case, Finns, who have not lived abroad can develop IC skills by interacting with dissimilar others at home. The methods chosen for this study, while allowing me a deeper understanding of the phenomena involved in the informants' personal experiences within the BP, unfortunately also limit my ability to see any objective measure of growth. No baseline measurement was taken prior to their BP experiences to measure against their post-BP experience. The only evidence I have of growth comes from the informants' self-reports in reply to a variety of questions. However, the data do indicate that some of the informants used a variety of IC skills in varying degrees, often without specific instruction. In attempt to understand these skills in action more clearly, I followed Silverman's (1993) recommendation of creating some sort of, often crude, quantitative measures to get a different feel for the data. As a result, I created an assessment scale to attempt to quantify the answers of my informants, hoping this process would illuminate in the data any patterns that might exist regarding which individuals in this study were applying IC skills and what manner.

Several key decisions guided the selection of items by which to assess the informants. First, I did not select IC skills such as openness, flexibility, and a non-judging attitude, three of the more commonly cited traits (see Table 3.2) because this group of people, for the most part, seemed to recognize these skills and attempted to put them into use, and thus I was not able to differentiate significantly between the informants based on their self-reports. Other traits,

such as interaction management and tolerance for ambiguity, were not explicitly or implicitly commented upon by all of the informants, and thus could not provide illumination to how the informants interacted interculturally during their BP experience. I also felt it would be useful to see not only how the informants were behaving, but also if they were learning anything from their BP experience.

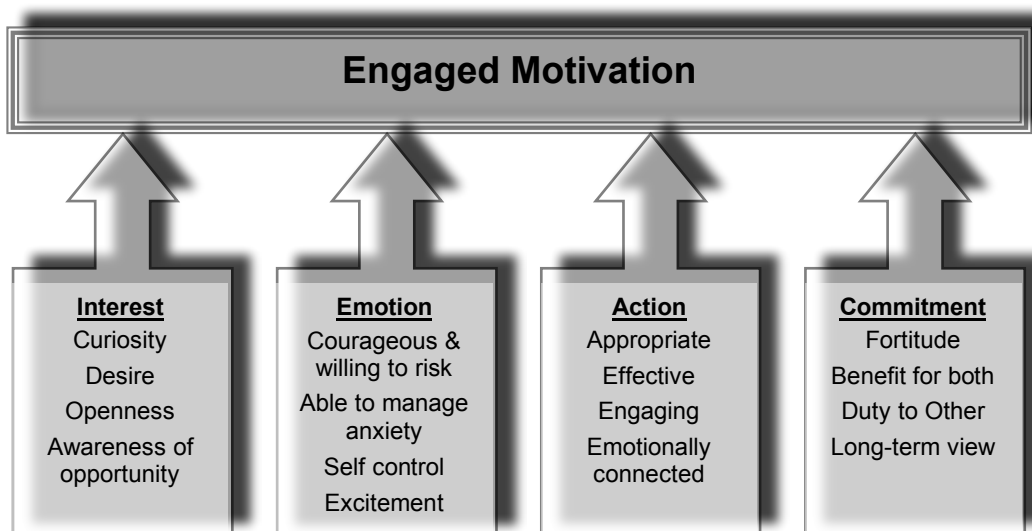
With these goals in mind, I selected 10 items on which to assess the informants, encompassing two sets of skills: antecedent skills and interaction skills. *Antecedent skills* involve those traits and skills an individual must possess or express prior to interaction, without which it would be unlikely that any intentional IC behaviors can take place consciously and regularly. For this assessment, I selected competency in the lingua franca (in this case, English) and a new construct that I call *engaged motivation* (defined below). The balance of the measures were *interaction skills*, which embody action steps that an interculturally competent person would implement when conversing with a dissimilar other—in anticipation of an interaction, within the actual conversation, and following its completion. Two skills, the application of IC theory and knowledge of one's own culture in action, join the skill of mindfulness in preparation as pre-interaction skills, although the former two also play a role in the actual interaction. Communicative adaptation, mindfulness in action, and observation form the core of the interaction phase. And an indication of learning from the experience and mindfulness in reflecting on what transpired complete a full interaction cycle.

*Engaged motivation* expands the essential IC trait of motivation, which is foundational to IC interaction (see, e.g., Kealey & Protheroe, 2000; Lustig & Koester, 1996; Martin & Nakayama, 1997; Ting-Toomey, 1999; Ting-Toomey & Chung, 1999). Indeed, possessing a multitude of IC-appropriate skills is useless if one is not motivated to use them. However, most theorists seem to view this trait in line with its dictionary definition—the state or condition of being incited, impelled, or provided with a motive—although Spitzberg and Cupach (1984) state that motivation impacts not only initial action, but also ongoing and future actions.

However, the data from this study point to a more complex understanding of the concept of motivation. Those who were the most IC connected, or who appeared to make the most progress in IC learning or skills development, had much more than simple interest. In analyzing their comments about their behaviors, it appears that their involvement was spurred on by a motivation

that had four components: interest, emotion, action, and commitment (see Figure 5.1). Some of the components of engaged motivation are discussed as separate skills within IC competency (see, e.g., Spitzberg & Cupach, 1984), yet this study's data suggest that in order for individuals to prosper from interacting with dissimilar others through voluntary social organizations all of these components must be present and active to some degree. Drawing them together within the engaged motivation construct allows for an easier understanding of how the components interrelate.

*Interest* represents the spark toward IC interaction, comprising the elements of curiosity about others, a desire to learn more and to make contact, an openness to difference, and the awareness of an opportunity to satisfy this interest. In short, the interest element is the stimulus, the reason to consider undertaking a particular action and the alertness to avenues to express that interest. The *emotion* component involves the affective elements of one's personality or skills that work during IC contact: one's emotions reflect experience but also regulate it (Matsumoto et al., 1989). Thus, the emotional component of engaged motivation includes the courage to make contact and a willingness to risk failure, difficulty, discomfort, or ambiguity during the challenge; the ability to manage the inevitable anxiety that will be felt (see also Gudykunst, 1995; C. W. Stephan & W. G. Stephan, 1992), particularly when the differences between the interlocutors



**Figure 5.1.** The four components of the engaged motivation construct articulate the foundational perspectives and abilities individuals need for establishing and maintaining contact with dissimilar others. These factors are particularly important during the process of relationship building.

is most apparent; self-control (see also Hammer, 1989; Hoppe, Snell, & Cocroft, 1999) over the myriad feelings that facilitate interpersonal contact or can cause one to pull back from interacting or to respond inappropriately; and finally, a feeling of excitement or wonder at diversity (see Byram, 1997) and meeting new people.

The third component is the step of *action*: Interest and emotional involvement result in nothing if some action does not take place. In this construct, the action step involves selecting appropriate and effective processes for the context and persons at hand, fully engaging in the action (rather than being on autopilot), being cognizant of the multitude of elements that comprise an action (internal to oneself and external), and finally, emotionally and intellectually connecting with the other individual at some level. The depth of a relationship depends on multiple contextual variables, but whether the action is a passing conversation with a shopkeeper or a deeply philosophical discussion with a peer, the individual needs to fully present—intellectually, emotionally, interpersonally, mindfully, reflectively.

The final element of this construct is *commitment*. While the term commitment may imply a greater depth of connection than many IC interactions may require, this element of the construct is a quite broad concept that simply means staying with the effort for however long it takes to reach the goals envisioned by the three previous components. This is particularly important for relationship building, but it can find expression even in casual conversations. In this construct, commitment embodies the element of fortitude—staying with the effort of interacting, particularly during the times when the interaction is challenging or difficult, stressful, when one feels ineffective or tired, or when the easier option would be to retreat to one's comfort zone. There is also a sense of duty to self, the other, and a group that comes with this, particularly in organized social events such as the BP. Finally, there is a recognition of and persistence in seeking the benefit for all interactants in a given context, and taking a long and dedicated view on the potential positive outcomes from any given exchange.

Table 5.1 presents the subjective quantification assessment. The ratings come from a 6-point scale, with 5 representing, depending on the item, *excellence in execution* or *continual use of the skill*, and 0 representing *not using the skill at all*.

The individual ratings on the 10 IC skills were drawn either from direct comments the individual made regarding specific actions that comprise the elements, or come from inferences I made from one or more related comments by the given informant. It is acknowledged that this is a subjective assessment based on the researcher's impressions drawn from the informants' responses to questions. Thus, these ratings may not reflect the actual learning or application of IC skills by the informants, but provide simply a different means of viewing the qualitative data.

The application of the assessment resulted in a ranking of individuals as shown in Table 5.2. The rating number decreases as one goes down the table, indicating that those individuals applied these IC skills less frequently than did the informants above them. The individuals highlighted are those who spent six or more months abroad.



**Table 5.1** General Assessment of Participants in 10 Areas Important to Intercultural Competency Development, Informants 1- 10.

	24FYY01	23FYY02	19FNY03	23FNY04	22MNY05	19FYY06	20FNY07	20FNY08	22FNY09	20FNY10
<b><u>Antecedent Skills</u></b>										
Engaged motivation (interest + emotion + action + commitment)	4	3	3	4	4	4	4	2	3	3
Lingua franca (English) competency	4	4	3	4	2	3	3	2	3	4
<b><u>Interaction Skills</u></b>										
Application of IC theory	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Communicative adaptation	4	3	1	3	3	4	4	1	1	1
Experiential learning	4	3	2	3	3	3	3	2	3	2
Knowledge of own culture in action	4	3	2	4	3	3	3	2	2	1
Mindfulness in preparation	4	3	0	4	3	1	2	0	1	0
Mindfulness in action	4	4	0	3	3	1	1	1	0	0
Mindfulness in reflection	4	2	0	3	3	1	3	0	0	1
Observation	4	3	1	4	4	4	4	2	2	1
<b>Rating from possible 50</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>13</b>

**Table 5.1** (continued) Informants 11–15.

	19FNY11	19FNN12	19FNY13	20FNY14	24MYY15
<b><u>Antecedent Skills</u></b>					
Engaged motivation (interest + emotion + action + commitment)	3	2	4	2	4
Lingua franca (English) competency	3	2	3	1	3
<b><u>Interaction Skills</u></b>					
Application of IC theory	0	0	0	0	0
Communicative adaptation	1	2	4	1	4
Experiential learning	2	2	3	2	4
Knowledge of own culture in action	1	2	3	1	4
Mindfulness in preparation	0	0	3	0	2
Mindfulness in action	1	1	4	1	4
Mindfulness in reflection	0	2	4	0	3
Observation	1	3	4	2	4
<b>Rating from possible 50</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>32</b>

**Table 5.2** Ranking of the Informants Based on the Assessment in Table 5.1.

24FYY01	38
24MYY15	32
23FNY04	32
19FNY13	31
22MNY05	28
23FYY02	28
20FNY07	27
19FYY06	24
19FNN12	16
22FNY09	15
20FNY10	13
19FNY03	12
20FNY08	12
19FNY11	12
20FNY14	10

## **6 DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS OF INFORMANTS' PERCEPTIONS**

The data in Tables 5.1 and 5.2 seem to indicate that several informants demonstrated a possession of some of the intercultural (IC) skills that IC researchers posit as important to IC competency (see Table 3.2). With no independent method to validate the informants' comments, there is no objective way to measure any IC growth related specifically to the BP; the data come solely from self-reports. Still, from the nature of and recollections within their self-reports, many informants describe areas that seem to support intercultural growth and development of IC skills as a result of their Buddy Project (BP) experiences.

In planning the study, I had hypothesized that some of the Finns who had not lived abroad (the at-home informants) would make some progress, although the depth and type of such progress was unclear. Therefore, I included four informants who had spent more than 6 months abroad as a means of comparing the development of the at-home Finns. Assuming that those who had lived abroad had developed some IC skills and competencies from undergoing the adaptation process to another culture, I proposed that they could serve as a type of benchmark for the at-home Finns: Did the at-home students demonstrate or relate any of the IC skills that were reflected in the comments of the exchange informants?

In analyzing the data, however, I found that not only were the at-home informants quite diverse in how their BP experience affected them, but that I could not treat the exchange students as a single, IC-capable group for comparison. Variations in their answers, underscored by the assessment process presented in Tables 5.1 and 5.2, demanded that I view them as a more diverse group. Even though there are just four individuals within this subset of data, impossible by any standard in which to understand such a phenomenon, it is still useful to consider possible reasons for this greater than expected span of IC competency expression within the exchange informants.

Certainly factors such the location of the exchange, the process of relationship building while in the other culture, and personality aspects surface as possible reasons for the differences. Another factor to consider surfaced as well: the age at which these individuals had their abroad experiences. It is possible that the age of the person at the time of the abroad experience can affect the long-term expression of IC skills garnered during the time abroad because of

a variety of factors within environment in which they lived. In this study, one exchange informant lived abroad at age 13 (with her family), one at age 16 (with a host family), and the other two in their early 20s (as individuals). It would be useful in future research to understand whether these results do in fact suggest that the nature of the exchange, the age of the individual at the time of the exchange and—more importantly for internationalization-at-home (IaH)—the supporting network of the exchange environment have significant implications for the individual's IC learning and skills development. Alred and Byram's (2002) longitudinal study of exchange students in England supports the possibility that a host family (or, the family of origin, as in the case of the informant in this study who was just 13 years old and abroad) provides more of secondary (intraculturally expansive) socialization within the new culture rather than the essential, perspective- and behavior-altering tertiary socialization.

The significance of how the security of a social network can negatively impact an individual's IC learning and skills development has direct implications for any IaH program in that the at-home interactants are enveloped by their home environment. Even if they notice IC differences in the visiting others, they are not compelled to draw on their personal skills to acclimate to or address them. The at-home individuals always know the nature and implications of the surrounding environment; they cannot truly experience the disorientation, stress, and emotional discomfort that comes with trying to reconcile what one has taken for granted regarding the processes, assumptions, or emotional connection needed to get things done in one's familiar home culture as compared to the unfamiliar culture (see also Y. Y. Kim, 2001; Lustig & Koester, 1996; Martin & Nakayama, 1997; Stier, 2003; Wiseman, 2001). The at-home individuals always have the option to remain uninvolved or to retreat from a difficult or stressing situation with a dissimilar other. So even if the at-home individual is very motivated or active in making contact, the fact that there always exists the possibility to leave the interaction fundamentally changes the nature of that interaction. It also can decrease the potential for IC learning and skills development.

Another interesting aspect of age that surfaced from Tables 5.1 and 5.2 is that two of the three at-home informants over the age of 21 were better than average in their IC-sensitive mannerisms and use of IC skills, with comments and assessment numbers that approached those of the older exchange students. It is

possible that one's process of maturing into young adulthood brings skills such as self-reflection and observation that can provide more fruitful benefits for at-home students in IC learning and skills development. The two at-home informants under the age of 21 who ranked equally as high were quite exceptional in their use of mindfulness, particularly in comparison to their same-age peers. These younger individuals who reported significant mindful, reflective, and observational skills seemed to possess natural personality traits that facilitated their IC growth that would fuel their IC interactions and skills development.

## **6.1 Possible Skills and Learning from IC Interaction at Home**

This study was a qualitative investigation with 15 informants. The knowledge gained from such a study does not permit conclusive generalizations that can be applied to a broader, or different, group. All of these informants were self-identified and all shared a serious interest in meeting culturally dissimilar others. BP participants who did not respond to the invitation for an interview and, more importantly, the considerably larger body of University of Jyväskylä (JyU) students who did not participate in the BP, may have entirely different perspectives on IC interaction and demonstrate a different trajectory in their IC learning and skills development. Nevertheless, the insights provided by the study subjects can inform a discussion about what might be possible regarding IC interaction on a greater scale on this campus and other locales, particularly in regard to the concept of IaH.

### **6.1.1 The nature of IC learning and skills development**

The data regarding the specific aspects of IC learning that the informants reported seem to fall into five broad categories (see Table 6.1). While these are not mutually exclusive areas, they will be treated as such in order to demonstrate distinct skills.

#### **6.1.1.1 Awareness of cultural differences and similarities**

The data indicate that the informants recognized both similarities and differences, particularly in the area of communicative expression, between Finnish and other cultures, even though they may not have conceived this in dialectic terms (see Martin & Nakayama, 1997, 2004). Many also demonstrated an understanding of the difference between the cultural elements of a person's behavior, values, and perspectives, and communicative patterns and those elements that reflect either the

**Table 6.1** The Nature of IC Learning and Skills Development by Informants.

Most informants demonstrated the following IC skills:

- ◆ Awareness of cultural difference and similarities, including the impact of personality
- ◆ Cultural sensitivity in the application of some IC skills
- ◆ Adaptation of communicative style for the co-actor
- ◆ Awareness of one's own culture in action
- ◆ Self-confidence and encouragement in current and future IC interactions

individual's personality or the universal human condition (see also Martin & Nakayama, 2004; Teekens, 2003), although they more often seemed to ascribe the differences to personality rather than culture. The informants varied considerably on the level or emphasis given to any cultural difference perceived, but it appears that for those who were able to build a relationship with a dissimilar other, the relationship was built upon perceived similarities and/or shared interests (see also Cupach & Imahori, 1993; Lee, 2006). And, as might be expected for individuals without formal preparation for IC interaction, few informants commented on the dissimilarities or similarities of others in any means beyond behavior: The underlying values, assumptions, and worldviews were rarely identified. Importantly, though, many of the informants indicated that even if they noticed differences, they simply took them in stride. What is hard to determine, however, is whether this approach reflects the personality types of the informants, some level of experience in diverse situations, or some element of the Finnish culture, or perhaps some combination of these factors.

The informants were able to define elements of the multifaceted concept of culture, naming many of the aspects/traits identified within the literature (see Table 3.2). This seems to underscore that modern educated people understand cultural difference, at least conceptually. During interaction with dissimilar others—in programs such as the BP—the abstract understanding of culture became more concrete and perhaps also more complex, and thus raises potential for more reflective individuals to contemplate how culture is expressed and influences people's actions. As the data demonstrate, the BP provided at-home students opportunities to experience cultural expression within their home environment, but these opportunities did not encourage most of the informants to delve into the more influential, less conscious elements of culture and cultural assumptions and values that underlie cultural expression, the unseen portions of

the “cultural iceberg” (see Weaver, 1993) that can crash against each other as the individuals become emotionally closer (see Bhawuk & Brislin, 1992).

Many informants noted that the foreign students they met on campus were not much different from themselves. While this “they’re just like us” syndrome may be one of the most common misconceptions in the world (E. T. Hall, 1976: 62) and perhaps a stumbling block for IC development (Barna, 1998), in this circumstance there may be rationales for the informants to feel this way. Interestingly, a similar feeling was reported by foreign students in Finland about their Finnish peers (see Taajamo, 2006). First, one can assume that because each person was meeting unfamiliar others, they all were on their best behaviors, striving to be more accommodating and not to offend (see also Burgoon et al., 2000). And in the friendly nature of simple conversation, circumstances did not transpire in which the differences in values, worldviews, expectations, and so forth would have surfaced to demonstrate difference. Second, perhaps generational issues are at play. The global popular culture of the Western youth provides a familiar foundation for easy interaction, with Finnish university students similar to their peers in other countries (see also Sibelius University, 2006b; Ylänkö, 2002). Ward, Bochner, and Furnham (2001) indicate that tertiary education is undergoing global homogenization, and that students studying abroad are most likely to be middle class individuals who attended secondary schools patterned on the Western educational system. In addition, several informants noted that the exchange students were “cosmopolitan” in nature, perhaps the result of previous travels or the globalized media (see, e.g., Burbules & Torres, 2000; James, 2005). Each of these elements creates the illusion of similarity, glossing over the existence of deeper and distinct culture elements. But they also provide a foundation upon which interaction can be initiated.

Third, many informants expressed their interest in terms of meeting the individuals of different cultures, with the emphasis on engaging unfamiliar *people* rather than unfamiliar *cultures*. Therefore, the Finns may have been more willing to address difference as personality (personal) facets or situational outcomes rather than cultural facets. This is in line with the system theoretical approach to IC communication advocated by Edwin Hoffman (1999) through his TOPOI (Tongue [language], Order, Perspectives, Organization and Intentions) model, a means for seeking rational explanations for and resolving miscommunication

in IC interaction in these five “places” of trouble typical in interpersonal interactions. Because of their focus on the other as a person rather than simply a member of another culture, these informants are less likely to stereotype their interaction partner and more likely to engage in intercultural dialogue, a approach of intense listening and engaged interaction through which understanding and creativity can surface (see also B. Hall, 2001; Salo-Lee, 2003, 2006), promoting openness and sensitivity toward the other as well as to the unknowns in the relationship and context. Fourth, because the Finns wanted relationships, it was important for them to find similarities that would transcend any differences so the friendship could grow (see also Martin & Nakayama, 1997). Once the relationship was established and deepening, they were less likely to look for differences. Lee’s (2006) study confirms the likelihood that differences exist, and might even be noticed, by the intercultural friends, but that they prefer to emphasize only the similarities.

Finally, the vast majority of non-Finns participating in the BP were from Europe, and most of the non-Europeans were from other Western nations or Russia. Of course, the “Europeanness” of the exchange students is by design, as the EU seeks to establish a continent-wide sense of what it means to be European (Zemke, 1998: 193; see also Ward, 2001). This perspective is reflected by Hofstede (2001: 10): “At home, I feel Dutch and very different from other Europeans, such as Belgians and Germans; in Asia or the United States, we all feel like Europeans.” Perhaps the Finns, in looking at how their cultural lifestyle compares with other European cultures, are simply seeing more similarities than differences.

Nevertheless, this sense that the exchange students are no different does have implications for an IaH program. Weaver (1993) states that to understand someone’s behavior, one needs to understand how that person experiences the many facets of the world around him/her and how that person learned to organize and use information (see also Chen & Starosta, 1996). So, if the Finns put emphasis on seeing similarities rather than differences, they cannot begin to understand how the learning and perceiving processes are different in the dissimilar other, how those cultural distinctions can affect the other’s behaviors, or the implications of culture within the interaction. By extension, then, they will have less opportunity to develop their IC skills. This is even



more significant when one considers that many immigrants, and nearly all refugees, living in Finland are not European.

#### **6.1.1.2 Cultural sensitivity in applying some IC skills**

For the most part, the informants understood and tried to practice some basic IC skills: openness, second-language use, motivated interaction, suspension of judgment, and so on. Some informants were quite demonstrative in how they expressed their sensitivity to different behaviors: They not only were aware of the distinctiveness in expression, but they tried to participate in such cultural expression. This sensitivity seemed to be derived from the informants' emphasis on seeing the dissimilar other as an individual (see also Barna, 1998; Cupach & Imahori, 1993; E. Hoffman, 1999), rather than as the representative of a culture. This made the interaction process more personal, more open, more sensitive. While this emphasis on the individual can diminish the IC learning that might come from observing and pondering the nature or expression of difference, it did lead to more appropriate and sensitive efforts toward relationship building.

#### **6.1.1.3 Adaptation of communication style**

Several of the informants consciously changed their communicative behavior, in particular their greeting and parting rituals (e.g., cheek kisses), to reflect the manner in which their foreign friends (particularly from southern European countries) would behave toward each other. The rationales for this behavior were varied, but most noted that they wanted the foreign students to feel welcome or wanted to demonstrate their desire to make contact. Other changes in behavior included making oneself talk more (reciprocity in speech patterns), sharing more personal information (reciprocity in self-disclosure; see also Lee, 2006; Lustig & Koester, 1996; Spitzberg & Cupach, 1984), accepting and creating closer interpersonal spaces when interacting, and touching and allowing to be touched (see also Andersen, 1999b; Lustig & Koester, 1996), with actions taken toward the goal of encouraging relationship building. Some informants became so comfortable with some elements of another culture's communication style that they accidentally applied it in compatriot interactions, usually with uncomfortable outcomes. For many of these individuals, it appears that the more expressive way of communicating was a joy for them, as if it embodied their own personal communication style that might be stifled under the more reserved Finnish

communicative style (see Carbaugh, 1995; Sajavaara & Lehtonen, 1997; Tulviste et al., 2003). One concern, however, is that it was not apparent how thoughtful or reflective the informants were being in applying these different communication styles: Rather than these actions serving as a demonstration of IC learning and adaptation, they seemed simply an avenue to express their natural extroverted personality types or perhaps were fun to do. Their comments also did not reflect, even early on, the higher anxiety that Gudykunst & Shapiro (1996) suggest can be expected in intercultural interactions, as compared to intracultural exchanges. Perhaps this could be related to the Finns' perception of the other's expectations regarding behavior: Another Finn might expect them to be quiet, calm, and controlled, which is not their natural or preferred communication style, whereas a member of another culture might welcome such energy and extraversion, and in fact might expect it.

Most of the informants articulated several familiar elements of the Finnish communication style (shyness, hesitancy to initiate communication, a "closed" body language, greater distances between people, less touch, etc.) and noted that Finns are hard to get to know, even by other Finns. Indeed, the desire by some informants to behave "not so Finnish," and thus be perceived as more approachable, and the frustration some voiced regarding the Finnish communication style, may reflect their feelings of being at a disadvantage in initiating and building friendships, as compared to the "outgoing" foreigners. Even though they appreciated much of their own culture, they saw areas in its communication style that they felt could benefit from other cultural expressions, and a few informants indicated that they were now incorporating some of these elements (more expression of feeling, more readiness to chat, more assertive turn-taking, etc.) in their interactions not only with foreigners but with other Finns as well. This attitude is significant because it indicates that younger members of the Finnish society who are experiencing alternative means of communicating and interacting may be more open to adapting the social expectations regarding elements of the Finnish communicative style, with implications for the wider society not yet determined. It also demonstrates that IaH experiences can result in new approaches to cultural assumptions that move quickly off campus and into mainstream Finnish life.

Another significant issue for an IaH focus is that many of these informants understood the need for adapting their behavior, even though they were the hosts, and had not taken IC courses that raised the potential for this need. While the rationales for this understanding varied (appearing more friendly, making others feel more welcome, being sensitive to different communication styles), the simple recognition that both parties need to adapt in an interaction is important for future cross-cultural experiences within a multicultural Finland.

One final observation is that the informants' personal temperament ranged from quiet to quite expressive. But the level of talkativeness did not necessarily correspond with level of success the individuals achieved in establishing IC friendships. Some extroverted personalities did not achieve deep friendships in this iteration of the BP while some introverted personalities did. Two perspectives may explain this. First, since the BP is presented as a means to meet others, the presumption for those registering to participate is that others wish to meet as well. Therefore, the BP as an "introduction service" paves the way for introverts to interact and perhaps develop communicative skills (see also Dunstan, 2003) since others have created the atmosphere in which all interact. Introverts are still required to communicate somehow, and those who remain in the program manage to establish ties, albeit often with the help of the more extroverted members. Second, and more important, relationships grow when there is similarity in interests, compatibility or complementarity in interaction style and disclosure, and overlaps in identities (Gudykunst & Shapiro, 1996; Hubbert et al. 1999; Lee, 2006; Martin & Nakayama, 1997; Singer, 1998). That depends as much, of course, on the personality expression (with or without cultural constraints; see M.-S. Kim, 1993) of the other as it does for the Finn. So while the extroverted Finns may have been able to make friends with just about anyone in their group, the introverted Finns who developed friendships were fortunate to have individuals within their groups who shared their interests, with whom there was reciprocal attraction, shared identities, and interaction styles that meshed with the Finn, who often was also trying to adapt his/her quiet style to meet that of the other.

#### **6.1.1.4 Awareness of one's own culture**

Perhaps one of the most challenging—but essential—aspects of IC interaction is learning about one's own culture, its unspoken values, and its assumptions that

lead to expectations, as a process in learning about others (see Byram, 1997; Pitkänen, 1998). However, only one of the informants (a former exchange student) even acknowledged that there was something to learn about being Finnish from interaction with dissimilar others in the BP. Although the others did not anticipate such learning from this experience, several pointed out that it did, in fact, take place. For some, the own-culture discovery was minor; for others it was quite enlightening or gratifying. A few had already been thinking about cultural difference as including their culture even before entering the BP, but more in line with the simple acceptance that if they had unique ways of doing things, so must the other. Certainly all of the informants articulated various aspects of Finnish culture, particularly communicative patterns. But the deeper elements of culture—the values, assumptions, traditions, systematic processes (particularly at the educational and government levels), and so forth—were areas for seeing anew through the perceptions of their buddies. Very little of this was explored by these informants.

For some of the informants, the learning about their own culture resulted directly from conversation, often in the form of discussion within their groups about how various cultures handled a particular event (traditions) or process (systems, particularly education). This learning also arose when foreign friends sought information or explanation for some observation/event. The nature of the questions helped the informants see taken-for-granted elements of their own culture and sometimes made them uncomfortable in having to explain or justify them. However, most of the informants who experienced such questions and reflections of others felt pleased with how their culture “held its own” when compared to others.

#### **6.1.1.5 Self-confidence and encouragement**

Since the BP was the first significant interaction some informants had with dissimilar others (and one can presume from the comments from the informants that this applies to many Finnish BP participants who were not interviewed), the outcome (emotional and intellectual) is significant in how they may view future interactions with dissimilar others. If an individual feels successful, he/she is more willing to interact with a dissimilar other in the future (see also Spitzberg & Cupach, 1984). So while the BP experience is not

interculturally stringent, particularly as compared to living within another culture, it does provide to intercultural novices—the less skilled, less knowledgeable, more nervous—a means to step across that IC divide and interact without major incident, thus building a sense of accomplishment. As with all growth processes, these “baby steps” are essential as the foundation for future growth and larger strides in varying circumstances.

On the other hand, there is also potential for a negative reaction for any number of reasons. If the group falls apart for lack of involvement of the foreign buddies, if the Finn finds the process of speaking the lingua franca or managing different communication patterns too stressful, or if the Finn has a bad experience with a dissimilar other, the BP experience has the potential for facilitating the Finn’s retreat back into his/her comfort zone, or for making it less likely that he/she will venture out of that comfort zone to interact—particularly voluntarily—with dissimilar others in the future (see, e.g., Amir, 1969; Spitzberg & Cupach, 1984). In view of the extended contact hypothesis (Liebkind & McAlister, 1999; Wright et al., 1997), such a retreat may also have a negative ripple effect among this individual’s friends and family. While such a dramatic negative outcome seems fairly remote (see, e.g., Blommaert, 1995), there are no studies investigating the perceptions and assertions of Finns who leave the BP early.

### **6.1.2 Factors affecting intercultural learning through interaction**

The areas of learning presented in Section 6.1.1 are, of course, generalities. Not all informants made progress in all of the areas, nor did all share similar levels of growth in any of the areas. Much of how each informant changed was the result of a multitude of factors, such as personality type, level of motivation, prior experience, level of maturity, and so on. The factors that affect how individuals would benefit from a BP experience—particularly in the area of IC learning and skills development—are summarized in Table 6.2 and discussed in greater detail here. It is important to remember that although I have separated these factors for discussion, most are interrelated, with change in one area often affecting one or more of the other areas.

There are other broader factors that affect the development of IC learning or skills development through a volunteer program such as the BP. Specifics about these issues are beyond the scope of this study, but are important to surface here,

**Table 6.2** Factors Affecting IC Learning Through Voluntary Social Interaction.

Based on the informants' comments, elements that affect IC learning during social interaction include:

- ◆ The language of interaction
- ◆ One's IC theoretical knowledge
- ◆ Engaged motivation
- ◆ Personality and temperament
- ◆ Use of stereotypes
- ◆ Prior experiences
- ◆ One's expectations
- ◆ Observation of self and others
- ◆ Reflection on observations, events, and learning
- ◆ Time for meeting
- ◆ Interpersonal and group dynamics
- ◆ Actual time in conversation
- ◆ The motivation/behavior of the other

before expounding on what the data indicate. For example, beyond an individual's personality, motivation, prior experience, and maturity, the nature of friendship making (see, e.g., Cupach & Imahori, 1993) has implications for relationship building with dissimilar others. Both within one's culture and with a dissimilar other, the process of getting to know someone involves similar requirements: a certain level of attentiveness to the other, perhaps an adaptation in differing modes of expression and mannerisms, shared interest, mutual attraction, and so on (Cupach & Imahori, 1993; Lustig & Koester, 1996). Yet there are differences brought on by culture, many of which are not conscious to either party. While E. Hoffman (1999) does not believe that these differences are of much consequence if one is engaging the dissimilar other as an individual rather than a cultural representative, other IC scholars (e.g., Chen & Starosta, 1996; Lustig & Koester, 1996; Spencer-Rodgers & McGovern, 2002) state that differences in language, patterns of behavior, other cultural norms, even how members of a culture process the stimuli around them, can lead to problematic interaction between dissimilar others. So it seems that possessing an array of skills and attitudes would assist the relationship building and IC communication processes. After all, one's culture influences what one deems as appropriate and effective in regard to intercultural interaction (Lustig & Koester, 1996).

Also important is the nature of learning, particularly from experience. These data indicate that as a relationship deepened, how the informant perceived

difference changed as well: The informants stopped noticing difference once the relationship became a close friendship. While this may be typical in that relationships become idiosyncratic as they become intimate (see also Gudykunst & Shapiro, 1996; Lee, 2006; Martin & Nakayama, 1997), much IC learning takes place at these deeper levels of a relationship (see also Amir, 1969; Cupach & Imahori, 1993; E. Hoffman, 1999; Martin & Nakayama, 1997). Nevertheless, from these informants' comments, the opportunity for IC learning from the events and interactions of the relationship decreased as the relationship deepened. Additionally, the informants indicated an indefinable element of interpersonal chemistry that grew over time (see also Ting-Toomey, 1999), perhaps a reflection of the similarity-attraction hypothesis, which suggests interpersonal attraction toward those who are comparable to ourselves in ways that we deem important (Lustig & Koester, 1996). While developing deeper relationships with dissimilar others includes benefits such as new knowledge about the other culture and the world, broken stereotypes, learning from "ongoing mutual clarification," and acquiring new skills (see Martin and Nakayama, 1997: 226), the data from this study seem to indicate that the more extensive the compatible chemistry between the two individuals, and thus a deeper relationship, the less emphasis the informant placed on the IC aspects of the relationship. Instead, they emphasized the similarities the two people shared, such as in their interests, fields of study, and interaction style. However, while the learning decreased for these informants, one cannot presume that all Finns would experience deep relationships similarly; others might continue IC learning as their relationships with dissimilar others grow (see Lee, 2006).

Finally, there is the culturally affected concept of friendship and the value of a friend. Like many elements of social interaction, the nature of friends and friendships draw on the unwritten values and attitudes within a given culture. As a result, how one selects a friend, the number of friends one prefers to have, the depth of the relationship for various levels of friendship, the role and responsibilities of a friend, how long it takes for a relationship to become a friendship, and how long that friendship is to last, for example, are influenced by internalized cultural norms (see Lustig & Koester, 1996). Although the informants were not unanimous in how they defined *friend* in the Finnish context, several informants pointed to three levels of friendship: stranger, friend (including perhaps

acquaintances, coworkers, neighbors, schoolmates, etc.), and best friend, those individuals with whom one desires to spend much time and to share interests and intimate thoughts. With each of these are the personal perspectives on what having a friend means, and this affects not only the process of friendship making but also an assessing of the “return on investment” (ROI) for the process (see Spitzberg & Cupach, 1984). Is this (dissimilar) person going to be the kind of person that is worth my time, energy, effort, thoughts, emotions, and sacrifices?

The areas just presented impact the factors that affect IC learning through interaction that are presented below. The degree of influence of these larger concepts (see Table 6.2) to the specific learning potential is related to the culturally influenced personal expectations and individual personality. Nevertheless, the following elements, derived from this study’s informants, are some personal and contextual elements that seemed to affect, in varying amounts, the potential and actual IC learning and skills development of the informants participating in a voluntary social (group) interaction.

#### **6.1.2.1 Language**

The role of language in IC interaction cannot be underestimated. If an interactant does not understand the conversation or feels repeatedly that she/he is not being understood, then frustration or discouragement can build. These negative feelings can influence the nature of the relationship, as well as assertions one makes about the other and/or the other’s culture.

In the case of the BP, most participants used English as the lingua franca, as does the JyU. As a result, both hosts and most guests communicated in a second language. While foreign students must demonstrate a certain level of English competency to attend JyU, this same requirement does not apply to Finns unless they seek acceptance into an English-language degree program (personal correspondence with JyU’s Head of Student Affairs and Services, Tuula Maijanen, November 5, 2007). So, even though most Finns begin to study English in elementary school (Piri, 1997), the level of linguistic competency can vary dramatically, and can differ between speaking and reading or between understanding and speaking. Some Finns with competent English skills lack the confidence to use it (Taajamo, 2003), feel the complexity of syntax or vocabulary (see Y. Y. Kim, 2001) too challenging, or



find it cognitively or emotionally draining to communicate for long periods in a second language. One informant indicated that a friend dropped from the BP because of her concern with her English skills, and this most likely is not a unique case (see Stier, 2003). Still, the majority of informants indicated they joined the BP principally to improve their English skills.

#### **6.1.2.2 Intercultural theory knowledge**

Few informants touched on the concept of theory, and whatever references were made were mostly passing comments. They rightly noted that while some IC skills and knowledge can be learned from a book (or a course), the sense of awareness and change in attitude could only come from experience. In particular, communicative elements such as nonverbal expression, interpersonal distance, language competency, paralinguistic usage, turn-taking, and so on—as well as how one emotionally responds to these in the other—can only be developed through experience with dissimilar others. In these and many IC skills, experience is the best teacher (Grove & Torbiörn, 1993; Stier, 2006).

However, individuals who have the theory behind them, such as informant 24FYY01, demonstrate that knowing and applying theory and knowledge can make a difference in how one interacts, as advocated by Bhawuk and Triandis (1996). It also affects how one perceives the actions of others, turning what could be a bad or unproductive experience into one of personal or IC learning.

#### **6.1.2.3 Engaged motivation**

The literature lists positive motivation as one of the key skills needed for developing IC competency (e.g., B. Hall, 2001; Y. Y. Kim, 2001; Klak & Martin, 2003), while negative motivation can discourage IC interaction (e.g., Spitzberg & Cupach, 1984). Indeed, positive motivation is the foundation for IC interaction: Skills and knowledge are useless without it because the individual has no desire to put them into use (see also Martin & Nakayama, 1997). Interaction is essential in improving competency, and nurturing motivation is essential for interaction.

However, the data from this study point to a much more complex understanding of the concept of motivation, which I refer to as *engaged motivation* (see Section 5.5). Based on this data, those who exercised this construct were more likely to have working groups, and in fact at least two groups that initially seemed destined to fail for lack of foreign buddies became

active and vibrant groups because at least one individual in each group did not settle for events as they were. Informants exhibiting engaged motivation had strong interest in and were excited about meeting foreign students, were courageous in seeking out new group members, took the action and invited others, and remained active and committed to making the group work. As a result, everyone in the groups that had at least one member who employed the engaged motivation construct had the opportunity to benefit from its use.

Perhaps more interesting is how the lack of even one of the components of this construct can lead to unproductive meetings, and the decreased potential for IC learning. While all informants had some level of interest, those with the higher level of interest were those who did not settle for less than what their vision of IC interaction would be. However, a couple of informants did not demonstrate the emotion component: They were hesitant to interact beyond the meetings, were unsure of how to interact, and seemed a bit fearful; they lacked a strong internal “fire” to make things happen; they were ambivalent. Matsumoto & LeRoux (2003) emphasize the essential role of emotion regulation in the process of personal IC learning and growth. Yet a person’s emotional inability to cope with the situations generated by his/her interest (see Spitzberg & Cupach, 1984) also may have contributed to his/her group’s lack of vitality. This might also be reflected in the informants’ comments about Finnish peers from other groups who simply accepted the fact that their group did not work.

In regard to the action step, all informants initiated the process by registering for the program, but the force behind it varied. For example, in one group from which I interviewed several individuals, all were unhappy with the fact that initially there was just one foreigner but six Finns. However, only one individual took the appropriate step of seeking out foreigners who had not registered and inviting them to join. The result was a very vibrant group, one that would not have happened without the action of that individual. A lukewarm expression of action is also reflected in the various participants who simply lamented that their groups did not meet, without their taking an active role in changing the reality: They wanted someone else to be responsible for organizing the meetings. Finally, several comments reflect the lack of commitment, such as “We try to plan things, but it doesn’t work out,” or “...I have so many interests.” In this study, individuals who did not employ a

committed attitude—make the time and effort to interact with the others in their group (see also Martin and Nakayama, 1997)—did not establish a significant relationship with a foreign student.

The clearest example of this construct is informant 19NY13. In her first buddy group (autumn), she employed all four components of engaged motivation, she established good friendships, could relate areas of new knowledge or skills, and had a positive perspective on the process. Her spring group, however, was less successful. She still had the interest in meeting others, she maintained her emotional component, and she undertook the action to register and meet. But she acknowledged that she pined for her friends from the previous group, and therefore was less committed to the spring group. It would be safe to assume that, because she was not committed to following through on her action and interest, she most likely did not develop (and had not at the time of the interview, about 5 weeks into the spring BP cohort) any relationships with the group's members nor benefit significantly in IC learning or skills development from any conversations held (see also Klak & Martin, 2003).

Informant 24FYY01 is quite correct when she states that only motivated people can develop their IC competencies. Motivation is undergirded by one's personality, including aspects of boredom, curiosity, and risk-taking (see, e.g., Arasaratnam, 2004; Morgan & Arasaratnam, 2003; Spencer-Rodgers & McGovern, 2002), or negatively by distrust or fear (see, e.g., Hofstra, van Oudenhoven, & Buunk, 2005). Many innate personality traits can find expression in engaged motivation, although I believe some of these elements can be introduced and enhanced through IC courses and skills practice.

#### **6.1.2.4 Personality and temperament**

Several of the informants themselves recognized how their personality and personal preferences related to their motivation, their skills development and practice, and to the overall scope of interacting with dissimilar others, as well as what, if anything, they learned from interacting interculturally. This is in line with several scholars (e.g., Amir, 1969; Brislin, 1981; Grove & Torbiörn, 1993; Weaver, 1993), whose research point to the key role that psychological or personality traits play in IC competency development and effective IC interaction.

The more outgoing and communicatively expressive individuals found themselves quite comfortable in interacting with foreigners with similar communication styles. While the less expressive individuals may not have had this effervescent trait to assist, some still connected with foreigners to make friends, and all maintained the opportunity for IC learning. This demonstrates that personality traits can assist in IC interaction in various ways, and the possession of extroverted communication styles is not the only means to productive interaction and IC learning.

#### **6.1.2.5 Use of stereotypes**

Most informants readily admitted that they had preconceived ideas about the cultures of their foreign buddies (see also Ting-Toomey, 1999), which not only is normal but also necessary in dealing with new situations (see, e.g., Allport, 1954; Lustig & Koester, 1996). Interestingly, two individuals insisted they did have such preconceptions since they had never met anyone from those cultures and were not affected by the wider perspective on other cultures either from their environment (see, e.g., Amir, 1969), secondary sources, or the media (see e.g., Y. Y. Kim, 2001; Liu, 2006). However, all informants also noted explicitly that they were not wedded to their initial ideas on other cultures because, they acknowledged, preconceptions not only can change, but in fact do. Certainly, if individuals rely heavily on stereotypes when interacting with dissimilar others, they are less likely to recognize or accept observable differences (see also Allport, 1954) that either reflect an incorrect assumption about that culture or the expressed unique personal traits that may or may not be representative of that individual's national or ethnic culture. Fortunately, these informants seemed to put very little energy into what they *thought* other cultures believed or how they behaved, but instead let the current experience with the foreign members in their group affect what they know or believe about individuals from that culture. Of course, the nature, depth, or salience of cultural assumptions (preconceptions) often would not be noticed or questioned unless these assumptions did not play out as anticipated, as some of these informants experienced, or if the informant had developed skills to keep an open mind about new (and old) knowledge. Still, these Finns readily adapted their prejudgments when exposed to new information (see also Allport, 1954), demonstrating flexibility and openness in dealing with others.

It is hard to gauge, however, whether this openness is typical of the Finnish culture, whether these individuals are representative of their young Finnish peers, whether this is a character trait of those most willing to volunteer for IC interaction in programs such as the BP, or whether this attitude is a trait natural to those who would most benefit from IC learning opportunities. Nevertheless, the existence of preconceptions about or prejudices toward another culture or region in itself does not necessarily delimit the amount of learning one can make within an IC interaction with someone from that culture or region. Rather the IC learning outcome is determined by how closely one holds to those prejudices and beliefs, particularly in the face of contrary information apparent in the actual interaction (see also Allport, 1954).

#### **6.1.2.6 Prior experience**

Every informant had traveled out of Finland at least once; some had extended travels. The literature indicates that short-term IC experiences, such as tourism or short study trips/exchanges, can result in individuals' observations, cultural knowledge drawn from comparisons, assessments of communicative skills, and even IC acquaintances (e.g., Amir & Ben-Ari, 1985; Horenczyk & Bekerman, 1997; Karwinska, 1999), although they also can result in negative perceptions (e.g., Wright et al., 1997). In general, the nature and length of a trip abroad and, more importantly, its authentic access to the local people (see Ward et al., 2001) affect the usefulness of prior experiences in assisting the individual to notice and appreciate differences that surface during IC conversation at home.

In addition, a few of the at-home informants had met foreign students in prior offerings of the BP, through classes, at other functions on campus, or during their earlier schooling. The more experiences an at-home student has in meeting dissimilar others, either at home or brief travel abroad, particularly if these individuals represent distinct cultures, the more the at-home individual benefits in learning about IC differences and in developing skills to improve the outcomes of IC interactions.

The BP also offers opportunity for individuals holding negative views of a particular culture to revise those through interaction with additional representatives from the culture in question. This study provides evidence of two informants for whom the BP did exactly that. The informants held generally

negative impressions of a particular culture based on prior experience with that culture. Yet, through interaction with representatives from the respective countries, these two informants learned to suspend judgment of the culture, to cease stereotyping all representatives of those cultures, and to deal with the individuals as such. There is no indication they felt favorably toward all members of that culture because of the current IC interaction, but they acknowledged they were able to put their previous bad experiences in to perspective, and to realize that individuals—not the culture or country as a whole—were the cause of the previous experiences. Growth situations such as related by the two informants can have a significant benefit for IaH individuals whose only international experiences are touristic in nature.

#### **6.1.2.7 Expectations**

Of all the subjects, informant 22MNY05 seemed to have experienced the most emotional conflict and concern—truly questioning the processes and actions of others. He noted his frustration at times, particularly when others did not behave (speak, interact, understand, or even show up) as he expected, an emotion similar to what Paige (1993b) hypothesizes regarding sojourners' expectations of another culture. He reflected on these things, at the time and afterwards, which helped him in his IC growth. He notes that the process became easier over time, which he credits to experience. However, I believe part of the decreased frustration came from his changed expectations of others.

Other informants related situations in which they expected that someone would or would not do something, and were also surprised or disappointed. Perhaps the role and the power of expectations—positive and negative, conscious and unconscious—remains an underexplored facet of IC learning and skills development. This is tied to the fact that many of the expectations (derived from culturally influenced attitudes, stereotypes, and prejudices formed via socialization, education, and cultural-based media; see, e.g., Gudykunst, 1995; Hubbert et al., 1999; Gudykunst & Shapiro, 1996; Ting-Toomey, 1999) form the lens through which we view others and their behaviors, as well as assess them. I believe helping those preparing for IC interactions, particularly novices, to create realistic expectations that are met (or exceeded) will provide a far more pleasant experience, successful IC exchange, and IC learning context than unrealistic

(particularly overly optimistic) expectations that fall short (see also Dignes & Baldwin, 1996). It is possible that unmet expectations may contribute to lack of participation in the group or even to group failure.

#### **6.1.2.8 Observation of self and others**

As noted earlier, very few informants stated they consciously observed behavioral differences or learned something about another culture through observation. Yet observations of IC interactions provide an outstanding way to gain knowledge about, at the very least, how members of other cultures behave (see also Lustig & Koester, 1996; Spitzberg & Cupach, 1984). Observation can provide clues regarding relationships, social contexts, and even the underlying but unspoken values and attitudes of a culture.

Yet, many informants did in fact observe others, even if it was not a conscious effort, because they adapted their communication patterns (e.g., cheek kisses) to reflect those of their foreign buddies. And a few informants were able to recall circumstances that seem to reflect an observation process. This disconnect between what they report they did (indicating they were observing) and their lack of direct comments regarding what they observed can indicate that these informants were observant but did not value its role in their IC interaction or learning, nor did they put particular effort into using this skill. Perhaps because we humans observe all the time, it remains an unconscious process unless something unusual causes us to ponder what we just witnessed.

The other aspect of observation is that of self, perhaps more appropriately known as self-awareness (see Chen & Starosta, 1996). While several informants indicated that they learned much about their own culture from comments made by their foreign buddies, very few indicated that they took that knowledge to look at their own culture and personality traits with “fresh eyes,” learning how what they take for granted affects how they see, think, feel, and react to other people and events (see, e.g., Kealey & Protheroe, 2000). Yet IC interaction—and the ensuing questions or concerns of foreigners—provides hosts the opportunity to become aware of what is normally not seen but is unique; troublesome, perplexing, or fascinating for others; or is a source of pride for the host culture’s members.

### **6.1.2.9 Reflection on observations and learning**

Certainly observation is important in IC learning and skills development, as is concrete knowledge about a variety of cultural elements. However, simply witnessing cultural differences or similarities is not enough (see also Bennett, 1998a; de Jong & Teekens, 2003). The significance of these observations and learning tidbits only comes from pondering over them; the process of reflecting is essential in order for IC growth to occur from interaction (see also Crookall, 1995; de Jong & Teekens, 2003; E. Taylor, 1994). Reflection is not a single process nor does it have a single goal. In any given IC interaction, one can reflect on a great variety of issues, such as one's role or behavior in the interaction; the role or behavior of the other; the context (physical, spatial, social, metaphysical, or emotional); the nature of the interaction; what assumptions were made in the interaction that could have caused difficulties; how the elements of the context created, nurtured, or sabotaged a particular outcome; and so on. Each analysis can generate interesting insights, lessons learned, or perhaps strategies aimed at better outcomes in similar events in the future. So just as wisdom comes from understanding the intricate meanings, uses, and applications of knowledge, so IC competency comes from taking observations and learning situations and reflecting on the myriad facets of context, persons, and culture that affect behavior and impression management.

In this study, without a doubt, those informants who reflected upon their experiences and observations at the time of the interaction and afterward—and recalled that they had done so—were those who also seemed to have made gains in IC learning and skills development. A few informants also thought in advance what they might need to do to manage the relationship building process or to interact effectively and appropriately. While not all of them developed this skill within the BP proper (meaning some were already reflecting on prior travel or IC interactions), the use of reflection and anticipatory mindfulness certainly assisted them in their relationship development and IC learning within the program. It remains unclear, however, how deep or multifaceted the reflecting or mindfulness processes were for these individuals.

Interestingly, for some informants, the value of reflecting on their BP events and experiences became clear as a result of the interview, even to some individuals who either had not seen a need for reflection or who did not recall using such a



skill. The questions asked in the process of data collection seemed to provoke thoughts, provide avenues through which to discuss events and perceptions, and to think differently about things they had simply taken in stride during their BP meetings. In many ways, the interview process was for some informants their first reflection experience, a process similar to debriefing following an IC simulation or other significant event in one's life (see Crookall, 1995). I believe this helped some informants to process their experiences better, but also demonstrated how valuable such a process can be, even long after the fact. Sometimes the informants were looking for rational reasons why things happened or did not happen as they expected. In some cases in which there was a significant incident—particularly when they were the cause of it—talking about the situation within the interview provided a somewhat cathartic experience, a chance to laugh about it but also to see what they had learned about themselves and others, even if they could not justify their actions, and perhaps to see how to do things differently in the future. As with most new skills, there needs to be a clear reason to make the effort to learn and use the reflection process. I believe that a couple of these informants, as a result of the interview process, began to see a value in reflection. And with the use of reflection, virtually any experience can become a learning experience.

Informant 19FNN12 provided clear evidence of this, in that after the interview she kept thinking about the various questions she had been asked, and then composed and sent to me a long e-mail text reflecting further on what she had said and what the experiences—both of the BP and prior travel experiences—seem to mean. She seemed to have a “live and let live” attitude toward the events of the BP during the interview and probably thought about incidences in the BP experience like we all look at everyday events: There is no need to pay much attention unless something is significantly wrong. But because the interview questions sought her opinions on how and why things are as they are, the process allowed her to bring a different perspective to her recollections. In the post-interview e-mail, she was able to provide nuanced and more thoughtful insights into what happened and why.

Some people, of course, are naturally predisposed toward observation, thoughtful assessment, and reflection, as informant 19FNY13 demonstrated. Others need coaching, support in practice, and a lot of experience to gain similar results.

#### **6.1.2.10 Time for meeting**

The time constraint for meetings was the single most-cited reason informants gave for difficulties within their BP groups. Certainly, the BP is just one of many extracurricular options available to students at JyU, and competes with their time for family, friends, hobbies, and studies (see, e.g., Taajamo, 2006). Yet some groups had a collective agreement in emphasizing the need to meet and meet regularly; those groups were most likely to succeed at regular meetings. Most other groups indicated they were meeting, at best, twice a month, often just once a month.

Many of the informants stated that the reason the groups (theirs and others) did not meet regularly or at all was because the foreign students either did not arrive initially or did not stay involved. Because no research has been conducted into the success and failure of BP groups, no independent confirmation can be made about who had registered and not shown, how many groups are meeting regularly, how many never quite form, and what the reasons are behind the success, stagnation, or failure of a group. One factor, of course, is group dynamics, which is discussed below. But if groups do not meet early and regularly, then a downward spiral can begin: The members do not meet and so they do not get to know each other, and then are less likely to make time to meet because they do not know or feel comfortable with the others, and on it goes (see also Gudykunst & Shapiro, 1996; Hubbert et al, 1999). Of course, if the group does not meet and meet frequently, little opportunity exists for IC learning or skills development.

Several informants pointed to the BP as a voluntary activity, and, as such, people are involved based on their own level of motivation. No penalties exist for not fulfilling one's commitment to the group, and often the groups themselves have little or no information on the status of their missing members. If that group stagnates, there are no options to rejuvenate it, other than personal invitations to foreign students. It appears most Finns simply wait until the next semester to try again.

#### **6.1.2.11 Interpersonal and group dynamics**

As in many areas of life, interpersonal or intragroup dynamics can help or hinder successful interaction. The interpersonal or group connection can also impact the degree or substance of IC learning.

All informants discussed the importance of organization within the group: If no one took the leadership role to coordinate meeting times, places, and activities, then almost assuredly that group would fall apart. Groups in which strong leadership existed, even if it was shared, met more frequently and more productively. The leadership role invariably fell to the Finnish members, a responsibility that some informants noted they or their Finnish peers feared or felt overwhelmed by, particularly since the Finnish members receive little preparation for such a duty. Even informants who did not mind organizing meetings noted that they grew tired of the leadership responsibility over time. The outcome of this responsibility can lead to either Finns not joining the program, as informant 19FYY06 had contemplated, or the groups falling apart or meeting infrequently after the kick-off, all resulting in lost opportunities IC interaction and learning.

If the group meets at all, and particularly during the kickoff meeting, the participants begin to assess their sense of chemistry with the group as a whole and with individual members. The initial meetings help the participant decide whether the effort to meet is worth it (the ROI). If the chemistry is good, the other members are interesting and enjoyable to be with, and the group seems to work well together, the Finn will most likely decide that meeting regularly would be fun. As a result, time will be carved out of his/her schedule to continue that experience. Should the chemistry not be a good fit with the individual, and several informants had such experiences, then the ROI issue becomes more prominent, and the chance of negative assertion toward the dissimilar other may increase (see, e.g., Amir, 1969). Informant 24MYY15 is correct in that the lack of commonality or a poor fit within the group is not an automatic death sentence for the group; it will just take more effort by group members to stay engaged. It is important to note that just because an individual does not find good chemistry with a certain group of randomly assigned individuals does not mean that it could not exist in another configuration of individuals. Sadly, however, the loose organization of the BP does not allow for bad fits to be easily rectified by motivated individuals seeking a new group.

It must be noted that although fun and commonality are foundational elements for building friendships, they have no significant bearing on the learning potential within the relationship. With the right tools, an individual can derive multiple learning opportunities even from a group with poor chemistry.

The alumni group (all four Finnish members from a BP group who remained together for two semesters) demonstrated the challenges of leadership and chemistry quite clearly. First, two Finns assumed leadership of the group for the first semester and the group worked through the organizational issues over the course of the first semester together. This method of organization remained in place from the very start of the second semester; all alumni informants agreed this made the process much easier and enjoyable in the second cohort. While the foreigners, particularly those in the first semester, did not benefit as much from this, the Finns—who obviously shared a level of good interpersonal chemistry—most certainly did. Additionally, because the established means of organization was functional in the second cohort, it created a comfortable level of intragroup chemistry, allowing the Finns to invest more personal time with the new foreigners in their group rather than having to coordinate and establish an organization, as other newly formed groups that spring needed to do.

While individual motivation is essential in order for individuals to even create a group, the chemistry of the group is what effectively determines how well it works. If one does not feel comfortable with or connected to the other members, no amount of organizing will change that, and the individual motivation may fade. Ultimately, however, all groups, even those with good chemistry, take some work and commitment to be productive (see also Lustig & Koester, 1996). But that is where the additional benefit of IC learning and skills development can be emphasized. For those prepared to interact interculturally, the prospect of benefiting personally from their effort could be motivation enough to stick with a less than optimal group through the semester. Friendships may never come from a group with little or no commonality or interpersonal chemistry, but at least all can look back at the experience with knowledge that it was time well spent in IC growth.

Informant 24FYY01 makes an excellent point regarding building relationships with dissimilar others: If the group does not work, then no amount of IC preparation matters, and if it does (meaning the personalities connect), then a lot of preparation is not needed. Certainly if people feel an interpersonal connection with others, they seem to manage around the cultural differences and build on the similarities. However, this perspective is valid only if the goal of the relationship is a friendship. In adult life, however, the

goal of much interaction with dissimilar others is not always friendship. So the skills needed to make and keep positive contact are different from the process of building a friendship based on interpersonal chemistry.

Research on intergroup interaction, particularly in regard to the change of attitudes, stereotypes, or prejudice under the umbrella concept of the contact hypothesis (see, e.g., Allport, 1954; Amir, 1969; Dovidio et al., 2003; Pettigrew, 1998a), does not address the element of intergroup chemistry specifically as a characteristic that can affect how people perceive each other, and as a motivational force, although Pettigrew (1997) does assume this with his emphasis on intergroup friendships. While studies have addressed the aspects of voluntary action and interaction leading toward change (e.g., Klak & Martin, 2003), this intangible element of personal preference for others within the group has not been investigated explicitly as a factor that can impact the outcome of the interaction. I believe future research on the role of interpersonal chemistry on intergroup relationships, particularly in regard to changes in attitudes, could offer insight into an important of any interpersonal interaction.

#### **6.1.2.12 Actual time in interaction**

Building relationships—whether within one’s own culture or with someone culturally dissimilar—requires time. While certainly two individuals can emotionally connect immediately, most relationships grow over time, requiring multiple interactions in order to establish some connectivity. Intercultural relationships may require additional time, however, as the participants may need, for example, to negotiate shared meanings for common concepts and experiences (see also Lee, 2006; Martin & Nakayama, 1997) so that they can build a foundation of commonality and discover similarities. This process, however, requires interaction—and a lot of it. Simple proximity to the other is not sufficient (see, e.g., Allport, 1954; Amir, 1969; Brewer, 1996; Mak & Buckingham, 2007; Pettigrew, 1997, 1998a; C. W. Stephan & W. G. Stephan, 1992; Ward, 2001); interaction is essential.

Informants who formed close friendships with foreign buddies, without exception, met these new friends outside the group meetings as well. They met multiple times, in multiple settings, and in multiple contexts (see also Pettigrew, 1998a). This increased number and diversity of interactions allowed

the interactants to explore each other more deeply and broadly (see also Ting-Toomey, 1999), as individuals and as members of distinct cultures. It also often allowed the Finns access to the friends of their buddies, thus providing additional opportunity to observe and interact with dissimilar others.

The opportunities for deep IC interaction solely within the scheduled BP meetings are limited, since each cohort of the BP lasts less than one semester. At most, BP groups have 10 to 12 meetings to build relationships, assuming the groups meet weekly. Even with this frequency of meeting, the meetings consist of multiple individuals trying to engage in conversation with multiple others. It becomes quite clear that unless there is some intense interpersonal chemistry that draws two people into deeper conversation, the conversations with any one individual in a group will be relatively brief and probably quite shallow in regard to topics and information shared. And this assumes that the group members spend their time together in conversation, rather than undertaking an activity, such as a game or movie night or going to a jazz bar together. On the other hand, several informants expressed a desire to do something as a group, rather than just chat, which presents another element of interaction. When people do things together—even if just for fun—different interpersonal dynamics are at play (see, e.g., Allport, 1954). So, whether the activity is collaborative, friendly competitive, or neutral, different activities in different settings and contexts can facilitate IC learning.

Another factor that dovetails with this is that of residence situations. Nearly all of the international students reside in two areas of the city in which student housing is available. For Finnish buddies who happen to live in the same areas, they have additional opportunities to meet informally and interact with their foreign buddies outside of the group, either at student events (e.g., parties, sports activities) held in those areas, or during travel to or from campus. As the comment by informant 22FNY09 indicated, she connected better with her foreign buddies in the spring group not only because she shared common interests but because she was able to chat with these people while walking between the student housing and campus, something she could not do with her autumn group members.

But there also is the issue of the Finnish communication style that may impact interaction. Because some Finns are culturally inclined not to initiate a conversation unless there is something important to say (see, e.g., Carbaugh,

1995), particularly with interactants with whom the Finn perceives a social distance (Tulviste et al., 2003), and certainly do not feel uncomfortable with prolonged silent periods (see, e.g., Sajavaara & Lehtonen, 1997), the actual interaction may never fully develop unless other animated individuals within the group cultivate a conversation. This cultural communication style could affect both the amount and the depth of any conversation that does take place. This is complicated by the fact that the Finns are speaking in a second language. At least initially, as informant 22MNY05 noted, Finns would benefit from learning the art of chat in a second language (see also Sajavaara & Lehtonen, 1997).

Several informants said they discussed cultural issues as an activity within their groups. Based on what little information the informants provided regarding the elements learned, one can assume that the nature of these discussions were focused primarily on surface issues of culture (e.g., social expectations, traditions) and communication patterns. Even if they had had the time, the nature of the underlying beliefs, values, and worldviews would be hard to articulate.

In summary, the importance of actual engagement in conversation during the relationship-building process must be emphasized. From the learning perspective, time in interaction provides opportunity not only to discuss topics and issues that can lead to knowledge and skills development, but these times also provide opportunity for observation of the nonverbal behaviors that can enlighten one's reflection on cultural differences and similarities.

#### **6.1.2.13 The motivation/behavior of the other**

Certainly, the "other" is *the* essential element of the IC learning equation. The other's own interests, engaged motivation, and commitment—as well as his/her communicative patterns and cultural perspectives—have a major impact on the ability of the Finn to learn and develop interculturally. The data present multiple situations in which the Finns voiced disappointment or frustration because other parties either did not attend, or attended but remained disengaged. In each of these circumstances, it became clear that the Finn not only could not build a relationship, but his/her IC learning and skills development suffered as well.

This issue of commitment to the BP and to group members by others, particularly the foreigners, offers a chance to entertain a discussion of what the concepts of interest and commitment mean. Certainly they can exist as a matter of

degrees: Some people are intently interested or committed to this project, some just so-so, and others marginally. And an action that appears to be a marginal commitment or expression of interest to one person may be considered tremendously so to another. I propose that many use the *committed* or *interested* terminology, even if the expression of those concepts is quite different.

These concepts surely reflect cultural norms as well as personality traits. For example, a member of a polychronic culture, who may frequently juggle multiple responsibilities, may believe a little involvement in a number of activities reflects a commitment while, perhaps a monochronic individual's faithfulness in attending one group's meetings is how he/she defines the same term. While the former sees any involvement, no matter how sporadic, as demonstrating interest, the latter sees anything less than regular participation as lack of interest. Further investigation of how cultures perceive and express interest and commitment would be useful in understanding the dynamics of group interaction on a voluntary basis, as well as how these impact the notion of engaged motivation.

While all of these aspects of the BP and IC interaction—and perhaps others as well—can facilitate or derail relationship building, the emphasis remains that the outcome of the relationship is a separate issue from that of IC learning and skills development toward competency. Whether a relationship never materializes, is only superficial, or becomes intimate, any interaction with someone dissimilar offers an opportunity for personal and intercultural growth with the appropriate mindset and appropriate actions—before, during, and after the experience.

## **6.2 Barriers to and Concerns About Intercultural Interaction at Home**

Many of the comments from the informants addressed issues that were problems for themselves, but also what they perceived or supposed might apply to other BP participants, to other students at JyU, or to interaction with dissimilar others in general. From these comments, it appears that there are a number of barriers and concerns that have implications for the IC learning and skills development of at-home students within an IaH vision.

### **6.2.1 Potential barriers to Buddy Project interaction & outcomes**

The barriers surfaced fall within three general areas: in regard to BP participation, in regard to communication with dissimilar others, and in regard to IC learning



and skills development within the BP experience. Understanding what issues might prove to discourage participation in a voluntary social activity or to general interaction with dissimilar others is essential to providing an atmosphere that would facilitate students' IC learning within an IaH environment.

The **barriers to BP participation** that informants raised or that could be derived from their comments include a general unawareness within the JyU student body about the program or unfamiliarity with how it works, or the assumption that the BP is intended for those coming from or going to exchange experiences. Other potential barriers to student participation in the BP are more personal in nature, including discomfort with or fear of using a lingua franca (English primarily); a lack of interest in meeting foreigners (at least at this time); a "comfort" with the Finnish way of life and little interest in other ways, meaning some students may not see a need for such a program; fear (of the unknown, or perhaps of a lack of knowledge or skills) and a related lack of courage; a perception of the program as a waste of time since the international students will leave shortly; or other commitments or higher priorities that dominate students' time. Certainly more than one of these barriers could apply to any student, but any one of these could cause a student to disregard any invitation to participate in the BP.

The **barriers to IC communication**, particularly within the BP, include a student's (English) language proficiency, ability to adapt communication styles, or nervousness or insecurity about the communication process with a dissimilar other. Other difficulties include Finnish cultural expectations and norms regarding appropriate communication patterns, and the challenges that BP participants may face in making connections or finding commonality with the foreign students because of, for example, age, different study focus, or other specific interests.

The **barriers to IC learning** specifically within the BP include group failures and limited time interacting, even for working groups; the participants' lack of skills in observation and reflection; a lack of theoretical background from which participants can draw or use in planning and in assessing outcomes and processes; and the small number of international students on campus in general and the smaller number who are active within the BP. The small number of foreign participants is compromised further when considering the frequent travel that many

foreign students undertake while in Finland, tours not only all around the country but sometimes out of the country (e.g., Russia, Estonia, Sweden). Moreover, the differences in life's focus for exchange students as compared to the Finns as hosts and the ambivalence that some of the informants feel about learning while friendship making also can challenge the learning potential.

Many of these barriers can be addressed through education and skills training, either as part of the BP or in general university studies. Certainly theoretical knowledge is important because it facilitates how the students would apply both their knowledge and learned skills (see Bhawuk & Triandis, 1996; Byram, 1997), and such learning can further the ongoing experiential learning and skills enhancement that develop over time. These skills include observation, assessment, and reflection, all aimed at broadening one's worldview, flexibility, repertoire of actions and reactions, mental recategorizations, and so forth.

Of course, achieving this active process for learning from IC interactions would require participants to get past their squeamishness regarding using a friendship—or any social relationship—as a foundation for learning. I believe that part of this discomfort comes from the unfamiliarity on the informants' part with the processes used in drawing learning from experience (see Kolb, 1984, 1993; Mezirow, 1991; E. Taylor, 1994). But perhaps it simply requires a change of perspective. I sense that the Finnish informants perceive a learning benefit from a friendship as unidirectional, and a process that turns the other into a subject to study rather than a person with whom to be friends. However, a bidirectional process—where one is not studying a person but rather the interaction process that is co-created by the parties involved, and through which both parties can have equal learning benefit from the experience—perhaps would generate more comfort for the informants. This perspective assures a learning process aimed at humanizing interpersonal interaction does not dehumanize the interactants in the process.

### **6.2.2 Concerns and implications for internationalization-at-home**

The informants surfaced several concerns regarding the effectiveness of the BP as an IC learning tool or the true benefit of such learning for the issues facing Finland as a growing multicultural country in a globalized economy. The concerns fall into the two broad categories: the nature of the IC experiences

and the perspectives that the informants had regarding their IC skills, before and after their BP experiences. These categories of concerns point to the depth and breadth of IC learning and skills development from the BP or the long-term use in IC interactions either within Finland or within another cultural context. Both areas are of significance to an IaH environment. Table 6.3 summarizes the implications for an IaH environment.

Let me emphasize here that the purpose of the BP is to bring Finnish and foreign students together for friendly socialization, as outlined clearly on the flier circulated prior to the autumn 2003 cohort (see Appendix A). Without exception, the goal of the Finnish informants for participating in the BP was to meet people of different cultures and have fun with these people. Although some informants had a rather abstract interest in learning from the BP interactions, no informant had IC learning as the primary or even a specific goal of participation. Therefore, the emphasis on what was learned by the informants from their BP experiences is strictly that of the present study, a lens trained on IC experiences after the fact. As a result, any concern or implication of the BP for IaH benefit raised here derives from this researcher's interest in experiential learning in IC contexts and should not be viewed as a failure or lacking of any kind in the Buddy Project

**Table 6.3.** Implications and Concerns of BP interaction for an IaH Campus.

<p>The nature of the IC experiences reflect</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Participants seeking similarities as opposed to noticing differences</li> <li>◆ Differences that are noticed are not actively engaged</li> <li>◆ National cultures of foreign BP participants are mostly European, thus more like Finnish culture than distinct, unlike many of Finland's growing immigrant groups</li> <li>◆ Finns interacting with only one or two informants of any given foreign culture</li> </ul> <p>(ideal solutions)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Increase the diversity of cultures represented in the BP</li> <li>◆ Assist Finns in noticing and learning from dissimilarities already in their midst.</li> <li>◆ Prepare at-home students in advance for interaction and enhanced IC learning</li> </ul> <p>Concerns about informants' views on their IC skills include</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ No at-home informants had IC tools/knowledge on which to draw during interaction</li> <li>◆ Informants' perceived a level of preparedness required only adequate language skills</li> <li>◆ Successful interaction leads to confidence and willingness for future engagement; it does not prepare them for likelihood of more difficult interactions which are more likely in other venues in life (erroneous assumptions for future interactions)</li> <li>◆ Circular logic: Better interaction with dissimilar others comes from knowing these others better.</li> </ul> <p>(ideal solution)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Provide preparation (theory/skills) to facilitate understanding and improved outcomes.</li> </ul>
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process or by its participants. Rather, my purpose is simply to further the discussion of what, if anything, can be done by individuals, the university, or the Finnish government to facilitate IC learning by Finnish university students interacting with dissimilar others on campus.

#### **6.2.2.1 The nature of intercultural experiences**

The informants surfaced many elements of IC interaction in the BP and the limited exposure to IC differences and issues. Certainly the emphasis of relationship building, and perhaps friendship making, affects the nature of the interaction as well as the IC learning, as indicated by the various factors listed in Section 6.1.2. Because BP participants, both Finns and foreigners, are looking to connect to others in some way, a goal involves finding commonalities between them. The emphasis on similarities across cultures—and the circumstances of university life create an environment in which demographic and educational similarities are more easily discovered—decreases the likelihood that the participants will actively seek differences. If the participants do notice the differences, it is likely they would not put much energy into thinking about the implications of such.

Additionally, the informants acknowledged that the cultures represented in the BP, while certainly different in many ways, were more similar to Finnish culture than different. And, as compared to more distant cultures, such as those in Africa, Latin America, or Asia, the European cultures were not much of a challenge to accommodate. However, the more diverse cultures comprising Finland's growing immigrant and refugee populations are considerably less represented within exchange and foreign degree students at JyU. While the informants acknowledged that they really had not learned anything concrete that would facilitate improved interaction with dramatically dissimilar others, they did feel that any experience with dissimilar others—even if the other is just slightly different—did serve a purpose, a something-is-better-than-nothing attitude.

It certainly would be more productive for IC learning if the exchange and foreign degree student cohorts were more diverse. A more culturally diverse foreign student body would accomplish two very important things for at-home students within an IaH context. First, it would expose Finns to different perspectives, worldviews, values, and so forth, that would help challenge them in expanding their own understanding, worldviews, and behavioral repertoire. And,

second, by studying, living, and interacting with more diverse individuals, Finns would improve the likelihood of being able to refashion their knowledge and IC skills to interact more successfully with dissimilar others in different circumstances. The benefits apply to Finns interacting well with immigrants and refugees of non-European origins in their home environment as well as during their travel to more dissimilar cultures.

But there is also value in helping at-home students become consciously aware of and learning from the distinctiveness in cultures that do in fact exist within the EU. Reflection skills would help them draw new information from whatever interactions take place, and other IC skills could facilitate their applying these skills in new circumstances with more diverse individuals.

Another important concern is the depth of IC learning that is possible from short-duration contact, principally an hour or so a week over three months. Unless the nature of the conversations involves the deliberate investigation of IC similarities and differences, it is unlikely that most participants will make great strides in IC awareness and growth. As noted above, even a friendship with a dissimilar other does not assure that such awareness will surface since the informants confirm that they do not pay attention to differences in these friends. Good IC preparation prior to interaction can facilitate at-home individuals with limited international experience to develop their IC skills in superficial or transient IC interactions, as well as in deeper relationships.

Finally, it is important to remember that most BP participants are interacting with just one or two members of any one culture at a time, although they are meeting members from multiple cultures. However, from these few representatives, the Finnish participants cannot gather definitive information about the other's culture or its communication patterns, no matter how often they meet, since one or even several representatives cannot embody the fullness of any given culture (see also Berg, 1995). Even if Finns meet scores of students from a particular culture and experience a variety of culture-related expressions, they still are meeting only a small segment of a culture, as astutely noted by informants 19FNY13 and 20FNY07. When visiting another country, it becomes more apparent how people of different ages, education levels, classes, and regions express dimensions of that culture. Again, good advance preparation can provide the at-home participants with knowledge and skills that allow them to keep what they

learn about any one culture in perspective, as well as to productively compare and contrast the variety of cultures they will see expressed in their foreign buddies.

#### **6.2.2.2 Informants' views on their intercultural skills**

Only one informant had taken any IC course prior to her BP experience, and she had taken these courses during her exchange period. So none of the at-home informants had the relevant theoretical tools by which to discuss any IC learning that might have taken place during their BP experience. Some of their comments, then, might have been different had they possessed at least some theoretical knowledge, and thus terminology, about cultural expression. Their innocence, however, does provide a useful look at how the majority of students at a university might perceive personal growth from IC experiences.

In assessing their preparedness to interact with dissimilar others, most of the informants noted their ability to speak English adequately, with the implication that adequate language skills would lead to successful interaction. Few saw the need for other types of preparation, such as understanding cultural difference or distinct communication styles, or observation and reflection skills. Some of this can be attributed to naïveté, some to the optimism of youth, and some to the fact that few had or had heard about problems or significant negative incidences within BP groups. Some informants concluded that the lack of problems in their BP experiences must have meant that they were themselves skilled enough. More likely, however, the brevity of the program meant that most interactions were quite superficial unless interpersonal chemistry resulted in friendships; there were few major events on campus or in the world that occurred during the course of this particular iteration of the BP that would have elicited circumstances in which the diversity in cultural perspectives would surface; or the exchange buddies were so similar in their behavior that no significant issues surfaced. Importantly, these experiences reflect informants who stayed with the program, whether or not their group was successfully working; there is no indication of what other issues might have affected individuals who were inactive in the program. Perhaps the language skills of those who left—or, rather, their perceptions of their language skills (see Sajavaara & Lehtonen, 1997; Taajamo, 2006)—were not as strong as those who remained involved, or perhaps they faced circumstances in which they recognized they needed more than simple language competency, and their solution to the

stress was to retreat from the group. Without more extensive study, it is hard to know for sure. But we do know that, in line with findings by Kovalainen (2005) regarding Finnish and American students' perceptions of their IC competency, the informants in this study believed that language skills were enough, and their experiences confirmed this to them.

While this easy experience of interacting with dissimilar others is good for the Finns in many ways (e.g., these informants did not express stress, frustration, or depression regarding the IC interactions but rather positive or neutral opinions), it is indeed a double-edged sword. Such easy experiences can lead participants to erroneous conclusions, such as (a) all IC interactions will be equally easy as those in the BP; (b) interacting with foreigners in a foreign environment is as easy as interacting with foreigners in the Finnish university environment; (c) other IC skills are not necessary for interacting effectively, appropriately, successfully, or enjoyably with dissimilar others; (d) the number of similarities and level of openness they found in exchange students would be equal to that found in the general population of another culture; or (e) "people are people" who simply need to be treated in the same manner as I would like to be (see Bennett, 1998b). Such perspectives and attitude can stifle compelling motivation to learn more about differences in cultural expression and how cultural values impact interaction.

In addition, several informants stated that they felt they would have been better prepared to interact with dissimilar others once they got to know them. This is a bit of circular logic. Certainly the interaction process with another is easier once the relationship reaches a higher degree of familiarity. Yet, when dealing with dramatically dissimilar others, it may be difficult to reach that level of connectivity if one lacks the IC skills needed to negotiate the early interactions successfully. This attitude also reflects the supposition that knowing and successfully interacting with someone from one culture automatically makes one equally prepared to meet and successfully interact with someone from a distinctly different culture. Finally, many of the BP groups were not meeting frequently, and so little of the foundational work needed for creating a workable communication style—which facilitates the creation of connectedness—was taking place, meaning the communication process among the members probably remained a bit strained and not particularly comfortable or comforting.

Perhaps adequate language skill and “being yourself” are enough for these superficial relationships in the average BP group, in line with E. Hoffman’s (1999) vision of people-centered interaction. The stakes are not so high here. If the relationship requires more skills or input than knowledge of English and the Finn does not have them, he/she can simply walk away. And if the group experience does not work out, so be it: The BP was intended just to be fun anyway. But in other IC interactions, particularly if something important is at stake, “being yourself” and speaking acceptable-quality English may not be enough, and the Finnish buddies would not have developed the IC skills to help them improve the likelihood of a positive outcome.

Another concern is that some informants—even individuals who demonstrated appropriate use of some IC skills—have been lured into believing that they do not need to be mindful in future IC situations because they have successfully managed these buddy experiences. Past and current research, of course, does not support their assumptions (see, e.g., Langer & Moldoveanu, 2000a; Lustig & Koester, 1996; Martin & Nakayama, 1997). The informants did not factor in any of the mediating circumstances (demographics, the nature of the program, the fact that they remain in their home culture, etc.) that may not exist in future IC interactions. Furthermore, they had no access to theory or literature to help them temper their enthusiasm and perhaps even overconfidence in their capabilities.

The experience of 19FYY13 and her buddy from India illustrates this point. She interacted comfortably and, evidently, competently with her southern European buddies, even mimicking their communication patterns. But she was insecure about, and noted that she did not know how to begin interacting with, the man from India, and therefore was reticent and uncomfortable with him. This demonstrates that, without some preparation or assistance, some individuals—perhaps many—will find themselves at a loss at times regarding how to proceed. Their course of action, then, may be just like 19FYY13: They will simply avoid or disengage from the situation. This resolution might result in offending the other, and most certainly in the lost opportunity to develop a relationship. The Finn also loses the opportunity to grow personally and in IC knowledge and skills. Interestingly, 19FYY13 recognized this failure as well, and indicated in a



subsequent e-mail that she was taking steps to expose herself to more diverse people to reduce her discomfort around dramatically dissimilar others.

These and other issues of concern could be mitigated through some type of preparation. For example, a poor BP experience can be quite discouraging. Some general IC knowledge and experience in reflection, however, could help the participants process their group's failure—and to learn. Learning potential exists even in poor outcomes, but few people have the innate personality type or the education/experience to make progress interpersonally even if the relational circumstances are not very encouraging.

The same applies to IC friendships. Exercising good IC skills becomes easier as the relationship develops (and as one gains experience and successes in interaction). But once the relationship deepens to a certain level, the mindfulness and attentiveness emphases seem to slip into the background (unconsciousness) and become conscious only as situations warrant. So unless the individual puts effort into mindfully looking at situations and then reflecting on them, much IC learning ceases. But even if the buddies never become friends, they can help each other hone their IC skills through pleasant, albeit fleeting, interaction.

### **6.2.3 Other avenues of benefit**

While this study focuses on the IC benefit of a particular program, the Buddy Project, it became apparent within the data that it is difficult—if not impossible—to separate the growth potential of the BP from the other experiences of the informants, particularly the very active individuals. These other avenues through which some of the informants engaged foreigners include the classroom or other academic/language programs, such as the Each One-Teach (EO-TO); other on- or near-campus social events, such as Stammtisch parties, programs of the ESN, and visits to the local bars; and travel abroad, either as a formal exchange, for a language or other program, or for fun. The IC learning potential that exists in the alternative avenues is briefly mentioned here, although in-depth analysis of these is beyond the scope of this study.

In the IaH scenario, having multicultural classrooms is considered an important goal, with rationales ranging from classroom discussions made richer by the diversity of thought, to the improved opportunity for students of different cultural backgrounds to socialize (Dunstan, 2003; Teekens, 2003; Ward, 2001).

While these are admirable goals, the simple presence of diversity in the classroom does not automatically translate into enhanced IC learning or socialization (see also Dunstan, 2003; Mak & Buckingham, 2007; Otten, 2003; Penington & Wildermuth, 2005; Pusch, 2004; Soeters & Recht, 2001; Teekens, 2003; Ward, 2001). The experience of the one informant who had a foreign student in her class demonstrates this: The informant never interacted with the exchange student, academically or socially. The same point applies to the EO-TO. If students focus solely on the language and not on the cultural aspects of the other or the language, then IC learning is incomplete. Some type of intervention, therefore, is needed within the classroom to facilitate IC learning and socialization (see also Dunstan, 2003; Otten, 2003; Penington & Wildermuth, 2005; Pusch, 2004; Soeters & Recht, 2001; Teekens, 2003; Ward, 2001).

Many of the informants participated in the *Stammtisches*, parties that draw scores of foreign students and perhaps tens of Finns. Some of the informants preferred that type of engagement with foreign students because it allowed them to meet a large number of foreigners in one place and, perhaps equally important, did not require a long-term interaction with any of them. Most informants acknowledged that very little deep interaction took place at these events, but if a natural connection between individuals was made, the relationship was often built through subsequent meetings in other locations: lunches, walks to campus, and so on. While the IC learning in any one passing interaction is limited, it is possible that good observation and reflection skills can provide for learning over time.

Finally, all of the informants had traveled away from Finland at least once; most had taken multiple trips, some two weeks or more in duration. Yet only a few of these trips could be considered authentic travel, in which the Finn had ongoing and substantive interaction with the locals (see Ward et al., 2001). Such authentic travel can provide immense opportunity for IC learning and skills development. However, most of the informants' trips abroad were of the tourist variety, in which the informant stayed primarily with family or friends (ingroup), and interacted with the locals for typical tourist needs—shopping, dining, excursions—all of which may limit getting to know the locals on a personal level. These types of experiences are unlikely to have a significant impact on IC learning (see also Penington & Wildermuth, 2005), except for the most observant and reflective individuals.

While the significant IC learning experience that educators and intercultural scholars have traditionally recommended has been living for at least several months in another culture, recent research indicates that good benefit can come from short but intense programs abroad (Dwyer, 2004). Abroad experiences expose the individual to a whole host of emotional and learning opportunities (see, e.g., Y. Y. Kim, 2001; Taajamo, 2006), elements that cannot be replicated in an at-home experience. Programs such as the BP cannot—and should not—be considered equal replacements for either authentic travel or study abroad programs.

During the interviews, many informants raised the issue of natural IC interaction experiences versus artificial circumstances. They pointed to the BP as an artificial situation, in which individuals are quite randomly assigned to a group and then left alone to interact and build relationships. The informants agreed that this type of interaction is “hit-or-miss,” meaning that sometimes the individuals connect on a personal level but often they do not. The informants were less inclined to think that positive IC growth can arise from such random meetings because the relationships are often shallow, even though some informants had made good friends through this process. Instead, they felt that natural interactions, relationships based on commonality in interest or on personal chemistry, are not only more productive in regard to friendship making, but also more likely to provide IC growth because the people really want to be together. While this sounds like a quite reasoned and rational perspective, and the literature supports it (see, e.g., Amir, 1969; Lustig & Koester, 1996; Martin & Nakayama, 1997), the informants often contradicted this logic by noting that they did not pay attention to cultural differences in their foreign friends because they are friends. Additionally, the fact that IC learning can take place even without friendships underscores that it is what the at-home student brings to the interaction in regard to IC knowledge, observation and reflection skills, and a host of IC skills, that makes the IC interaction IC-learning productive.

### **6.3 Preparing At-home Students for IC Interaction**

Penington and Wildermuth (2005: 170) point to research confirming that simply engaging in an IC experience does not automatically lead to IC learning, and that without “structure, context, theory, assessment, guided reflection, and so on to aid

students in analyzing their experiences,” short-term programs abroad can merely reinforce the students’ currently held view of the world. While they are referring specifically to short-term travel/study programs, their points are equally valid for at-home programs.

In a strictly voluntary social organization, such as the BP, the entire responsibility of what takes place after the introduction falls to the participants in the assigned groups, many of whom have little or no international or significant interaction experience with dissimilar others. There is no preparation in advance and no support offered (either from the student organizers or any other resource at the university) during the program, should questions or concerns arise. Indeed, a few informants ruefully noted how alone they felt in the early weeks of their buddy groups. Some type of preparation would have facilitated their interaction processes, perhaps averting some potential problems. And while learning is not a stated goal of the BP, humans are learning beings, and some type of learning takes place whether it is intended or not. So why not prepare the participants to be in IC interaction so that it is effective, appropriate, and developmental?

Part of the problem is that the program is administered by fellow students who recognize the value of IC interaction but are not qualified and do not have the time or resources to offer much more than introductions. Most of the informants thought the concept of some type of preparation in advance of a BP experience would be useful, noting that such a program might have changed their perceptions and behaviors, and enhanced their thoughtfulness regarding what they were doing, thinking and learning. Interestingly, the informants had mixed feelings regarding the notion of adding such preparation formally to the BP. While many personally thought it would be beneficial and would consider taking such a preparation if it were offered, they were not so encouraging about how their peers would feel about an extra requirement to the program. As might be expected, offering such a preparation course as an option was highly recommended by the informants.

IC theory and skills courses are offered by various departments at JyU, but the number of available spaces is limited. Moreover, some informants were participating in the BP during their first semester on campus, so they had no opportunity to complete a university IC course prior to group assignment. And some participants know very little about IC issues and would not know how to

seek out information even if they realized they needed it. Indeed, it appears that the informants who made IC skills progress did so based on their own initiative and personality strengths. But not all informants have such gifts. Some sort of preparation—voluntary or required—could significantly improve the IC growth outcomes for most BP participants, from their BP interactions as well as from any interactions with dissimilar others on or off campus.

Yet once the assessment comes that some type of preparation is needed, challenges arise. Because these students have little international experience, it is likely that they would find a course that introduces them to IC concepts and how culture affects behavior “overtly foreign, dull, or irrelevant” (Brislin, 1993: 295). They most likely are not interested in theoretical or abstract culture-general presentations that emphasize a process for IC learning: They want easy, concrete, painless, and fun presentations (Weaver, 1993: 156), with practical solutions to the problems they may face in interacting with dissimilar others, with an emphasis on what affects communication (Teekens, 2003). Yet, Grove & Torbiörn (1993: 82) state, “Unless the elements in one’s frame of reference are shaken up and their reliability seriously challenged, contact with an unfamiliar environment is unlikely to have a lasting effect on one’s values, perspectives, and behaviors.” Paige (1993b) concurs, noting that a strong emotional component is essential to create the intercultural experience. One goal of such preparation should be to help participants move from the “overt and descriptive level to the analytical and interpretive” by providing a framework to the students to help them see the interrelatedness of cultural facets and help them understand, and perhaps even predict, behavior different from their own (Weaver, 1993: 158). Weaver further emphasizes that the mind-set that best helps with IC adaptation, but which would be equally useful in an IaH environment, is one that is oriented toward interaction and a process that involves an understanding of “we” as well as “them.” Finally, whatever information is presented needs to be enveloped in the vision that IC learning is life-long learning (Ericsson, 2000; Mullins, 2000). And, because this program may be voluntary, all of this must be accomplished in just a few short hours.

Based on the information just presented and comments made by the informants, it is easy to see that what the BP participants would want from an IC preparation course (easy, concrete, and specific) is not necessarily what they

need (a framework based on theory and a process for current and ongoing IC learning and skills development). In addition, a cultural-general approach is the only possible option because (a) the Finnish participants would not know which cultures would be represented in their group, and there would be multiple cultures within each group (b) even if the cultural origins of the foreign buddies were known, another culture is far too complex, too rich, and too nuanced to even begin to provide usable information in a short training period (Grove & Torbiörn, 1993), and (c) there are enough commonalities among interacting peoples that a general training facilitates the process (Brislin, 1993) no matter which culture is home for the buddy.

But as informant 23FNY04 sagely pointed out, the equivalent of a movie on stereotyping is not enough: Learning and practicing IC skills are equal partners of general IC information—perhaps more so. Weaver (1993: 156–157) underscores that simplistic and humorous films and other “quickie, cure-all, painless approaches” not only are not productive, but also can create a false sense of confidence in the trainees’ abilities as well as false expectations that all IC interactions are easy. So some theoretical information is necessary (see Bhawuk & Triandis, 1996), as is a framework for understanding the multifaceted concept and expression of culture, to be followed by simulations, discussions, and exercises to provide a process that introduces or enhances skills in observation, nonjudgmental assessment, reflection, and alternative rationalizing; openness; flexibility; and stress management, among other skills and attitudes, all aimed at making practical the theoretical information. Participants thus would be encouraged and empowered, although in a limited way, to seek out and implement new knowledge and skills, with the understanding that these become refined and expanded through practice. Indeed, through effort, repeated exposure, and emotional and first-person engagement—and the continued practice of using knowledge about one’s own and other cultures to identify and understand the role of culture in the thinking and behaviors of self and other, whether at home or in another culture—IC competencies are formed.

Yet even within such a preparation course, the trainers must remain mindful of the overriding purpose of the BP: friendship making. Therefore, even though it is essential to help the participants learn about, observe, and reflect on differences in cultures and their communicative expression in order that the

participants may interact more efficiently, effectively, and appropriately, it is upon the similarities among people that connections and relationships are built. Therefore, any educational process aimed at individuals seeking to build relationships with dissimilar others needs to emphasize both differences and similarities among cultures, the multitude of identities involved (see also Bourne, 1998; Burgoon et al., 2000; Pitkänen, 1999; Turunen & Leppäaho, 1998), and the role of personality, so that learners can readily recognize and appreciate the interplay among the various elements that make individuals unique.

There are two additional points that should be presented regarding any type of educational vision, particularly ones that require one party to observe the behaviors of another. The first point is that the informants were rightfully concerned about how approaching the other as a subject for learning would make the other feel like a “tool” rather than a friend. But the emphasis must be clear that the focus of the learning is not the other as a person but rather what transpires between two people, particularly when they are culturally dissimilar. The learning comes from looking at the actions and reactions, pondering the assumptions and the insights, understanding what one brings to the interaction as much as what the other does, and attempting to see both the individual threads as well as the entire tapestry of human expression influenced by culture. In addition, by preparing both parties, host and guest, to interact more IC productively, then the process is not unidirectional, but reciprocal and to the benefit of both.

Second, several informants were quite hesitant in supporting the addition of any type of learning element to a voluntary social program. They emphasized that the program is designed to be strictly social and strictly voluntary; any changes to either of these characteristics changes the program. This perspective would need to be pondered at greater length, as it raises several questions. Is this perspective valid? Does having some or all of the participants learning from their interactions fundamentally alter the nature of the program (particularly since some individuals are already developing some IC skills from their experiences)? Are learning and social interaction mutually exclusive activities? Does the BP remain a valid program when it appears that only a small number of groups successfully interact throughout the semester and most are, at best, infrequently meeting? Failing groups cannot provide what the organizers promote—friend making or any type of substantive

interaction with students from other cultures. And must all IC interactions be learning situations, or is there human value in simply having mindless fun if all parties agree and no one gets hurt? Discussion and determination of these questions is beyond the scope of this paper but are important for consideration by the organizers of the BP and by university administrators who seek to encourage host-guest interaction for the betterment of both parties.

#### **6.4 Intercultural Benefits of the Buddy Project**

Overall, the short answer to the question of whether a voluntary social program such as the BP can help students without international experience develop IC skills to the point of competency while at home is No. It is even unclear whether any student can become IC competent without ever leaving his/her home environment for a period of time (cf., e.g., Nilsson, 2003; Stier, 2003, 2006). The data indicate, however, that at-home individuals can develop some IC skills and IC learning, but they could not be considered IC competent because large areas of their development have not been (and probably cannot be) exercised within the home environment. The underdeveloped and inaccessible areas of IC development include the deculturation and emotional disorientation one often feels in another culture; challenges to their identity and social position; ongoing first-person experience of living in a manner different from familiar at-home patterns and norms; development of coping skills for unfamiliar surroundings, systems, and language; and intense emotional investment that can lead to negative (insecurity, frustration, need to change) and positive (self-confidence, improved insight and empathy, etc.) outcomes (see, e.g., Gmelch, 1997; Y. Y. Kim, 2001; Otten, 2003; Teekens, 2003; Ting-Toomey, 1999; Paige, 1993b). That said, however, it should not be inferred that, in the greater scheme of higher education, a program such as the BP is useless in helping at-home Finns prepare for living and working in a globalized economy and within an increasingly multicultural society. I will come back to this point in a moment. First, I would like to recap the major points the informants raised regarding the IC benefit of the BP for them.

First, several informants made it clear how difficult it is to separate the benefits and learning experiences of the BP from prior or concurrent cultural learning experiences—or even life experiences (maturation). Pascarella and Terenzini (1992) conclude that the years a person spends at university are



times of great growth and development: intellectually, emotionally, socially, morally, and interpersonally. Certainly natural processes in maturation—particularly within the first- and second-year students—influence any concrete IC learning or skills development. The informants also noted that familiarity with the process (based on prior cohorts) and previous experience with foreigners (either through travel or on campus) also added to their comfort level and assessment of growth. So what part of their openness toward difference, flexibility, interest in others, suspension of judgment, and so on would have happened even without BP participation or though another venue to meet dissimilar others is open to debate and would make for a good study.

Approximately half of the at-home informants felt that the BP was a good learning process. Even if they could not attribute all they learned to the program, they could clearly articulate the benefits of participation. Whether it was useful in helping them to interact appropriately and effectively with dramatically dissimilar others, such as the people from African and Asian cultures now living in Finland, they were far less optimistic. But they did emphasize the need for “baby steps” in the process toward IC competency. This is particularly noteworthy since none of the at-home informants had any preparation for such interactions. So while they were challenged a bit in their IC interactions at times, they experienced the challenge within the comfort of their home environment so the stress level was manageable for them (although we cannot know if this is true for the Finns who dropped from participation). The fact that the at-home informants took these steps without preparation or assistance is a testament to their personal characteristics.

While the at-home Finns do not experience the broad range of cultural adaptation and culture shock aspects that they would by living in another culture (see, e.g., Grove & Torbiörn, 1993; Y. Y. Kim, 2001; Ward et al., 2001; Weaver, 1993), they do have a unique experience in their role as hosts to foreign students who are experiencing such changes. They are in a position to observe their foreign buddies’ experiences and to be a part of the resolution process in adaptation, a vantage point that could be, for the observant and reflective person, an important learning experience. They also, as hosts, will be involved in the welcoming to, “integration” into, and the explaining what is and why about their home culture of Finland. This responsibility is not so essentially on that of the guests, so again this experience offers the at-home students a different facet of IC development.

Another reason why the BP program is less stressful for its participants (as compared to exchange programs and/or authentic travel experiences) is because there is a natural equality to the program: Those participating are doing so because they wish to, and there is a level of demographic and experiential similarity among participants. Commonality in age, current life status, economic strata, and so forth, facilitates communication in that there are natural topics from which to initiate a conversation. This contrasts with the unevenness when dealing with, for example, immigrants to Finland in a multicultural society, who are more diverse and where it can be more difficult to establish rapport because the overlap in experience, interest, and demographic identities is smaller.

The BP, as an introduction program, can set the stage not only for IC interaction among group members, but can extend beyond, as friends introduce their buddies to their friends (see also Liebkind & McAlister, 1999; Martin & Nakayama, 1997, Wright et al., 1997). Meeting their BP buddies and their buddies' friends at lunch is an excellent example of how this works, because it allows Finns to participate in a more natural interaction with—and an authentic look at—more representatives of the same culture, or how people of different cultures interact. For Finns prepared with general and theoretical knowledge about cultures and IC skills, observation skills, and reflection skills, these natural situations that grow out of the BP can enhance the Finns' development and provide experiences on which to ponder and build further knowledge and skills. Even casual contact with multiple representatives of a single culture can be informative, particularly in regard to communicative expression, if the observant participant exercises good IC skills.

The BP and other programs of its type offer a valuable alternative to activities such as a party with foreign students, and this is especially useful when considering the diversity in personality types across a broad section of university students who might like to interact with and learn from others. In a non-structured situation, the more timid or introverted personality types may have difficulty initiating conversation. But an organized activity such as the BP makes the introduction for them, and they simply need to follow up.

In regard to the extended contact hypothesis (see Wright et al., 1997), it seems that some informants did have friends who were willing to observe the IC interaction—they let another make the investment of time, emotional

interaction, and so forth, but then benefited when their Finnish friend brought his/her new foreign buddies to meet them. Some benefit exists for these third-party Finns who may have emotional or scheduling reasons why they themselves do not participate in the BP. By having a pleasant experience with their friends' foreign buddies, they may be more open to personally interacting with dissimilar others sometime in the future. This also "spreads around" the limited number of international students on campus. Of course, there are concerns with this: (a) the potential for negative interaction by these Finnish friends operating without any IC preparation (see also Otten, 2003; Teekens, 2003; Wright et al., 1997); (b) these fleeting interactions might lead the third-party Finns to believe interacting well interculturally is easy, and (c) the IC learning for these third-party Finns is quite limited without the tools to make concrete self-improvement. Nevertheless, since few serious problems in their IC experiences with their foreign buddies have been surfaced by the informants, who also did not have preparation for interacting with dissimilar others, the benefits to the third-party Finns seems to outweigh the concerns.

But the key to lessening the likelihood of problematic interactions resulting from naiveté, ethnocentrism, cultural insensitivity, or lack of experience is education. Arming students with the necessary knowledge (theory), tools (for turning theory into productive action), and skills (affective, behavioral, reflective) prior to interaction not only facilitates an easier and more enjoyable interaction but also facilitates ongoing IC learning and skills development toward competency. Some individuals are naturally predisposed to behave in a way that facilitates IC interaction; most people need help, and many of these skills can be taught (see also Weaver, 1993). Even though several informants seemed to manage quite well and exhibited appropriate IC skills, it is unclear how mindful or intentional many of those actions were and therefore how replicable these actions (see also Wiseman, 2001) might be in future IC situations. I firmly believe that their experiences—and more importantly, the long-term learning from those experiences—would have been greatly enhanced with some preparation in cultural knowledge and skills development. Such preparation would have achieved two benefits: First, it would have helped them to be more confident, but not overconfident, in their interactions, particularly at the beginning of the program; and second, it would have furthered the distance they would have traveled on their path toward IC competency. The

ultimate outcome of IC growth would allow them, within their home culture but with dissimilar peers, to hone skills needed for effective and appropriate interaction in more challenging environments abroad or at home. Developing these skills at home will not eliminate the stressors and adaptation processes these Finns would experience when living in a new culture, but it would provide them the immediate tools to lessen the learning curve in cognitive, affective, and behavioral adaptation (see, e.g., Y. Y. Kim, 2001) that comes with living in a new environment. Once there, they could simply refine the use of the tools, applying them more effectively in circumstances even as many pressures are upon them.

The BP—or a similar program within an IaH environment—is *not* a panacea: It cannot parallel the benefits of an exchange or other abroad experience. Too many ongoing experiences of an exchange (see, e.g., Gmelch, 1997; Y. Y. Kim, 2001; Paige, 1993b) simply do not exist in an IaH environment. Still, with proper theoretical and skills preparation, at-home interaction with dissimilar others can be beneficial *if* individuals are attentive, observant, mindful and reflective.

### **6.5 BP Data Compared to Other Theoretical Structures**

Because few studies have investigated at-home students developing IC skills, it is useful to look at studies that investigate the individuals who go abroad to assess whether any theories or models might shed light on the lesser-studied at-home students. In particular, it is useful to look at the out-bound students of the culture you are studying (in this case, Finland) to see parallels or contrasts that might inform the research on their at-home peers.

Of course it is not possible to compare directly out-bound Finns to the at-home Finns who have no interest in going abroad. In my study, although most of the informants had not yet lived abroad, they are interested in doing so. The informants therefore possess already an interest in experiencing life within another culture, and their thoughts and skills may not at all reflect the larger body of students who have no intention of an exchange period, the focus of an IaH environment. It is acknowledged, however, that a current intention to take an exchange does not guarantee that circumstances in the future will allow it.

In the subsections below, I look at two separate typologies that reflect individuals who go abroad. The first typology addresses general personality types of students (Finns) who benefit from study periods in another culture; the second

addresses facets of the “interculturally effective person,” focused on those who undertake government or non-governmental development work in other cultures. Even though these two typologies are aimed at quite different IC circumstances, namely experiences within another culture, they both offer concepts that might find use in discussing the goals for at-home students at an IaH university.

### **6.5.1 Adaptation of Taajamo’s Types of Cultural Interaction**

Taajamo (1999) looked at the attitudes and learning potential of Finns going abroad by investigating the meanings that 14 Finns who took an exchange period to England placed on their abroad experience. From this data, he also articulated five types of orientations representing how these exchange students constructed their relationships within another culture. I believe there are parallels within the orientation of those students to the students who persevere in a BP experience.

Taajamo’s (1999) study describes the types of cultural interaction of his participants with an emphasis that the description does not correspond with individual students, but rather as an approach that exchange students might embody. This is important to note, he adds, because individual students can vary in their orientations at various times and in varying circumstances. Table 6.4 provides the descriptions Taajamo uses for his orientation types; that table also provides additional descriptors that would apply to participants in an at-home social interaction program, based on the interviews that form the data for my study. In thinking about how the various informants might have reflected these orientation types, I placed the informants in the most appropriate group, a difficult task since, as Taajamo cautioned, many also demonstrated traits provided by alternative types and, in another BP cohort situation, perhaps an individual might rank differently. So, based on their self-reports and the experiences they noted in this study, the assignment reflects only a snapshot of a reported place and time, and not the true nature of the informants.

The Determined types were outgoing and likely to engage in mimicking the communicative behaviors of their foreign coactors, were effusive about their experiences, and laughed easily about their experiences and mistakes. These individuals were assertive in meeting foreign students and, as a result, built large networks of friends from other cultures. They seem to prefer learning about IC distinctiveness and skills development through “hands-on” applications.

**Table 6.4.** Comparisons and Descriptors for Cultural Orientation Types.

<b>Orientation Type</b>	<b>Taajamo Descriptors</b>	<b>BP</b>	<b>At-home Descriptors</b>
<b>Determined</b>	trusts in own abilities; is bold, extroverted, and verbally gifted; has high self-esteem; will not accept failure; has courage and a touch of daredevilry; encounters local culture deeply by establishing interactive relationships.	06 07	is an explorer; takes initiative; doesn't necessarily have IC skills, but is content to learn as it goes from personal experience; takes differences in stride; is not afraid to make mistakes but instead can laugh at themselves and learn from mistakes.
<b>Observer</b>	primarily an onlooker, short-spoken, somewhat reserved; adopts a neutral attitude toward all things, attempting to normalize them. Wishes to see other cultures, but may not necessarily take part.	8 9 10 11 14	Has a personal curiosity about others, but is not driven to take concrete steps in developing skills to interact effectively; active, but not willing to push to get more of what is said to be wanted; may simply be unsure of how to proceed; easy-going.
<b>Studies / career-oriented</b>	has aim to supplement studies and deepen knowledge base; looking for new perspectives or professional contacts.	3	has both academic/career and personal interest in others, is content to simply let things happen. Acknowledges need for theory/skills but separates them from activity in a social setting.
<b>Self-improver</b>	aims for multifaceted personal development; seeks intellectual (or spiritual) capital through new experiences; concentrates on personal growth and is internally motivated.	1 2 4 5 12 13 15	has broad-based interests, of which culture is one; willing to invest in the hard work in order to improve; more likely to seek theoretical basis for practical learning.
<b>Sport-oriented (fun)</b>	aim is social interaction as a counterbalance to study, and undertaken with eye toward friendship making.	x	little interest in anything more than enjoyment aspect of interaction; separates learning from fun experiences.

Note: Drawn from Taajamo (1999) and adapted to at-home IC interaction learners based on inferences from this study's data.

Informants of the Observer type shared the curiosity that all informants expressed, but were less active or assertive in getting their group to work or going outside the group to establish relationships with international students. This type expressed disappointment that their group did not work as they hoped, but were not very active or creative in changing the status quo. These individuals seemed less willing to invest the energy and effort in making IC interaction an ongoing reality, at least in this iteration of the BP.

The one informant who reflected a Studies/Career-oriented type was, in many ways, similar to the Observer type, except that she expressed interest in the role of culture in her studies, as well as for her personal development. In her specific case, a disconnect seemed to exist between acknowledging the need for IC development

(gained when in another culture) and recognizing that her BP experience could offer something similar at home.

The Self-improver types seemed to be those who may not have been as naturally bold or vivacious as the Determined, but who were internally driven to seek out difference in those around them. These informants either worked hard to make the relationships work or exhibited a significant self-reflective work: Both of these traits provided essential benefit in IC learning and skills development. They also were involved in other activities on campus and in their personal lives that demonstrated their multi-faceted natures. Most informants in this group seemed interested in theory and skills development as a foundation for their IC interaction.

While none of the informants in this study exhibited a strictly Sports (Fun)-oriented type, many cited this as a major reason for participating in the BP. This type would be considerably less common in an IaH environment since at-home students have many other avenues for fun on campus. The BP would not be appealing unless they were motivated to engage dissimilar others. Still, some risk-seekers (see, e.g., Arasaratnam, 2004; Morgan & Arasaratnam, 2003) might join the BP strictly for the thrill of it.

Taajamo (1999) indicates with this typology that some exchange students make larger gains in IC learning while abroad than others. He notes that the Determined and Self-improver types are those who seem to benefit most. That seems to mirror the data in this study, particularly when I compare the assessment in this typology to the assessment provided in Tables 5.1 and 5.2. Most of the individuals whose reported attitudes and behaviors reflected either the Determined or Self-improver characteristics reside in the top ratings, thus indicating what I perceived as noticeable IC benefit from their BP experience, while those in the Observer and Study/Career-oriented types reside lower, indicating less IC benefit.

### **6.5.2 Adaptation of Kealey and Protheroe's Profile of the Interculturally Effective Person**

Another typology is IC effectiveness, created by Kealey and Protheroe (2000). This behavior-based construct includes an "outline of the skills, knowledge, attitudes and other characteristics required or desirable for living and working in another culture" (p. 4). Kealey and Protheroe state that an interculturally effective person possesses three main attributes: (a) ability to communicate with dissimilar others in ways that earn respect, trust, cooperation, and productivity in achieving

professional goals; (b) the ability to adapt both technical and managerial skills to fit the local conditions and constraints; and (c) the ability to adapt personally so as to be content and at ease in the host culture. They further note that the first two items apply to intercultural and multicultural interactions, whether abroad or at home, but the last element applies only to international situations.

Kealey and Protheroe's (2000) construct lists nine major competencies, each of which includes at least two core competencies and detailed behavioral indicators. For this study, only the major and core competencies are addressed (see Table 6.5), although many of the behavioral indicators could apply as well. The left column provides Kealey and Protheroe's competencies; the right column provides adaptations for an individual who is attempting to be interculturally effective in interaction with dissimilar others within his/her home culture.

When the self-reports of the informants in this study on BP participants are viewed through this typology for interculturally effective behavior, it becomes apparent that many of the informants have been able to demonstrate some level of activity on many of the competencies. This is encouraging because it indicates that, from the vantage of Kealey and Protheroe's work, some individuals indeed can become interculturally effective within their own environments if they possess some natural abilities and have adequate preparation and support.

Perhaps most significant in Kealey and Protheroe's model in relationship to the BP is that many of the competencies required or desired to be interculturally effective are either natural personality traits or are learnable skills. Weaver (1993) notes that while personality (and/or the predispositional dimensions articulated by Y. Y. Kim, 2001) may be the most important determinant for successful cross-cultural adaptation, some skills can be learned by those not so naturally gifted to facilitate the transition into a new culture. Many of the competencies listed by Kealey and Protheroe could be learned through an appropriate training process—based on theoretical knowledge (see Bhawuk & Triandis, 1996), made concrete through experiential learning (see Kolb, 1984, 1993) and enhanced through a multifaceted mindfulness concept (see Langer & Moldoveanu, 2000a; Mezirow, 1991; Ting-Toomey, 1999) and transformative learning (see Mezirow, 1991; E. Taylor, 1994) that leads to deculturation and then acculturation (see Y. Y. Kim, 2001)—and could assist at-home students to become interculturally effective, on their way toward intercultural competency.



**Table 6.5.** Adaptation of the Profile of the Interculturally Effective Person for Individuals Operating Interculturally Within Their Home Environment.

<b>Kealey &amp; Protheroe's (2000) Components</b>	<b>Adaptation of Components for At-home Individuals</b>
<b>Adaptation Skills</b>	<b>Adaptation Skills</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Able to cope with culture shock and the ongoing challenges of living in another culture</li> <li>◆ Enjoy an enriching experience in host culture</li> <li>◆ Without abandoning ideals, behave in ways differently in host culture than home culture</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Able to recognize difference in cultural expression and not feel afraid or threatened</li> <li>◆ Enjoy the challenges and experiences of interacting with dissimilar others</li> <li>◆ Behaving interculturally and appropriate for oneself and the other so both feel valued and involved</li> </ul>
<b>Attitude of Modesty &amp; Respect</b>	<b>Attitude of Respect &amp; Welcoming</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Show in attitudes and behaviors a respect for the local culture</li> <li>◆ Demonstrate humility by not soliciting acknowledgment or drawing attention to oneself</li> <li>◆ Self-confident to take initiatives &amp; promote change when called for by the assignment (within attitudes of respect &amp; humility)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Attitudes and behaviors that demonstrate respect for the ways of the other</li> <li>◆ Exhibit a welcoming attitude and effort to help the other feel comfortable in interaction</li> <li>◆ Willingness to provide information and help when needed, while giving space for other to experience independently the host country</li> </ul>
<b>Understanding of Culture Concepts</b>	<b>Understanding of Culture Concepts</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Have conceptual understanding of how culture affects all people and societies</li> <li>◆ Understand the influence of own cultural conditioning and how some values of own culture may cause problems in host culture</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Have a conceptual understanding of how culture affects all people and societies</li> <li>◆ Understand the influence of own cultural conditioning and how some of own cultural values may cause difficulties within IC interactions</li> </ul>
<b>Host Country and Culture Knowledge</b>	<b>Genuine Interest in Other Cultures</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Demonstrate desire to learn about host culture</li> <li>◆ Possess knowledge of history, geography, social mores, customs, and socio-economic conditions, etc. of host country</li> <li>◆ Possess knowledge of local work organization, political processes, organization, and local management practices of host country</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Possess, and act on, desire to learn about other cultures</li> <li>◆ Undertake process to learn deeper knowledge of other cultures, such as history, geography, social mores and customs, socio-economic conditions, etc.</li> </ul>
<b>Self-knowledge</b>	<b>Self-knowledge</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Understand own culture and how it has shaped how one thinks, feels, and reacts to people and events</li> <li>◆ Know own personal strengths &amp; weaknesses in overseas working and living</li> <li>◆ Recognize and manage own reactions to ambiguity</li> <li>◆ Understand own style of management or work</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Understand own culture and how it has shaped how one thinks, feels, and reacts to people and events</li> <li>◆ Know personal strengths &amp; weaknesses in interaction with dissimilar others</li> <li>◆ Recognize and manage own reactions to ambiguity or unfamiliar behaviors</li> <li>◆ Understand own communicative style</li> </ul>
<b>Intercultural Communication</b>	<b>Intercultural Communication</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Can convey thoughts, expectations &amp; opinions understandably yet culturally sensitive</li> <li>◆ Not afraid to participate in local culture and language; not afraid of making mistakes</li> <li>◆ Can establish shared meanings with locals so all understand what is said in the same way</li> <li>◆ Possess sufficient local language capacity to demonstrate interest in the people with whom they interact</li> <li>◆ Can empathize, not just intellectually, with how locals see the world</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Can convey thoughts, expectations, opinions &amp; disagreements understandably yet culturally sensitive</li> <li>◆ Not afraid to participate in dissimilar cultural expressions and foreign languages; not afraid of making mistakes</li> <li>◆ Can establish shared meanings with dissimilar others so all understand what is said in the same way</li> <li>◆ Possess sufficient foreign language ability to demonstrate interest in and ability to interact with dissimilar others</li> <li>◆ Can empathize, not just intellectually, with how dissimilar others see the world</li> </ul>

<b>Relationship Building</b>	<b>Relationship Building</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Socialize harmoniously &amp; productively with host nationals &amp; co-workers</li> <li>◆ Help people of diverse cultures to work together in task-functional way</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Socialize harmoniously with members of one or more cultures</li> <li>◆ Help people of diverse cultures to work or socialize well together</li> </ul>
<b>Organizational Skills</b>	<b>Organizational Skills</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Find a workable balance between the need to adapt behavior to local norms and to maintain own cultural identity and values</li> <li>◆ Develop personal and professional networks of local, national and international stakeholders</li> <li>◆ Can build consensus between locals and foreigners by reconciling perspectives of various cultures so all feel contributors to endeavor</li> <li>◆ Maintain focus on task goal while managing cultural and organizational resistance</li> <li>◆ Possess a degree of political astuteness to balance competing forces in an organization and its environment</li> <li>◆ Professionally resourceful to function with a different level of resources and supports than are accustomed to in home culture</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Willingness to undertake the effort not only to get oneself active in meeting dissimilar others, but to help others who wish to continue contact</li> <li>◆ Look for ways to interact with people of various backgrounds, experiences, and cultures</li> <li>◆ Able to build consensus so that all participating in a group activity feel valued and contributory</li> </ul>
<b>Personal &amp; Professional Commitment</b>	<b>Personal Commitment</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Gives evidence of wanting to contribute to the local community and not solely to the welfare of organization or self</li> <li>◆ Have a clear and realistic awareness of their own motivations and expectations regarding the assignment and personal life abroad</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ When interacting in a relationship, giving evidence that one is committed to the other in means suitable to the nature of the relationship</li> <li>◆ Have a clear and realistic awareness of own motivation and expectations regarding IC interaction, and potential benefits of remaining engaged with dissimilar others</li> </ul>

Note: Drawn from Kealey and Protheroe (2000) and adapted to at-home IC interaction learners based on inferences from this study's data.

## 7 CONCLUSIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

The government of Finland wisely and rightly is beginning to embed various intercultural (IC) concepts and perhaps even some IC skills within the educational programs of its domestic students. But there remains a need for continued programs at the university level, for young adults, when natural development in intellect and maturity (see, e.g., Pascarella & Terenzini, 1992) allow for a particular type of knowing and understanding and, especially, reflexivity and reflection, that leads to personal transformation. The impartation of these needed skills, the introduction of more complex and culturally influenced perspectives on the human condition, and the practice of perspective- and precept-altering reflection will reap the most fruit in the tertiary-level student. The fact that up to 75% of the Finnish age cohort could be in some form of higher education institution (HEI; see MoE, 2005b; Yrjänkeikki & Takala, 2001) bodes well for the nation *if* they are able to provide the types of programs that illicit the theoretical knowledge, experience, reflection, and transformative development students and societies need for a global economy and growing domestic multiculturalism. Finland is in a unique situation regarding its development as a nation and society and can set the pace on what should be considered essential in contemporary education for a multicultural environment and an interconnected world.

The purpose of this research project was to determine whether Finnish students who have not lived abroad can develop intercultural (IC) competency at home simply by interacting with their foreign peers, and what factors help or hinder the process. This investigation was situated within an internationalization-at-home (IaH) concept, which suggests that university programs—in particular, inbound mobile students and teachers and internationalized curricula—can facilitate IC competency growth. The qualitative research data comprised interviews with 15 Finnish university students (11 who had not yet lived abroad and 4 who had) who were participants in the Buddy Project (BP), a volunteer social program in which groups of Finnish and foreign students are formed and are responsible for building relationships among the group members.

This has been a highly complex research process, with multiple factors being considered as part of the implications of the research findings. In addition, there was a continual cycle of analysis and literature review that fed the

conclusions and recommendations for future research that are to follow. The results presented here were not what I had anticipated they would be when I began the study. The informants' comments, and in looking at the data in its entirety, as well as and the substantive literature, led not only to an unexpected conclusion, but also resulted in a reconsideration of basic concept terminology within the literature—terms often used inconsistently or applied without definition in sometimes contradictory or unclear manners. Concepts such as intercultural competency, intercultural communication competency, motivation, and internationalization-at-home are the key concerns for this study, but others also exist. Ultimately, after consulting and pondering the literature, I felt the need to clarify constructs that had direct implications for this study, this data set, and the analysis that took place. As the concepts became more clearly defined, particularly what would constitute intercultural competency, my perspectives on the data analysis and conclusions shifted. Yet I believe this study provides a wide variety of findings that can further the discussion and, perhaps, the application of programs aimed at the at-home university students in Finland, as well as in other countries around the world.

## **7.1 Key Findings**

The key findings, for the most part, fall within answers to the research questions. The next subsections address the primary research question, and the first three subquestions. The final sub-question regarding the implications for Finnish students who will never abroad is addressed in Section 7.3.

### **7.1.1 What is the intercultural competency outcome of students (in this case, Finnish university students) who have never lived abroad interacting with peers of dissimilar cultural backgrounds through participation in voluntary social programs such as the Buddy Project?**

The most significant finding of this study involves the whether competency is attainable if one never leaves one's home environment. Several IaH theorists (e.g., Nilsson, 2003; Paige, 2003a; Stier, 2003, 2006; Teekens, 2003) suggest that it is possible for at-home students to attain IC competency, although it must be noted that how IC competency is conceived is often not clearly defined or constitutes elements such as appropriateness and effectiveness in interaction with dissimilar others and/or tolerance, understanding, and respect of dissimilar

others. When IC competency is addressed in the literature, it is often used interchangeably with the construct of intercultural communication (ICC) competency, at times inferring that the two terms are equivalent, although some theorists are beginning to make the distinctions (e.g., Byram, 1997; Stier, 2006).

However, through a study of the literature, it seems quite clear to me that the confusion created by the lack of clarity in the two terms can be rectified by viewing IC competency and ICC competency as distinct constructs: The former represents primarily internal perspectives, knowledge, capabilities, and emotional statuses, and thus is intrapersonal (see also Stier, 2006), while the latter involves the behavioral skills and abilities, contextual and environmental elements, the personal communicative styles and practices of the interlocutors, and interaction goals, and thus is interpersonal (Ibid). Therefore, an individual could be perceived as interpersonally/ICC competent (i.e., behaviorally appropriate and effective; see Lustig & Koester, 1996; Spitzberg, 1993; Spitzberg & Cupach, 1984) without being intrapersonally/IC competent. The result of good luck or contextual elements that support the interaction, the actions may not necessarily be intentional or repeatable (see Wiseman, 2001).

However, because IC competency involves a multitude of internal elements (e.g., cognitive, attitudinal, motivational, affective, etc.) that usually—but not always because of environmental elements outside the control of the actor—are expressed in competent interpersonal interaction, this construct must be measured by other means, such as psychometric instruments and/or qualitative methods. Because the depth and breadth of IC competency encompasses more components, particularly attitudinal and affective elements, it appears that the IC competency construct is the umbrella under which ICC competency, specifically focused on interaction, resides. While ICC competency exists only in interaction—immediate or ongoing—with dissimilar others, IC competency can be expressed in a variety of ways (such as through writing or other media, action or activities, or in simple internal perception and evaluation) that do not directly involve other persons in real-time interaction.

Although most studies talk about IC competency, the researchers are actually investigating ICC interaction—how people of diverse cultures manage to communicate appropriately and effectively. It is my belief, however, that the more critical competency needed in our diverse and interconnected world is the

higher order competency: IC competency is more culture general, providing the foundation for the IC competent individual to perceive and evaluate accurately the communicative clues in any given environment, and to choose appropriate manners and processes to interact competently. Decisions on what is perceived, how to act, what to say, and how to evaluate are based on a well-developed foundation of knowledge and IC theory; attentiveness to the emotional, attitudinal, and motivational components both in the environment and within oneself; and drawn from a range of practiced skills. Because the art of communication is culturally influenced, one cannot possibly be fully ICC competent in the many variations of communicative behaviors. But the IC competent individual has a deeper and broader arsenal of abilities—cognitive and affective as well as behavioral—through which he/she is more likely to derive reasonably appropriate and effective intercultural communicative avenues of action. Whether interacting with members of different cultures in the business world or dissimilar members within one's own home society, or viewing and evaluating events of cultures around the world within the media, IC competence provides greater internal and external development to allow more tolerant, understanding, respectful, and competent attitudes and actions.

Individuals can be trained to behave verbally, nonverbally, and paralinguistically in ways that are appropriate and/or effective for members of dissimilar cultures. The training for one culture, however, is not usually transferable to other cultures (see also Salo-Lee, 2003). Most HEIs, however, recognize that the IC outcomes that students and adults need today are not so specific, but rather involve the grounding of IC issues within cognitive, affective, and skilled behaviors—and level of cultural literacy that facilitates communication, an understanding of information presented via various media forms, and the interwoven issues and practices, all of which are influenced by cultural sensitivities, perspectives, and assumptions, within an interconnected world (see Salo-Lee, 2007)—that would prepare students to manage the diversity in the world around them and to allow them to observe, learn about, and interact well in a multitude of cultural environments or within a multicultural environment at home. They seek IC competency for their students.

The problem is, however, that while some of the IC skills can be taught, such as theory and the practice of various behavioral skills, most are quite personal and

must be experienced and reflected upon in order to be owned by the individual (see also Stier, 2006). That is why mobility has been emphasized within higher education (HE). During their time abroad, students must learn to adapt to unfamiliar ways of doing and being, but also in thinking, perceiving, valuing, and assuming (see, e.g., Alred & Byram, 2002; Berwick & Whalley, 2000; Gmelch, 1997; Teichler & Jahr, 2001). It would be unusual indeed for a person to truly understand difference without personally experiencing being different; to understand confusion and emotional disequilibrium (see also Y. Y. Kim, 2001) without knowing first-hand the inability to manage as usual or feeling unsure or frustrated because what had been effective no longer is; or to comprehend an immigrant's or sojourner's insecurity, sadness, or longing for another way of being if one has only experienced an environment that one understands and can manage. In short, the essential affective element of IC competency cannot be fully developed if one remains in the home environment where the language, social interaction cues and expectations, and environmental influences are all familiar. The affective component of IC competency influences not only the emotional balance and growth of the individual, but also affects the cognitive perceptions and selections and the behavioral options and expressions. One must go to the unfamiliar in order to develop more fully his/her entire being into IC competency.

As a result, getting back to the original point, I believe that if the IaH theorists who believe IC competency can be developed by at-home students actually mean ICC competency—the ability to act appropriately with people from different cultural backgrounds—then perhaps that is possible under the right educational circumstances. The data in this study point to some circumstances that might bolster improvement in ICC competency.

Therefore, in answer to the research question, Finnish university students who have not lived abroad and who will not live abroad, cannot develop IC competency simply from interacting with dissimilar others—or even taking IC courses or operating in an IaH institution. However, despite the unlikelihood of at-home students becoming IC competent, they can develop IC knowledge, attitudes, and skills that move them along the continuum toward IC competency, as several of the informants in this study seemed to demonstrate. Any increase in IC knowledge, attitudes, motivations, and behaviors is valuable and would improve the prospect of the individual selecting

appropriate and effective ICC-competent actions in an intercultural situation or multicultural environment, a value both in terms of a globally interconnected economic environment and a society gradually being transformed by increased immigration. Such growth also provides some of the essential cognitive, affective, and skilled foundations that would facilitate more rapid authentic IC competency development should that individual find him/herself living in another culture at some point in the future.

### **7.1.2 What is the nature of the intercultural learning gained from this interaction, if any?**

While this study did not allow for quantitative measurement of any growth in IC understanding or skills development, the comments of the informants did shed light on the types of growth that was possible. The informants indicated primarily five areas of IC learning, although some individuals grew in other manners as well.

Many of the informants articulated (a) an awareness of cultural similarities and differences, (b) cultural sensitivity in the application of some IC behaviors, (c) an adaptation of communicative style, (d) an awareness of their own culture, and (e) the development of self-confidence in the ability to interact well with dissimilar others and encouragement to continue engaging dissimilar others. While not all informants developed in all of these areas, and certainly not all progressed at the same rate in any of them, a few of them experienced growth in all five and indicated good potential for appropriate and effective interaction with dissimilar others both within their home culture or during authentic travel abroad.

### **7.1.3 What is the depth of the intercultural learning gained from interaction, if any?**

As one might expect, the range of development in IC learning through interaction with dissimilar others was quite variable. For some informants, there appeared very little depth in their IC growth, either because they could not articulate specific areas of growth or because they did not value what growth did take place. Others were able to provide specific examples of the depth of their growth, primarily in understanding and acceptance of difference in the perspectives of or actions by their foreign buddies and other foreign students they interacted with in their home environment.



Two factors seem most significant in facilitating a deeper level of growth by the informants. First, the informants who articulated growth in their IC understanding and acceptance of dissimilar others were those who also expressed their practices of anticipating and observing difference. They expected that the other would not behave like they do, and thus were mentally prepared for observing and embracing difference. Additionally, although the initial observation was not always evaluation free, these informants told how they noticed others' behaviors, including that of their compatriots. They were curious and open to different ways of living and being, and often engaged these friends in discussion of how life is lived beyond Finland. Some even participated in various nonverbal means of communication, in line with their foreign buddies.

The second significant factor is that many of these individuals also reflected on what they observed or on their reactions to specific events. This essential step of pondering difference and experiences and how difference affects interaction—before, during, and after—allowed some of the informants to develop not only deeper understanding of cultural in action, but also provided opportunity for cognitive, affective, and behavioral growth.

The findings for this research question also demonstrates that IC growth does not simply happen by one's proximity to difference, or even by interacting with dissimilar others (see also, e.g., Pettigrew, 1997, 1998a; Pusch, 2004; Teekens, 2003; Ward, 2001). Rather, as the informants who developed deeper IC progress evidenced, specific skills and processes—stances that, for several of these informants, seemed innate—transformed simple interaction into valuable learning experiences. The goal of assisting at-home students to develop IC knowledge and skills seems to require that these essential (preferably non-judgmental) observation skills and the processes of self-reflection be taught and encouraged so that IC growth can take place whenever diversity is experienced.

#### **7.1.4 What factors affect the IC learning through interaction?**

In the course of interpreting the data, several factors surfaced that seem to affect the nature or depth of IC learning by the informants. While some of these factors came directly from data, others seemed more intuitively present and thus were not studied as part of this research, but should be by future research. These intuitive factors include any specific personality characteristics of informants,

their level of motivation to interact and develop IC knowledge and skills, their prior IC experiences, their level of maturity, the culturally affected perspectives on the nature of friendship and the process of friend-making, the culturally bound nature of learning, and the process of personal transformation as a result of intercultural interaction. Each of these areas could exert significant effect on the factors of IC learning that were identified within the data.

The factors found in the data that affected IC development within these informants can be grouped within the general categories of intrapersonal, interaction dynamics, and the “other.” Intrapersonal factors include the informants’ knowledge of IC theory and/or practices, their engaged motivation (an expanded construct of motivation that includes various aspects of interest, emotional ability, interaction, and commitment), their personality/temperament, their prior or parallel experiences in IC interaction, their expectations for interaction, and their skill in observing themselves and others and in reflecting on these observations and experiences. Interaction dynamics involve the comfort level or abilities for conversing in a lingua franca, time made for meeting dissimilar others, and the amount of time spent in conversation during the interaction period. Finally, the motivation and/or behavior of the culturally dissimilar “other” can affect the IC growth of the informant: If the other does not make time to interact or is unable to manage, the outcome for IC knowledge and skills development in the at-home interactant is severely hampered.

Furthermore, the data point to several problem areas with implications for IC learning: These barriers exist in BP participation, in communication within the program, and in the IC learning process within a voluntary social program, such as the BP. The barriers to at-home student participation in the BP can be grouped within the areas of information, emotional hesitancy, time/interest, and value/benefits. The informants told that they and others were unaware of the program, unfamiliar with its workings, and assumed the program was intended only for those preparing for an exchange period or who have been mobile. Emotional hesitancy is reflected in the discomfort that some potential participants felt in use of the lingua franca, in a variety of fears (e.g., about one’s knowledge and/or ability to interact well), and the lack of courage to risk involvement with or confront anxiety in interacting with dissimilar others. Many informants indicated that they and their Finnish peers faced competing priorities (academic and

personal) for their limited time, with responsibilities to family or employers affecting how much time they could devote to interacting socially with foreign students. Finally, the informants noted that there is a level of disinterest in international issues/interaction by their Finnish peers: These individuals have little desire in exploring alternative ways of living and communicating; perceive the effort to meet foreigners in the BP a “waste of time” since the foreign students are in Finland for too short a time to develop true friendships; or do not see any need to develop IC skills as part of their university studies since they do not intend to live abroad. In short, the informants indicate that some of their Finnish peers do not see a value in such IC interaction for themselves, no return on such a high investment of energy, time, and emotional commitment.

Barriers to IC communication within the BP include English language competency by either the Finnish or foreign buddies; the Finns’ ability to adapt their learned communication style; nervousness or insecurity about communication affected by, for example, culture, age, or difference in academic interests; the expectations of the Finns regarding appropriate communicative norms and patterns; and the challenges individual Finns had in establishing connections with the specific foreign students in their buddy groups.

Finally, barriers to IC learning within the BP is affected by the seemingly very common reality of group inactivity or failure; the limited time available for substantive interaction during meetings, particularly the type that goes deeper than superficial discussion of cultural behaviors; the lack of observation and reflections skills by the at-home students; the lack of IC theoretical grounding to guide decisions regarding interaction and evaluation of events; and the small number of international students on campus and as participants in the BP. Further hurdles include the differences in priorities for university life for the exchange students as compared to their hosts, and the ambivalence that the informants expressed about an IC learning process during friendship making or from existing friendships.

On the positive side, factors that have the potential to enhance IC learning, albeit all beyond the framework of the Buddy Project or any voluntary social interaction, include access to IC theory or skills courses; learning within multicultural classes or participating in multicultural project groups; authentic travel to other cultures; multiple opportunities to meet their foreign buddies and other foreign students in venues beyond the BP; and the meeting of their

foreign friends' friends. This latter point is particularly useful when the at-home Finns meet multiple representatives of a particular culture. Finally, there was some indication of the extended contact theory (see also Liebkind & McAlister, 1999; Wright et al., 1997) in practice.

Table 7.1 provides a summary of the key findings of this study. These findings are drawn from not only the answers to the specific research questions but also broader findings that surfaced as result of the data analysis and how the literature review relates to the topic at hand.

**Table 7.1.** Key Findings from Finnish Buddy Project Informants' Interaction with Foreign Peers.

<b>This study confirms...</b>	<b>This study advances...</b>	<b>This study questions...</b>
that simple interaction with dissimilar others does not lead to IC competency development.	the discussion about the difference between intercultural competency and intercultural communication competency by presenting a synthesis of the literature that explores the individual components of competency as distinct from the relational components.	whether the network of support surrounding someone living in another culture can affect the authentic exposure to the new culture and thus limit the IC learning potential of that person within that environment.
that the roles of observation and reflection are fundamental in the process of IC learning and skills development.		
that time abroad, as demonstrated by the exchange informants, does improve one's tolerance, open-mindedness, and flexibility in interaction with dissimilar others, even within one's home environment.	the role of motivation within IC interaction, encapsulated within the engaged motivation construct, i.e., that sustained interaction requires initial interest, emotional involvement, active engagement, and multi-level commitment.	whether IC development can occur at home when informants look for similarities in order to build relationships rather than learning about/from differences in cultures.
that some at-home students can experience a bit of deculturation and then acculturation of new ways of interaction.	the discussion regarding the potentiality of IC competency development within one's home environment by indicating that while IC competency is not attainable without significant experience within a dissimilar culture, IC learning and skills development can be attained within an IaH environment.	whether the conditions for the contact hypothesis operate similarly for voluntary social intergroup interaction as they do for intergroup project work, particularly when the at-home informants do not hold negative perceptions of or prejudice toward their foreign interactants.
that motivation is an essential precursor for and component of effective IC communication.		
that a change of negative attitude toward dissimilar others can generalize if the individual approaches interaction with an open attitude.	the potential of the extended contact theory (Wright et al., 1997) in two ways: (a) as a potential IC learning opportunity for at-home individuals not personally involved in volunteer social activities, and (b) the extension of contact by at-home individuals to friends of foreign students, thus expanding the circle of contact with dissimilar others and additional IC learning.	whether the internationalization of European HE as a means toward IC competency development for global business and multicultural societies is advanced by Europeans interacting primarily with other Europeans (the goal of Erasmus) and other persons from Western countries who are more alike than different as compared to cultures in developing and emerging economies.
that personality and dispositional factors do come into play during interaction, and particularly during IC learning from interaction.		

## 7.2 Limitations of This Study

In any social research study, but particularly in those involving differences in culture between the researcher and the subjects, the researcher must make judgment calls about the “best” way to proceed in answering the research questions (J. D. Johnson & Tuttle, 1989). The choices made early on, and all the way through to the reporting, can deeply affect the validity and value of the study. In assessing the choices made in the process of conducting this research topic, it is noted that this study is limited in three principle areas: issues regarding the nature and securing of the informants, methodological issues regarding the data gathering, and concerns about the role of culture and language in the process of data gathering and analysis.

Limitations regarding the choice to study the BP and some of its Finnish participants are several. First, the study investigated an outcome of IC competency development from a program for which cognitive or experiential IC development was not an integral element: The BP was designed specifically to encourage social interaction between domestic and foreign university students (personal interview, Anne Kettunen, secretary of the International Affairs Subcommittee of the University of Jyväskylä Student Union, December 12, 2003). Second, the organizational structure of the BP—that is, the activities and behaviors, indeed the very existence, of the groups rest strictly on the individual and collective efforts of the members assigned rather randomly to groups—has a bearing on the study in that not all informants had equal group stability or comparable conditions in which to investigate any IC development outcome. On the other hand, such a loose organizational structure allowed for an assessment of the informants’ efforts and behaviors that was free from superordinate influences.

A third limitation is that only one of this study’s informants represents the traditional at-home student (i.e., has no intention of living abroad); all of the other at-home informants were at least open to the possibility of taking an exchange period, and some were in the process of arranging their mobility activities, thus raising concern about the reliability of the findings when considering truly non-mobile HE students. Fourth, the informants in this study were not only motivated to participate in the BP but also motivated to take part in a study of the program, making them a special subgroup within the larger BP cohort for autumn 2003.

Finally, the method for surfacing and inviting informants was based on opportunity and availability, that is, those who responded to the email request to the BP participants list or to the requests of other informants they knew, or the fortunate discovery of a member of the alumni group who was willing to provide the contact information so that I could invite her former groupmates to participate. Thus it is unclear whether their views and experiences are typical for other Finnish peers of the autumn 2003 cohort, of any BP cohort, or for the non-participant Finnish University of Jyväskylä (JyU) student. Conducting a study in which measurements are taken from a representative sample of all students at JyU or all Finnish participants of the BP would have put the comments of informants into better context. A survey of all participants in the autumn 2003 BP cohort had been planned but was cancelled for lack of time (personal correspondence, Milla Haapala, chairperson of the ESN Jyväskylä subcommittee, June 22, 2004). J. D. Johnson and Tuttle (1989) emphasize that issues regarding the appropriateness of a sample are partly a function of how the results will be used and that even if findings from a nonrandom sample cannot be generalized to a larger population, there may still be some benefit from the research within these limitations. This embodies the intent of this study.

In regard to the methodology, the most obvious limitation is that the study is that no measures were taken prior to or following the informants' interaction with their foreign buddies to establish objective indications of nor measures of the nature of the IC development, if it transpired, nor the amount of cognitive, emotional, behavioral, or motivational growth that might have taken place. This study is also limited by (a) the use of a small sample from a single university, (b) no measure of the wide range of contextual issues in the lives behaviors of the informants or their foreign buddies, or environmental issues at the university or in the society at large that could affect the nature and level of interaction, (c) the short duration in the interaction of the BP participants; (d) no measure of the types or duration of activities in which informants interacted with their foreign buddies; (e) no control of the variety of factors that might influence the relationship building or the nature of engagement between the Finns and their buddies, issues for all coactors such as personality characteristics, levels of motivation, proficiency in the lingua franca (usually English), the level of shared interests or topics, and so forth; and (f) the use of self-reports of the nature of interaction between the informants

and their buddies rather than, for instance, observation. Self-reports are problematic in that they are subject to errors in accuracy and to potential biases (Gudykunst & Shapiro, 1996). This reality was further complicated by the fact that the interviews took place several weeks after the events. Not only did several informants make comments that indicated their memory was fading, but it is also possible that significant or interesting issues or insights had been supplanted over time by equally interesting, but different and more current, experiences or that the time between the event and the interview has resulted in the informant simply incorporating the learning into his/her updated perspectives. Furthermore, since most of the informants had not been abroad to develop IC skills and knowledge, nor had taken any type of IC course, they did not have the knowledge base or terminology in which to answer some of the questions well, particularly those related to specific skills, attitudes, values and so forth, or to assess their own perception of IC growth.

These methodological limitations, along with those of the study sample, result in the inability to extend the findings any broader than the informants themselves. This study needs to be replicated with a larger sample and at multiple institutions, using psychometric measures before and after BP interaction, and conducted within various controls and through the use of different research methods to discover if the findings of this study have broader implications and/or validity for other bodies of university students.

Finally, the use of English as the language of the interviews is a limitation of this study as well. Edward Hall (1976) states that communication can be viewed as a contextually determined process, and thus researchers run the risk of wrongly interpreting the communication process and/or the variables that affect the outcome of this activity, particularly the intercultural elements (J. D. Johnson & Tuttle, 1989). Moreover, language influences how one experiences the world and how one speaks about those experiences (Carbaugh & Berry, 2001). In this study, language and culture were very much factors in both the experiences that the informants were discussing as well as in interviews that formed the data. For the most part, the informants had experienced events in IC settings within a second language (English), processed internally within themselves in Finnish, and discussed in English. While nearly every informant indicated that use of English for the interview was not a problem, the data clearly indicates that some, if not all,

of the informants struggled at times to communicate their thoughts and perspectives in English. It is my belief that while the points of the comments might have been similar to those given by the informants had they been able to speak in Finnish to a Finnish researcher, a depth and richness was lost in the need to communicate in language other than the informants' mother tongue.

Moreover, the concern arises that not only were the informants challenged by having to use a second language to express themselves, the questions were presented to them only in the course of the interview, meaning the informants had to form thoughts, opinions, and recollections in English without the benefit of significant time to formulate their replies. Had the questions, or at least a portion of them, been supplied to the informants in advance, they might have been better prepared to respond, having had time to contemplate their thoughts prior to the interview. Doing so might also have reduced the stress felt by the informants that may have affected the nature of the communicative process in data gathering.

Although this study's findings are not generalizable to a wider population, even within that BP cohort, the results nevertheless do present implications for administrators, project organizers, and individuals within an IaH environment. Further, the findings raise issues and concerns that might inform discussions and programs aimed at furthering the IC knowledge and skills development for at-home students, whether in Finland or elsewhere in the world.

### **7.3 Implications of Findings**

The significance of this research is that it is one of only a few studies that qualitatively explore the IC development of host students in voluntary interaction with foreign students within their home environment. The data clearly indicate nearly every informant made some progress in IC awareness or growth, even if it was incremental, while a few of the informants indicate substantive IC growth. The significance of this is highlighted further by the fact that none of the at-home informants had been exposed to formal IC theory or skills development prior to interaction.

On the other hand, all were motivated to interact with foreign students, as demonstrated by their volunteer registration for the BP and the desire to attend meetings with their foreign buddies. Such motivation or interest in foreigners perhaps predisposes them to IC awareness and growth. With no research to



indicate how typical these informants are of the general student body at JyU, or with their peers at other Finnish HEIs or in other countries, it cannot be determined how likely other students might benefit from interaction with foreign students on campus.

Yet the policy statements from the Finnish Ministry of Education (MoE) and JyU articulate a goal that all students have the opportunity to “internationalize,” even if they do not take a mobility period as part of their degree studies. The results of this study hold open the potential for non-mobile students to develop some measure of IC knowledge and skills at home through interaction with inbound mobile students. As part of a fuller IaH program (i.e., revisions in degree curricula to integrate international perspectives and knowledge; more and better interaction between foreign and at-home students within multicultural classes; increased faculty exchanges to bring alternative pedagogical approaches to teaching and research; greater availability of IC programs and learning opportunities throughout the campus; effective use of ICTs in collaboration with peer institutions worldwide, etc.), voluntary social interaction provides a different yet valuable means through which at-home students and in-bound exchange and foreign degree students can explore cultural diversity and develop their IC knowledge and skills. An IaH environment also can enhance the abroad experiences of mobile students, by providing significant grounding in IC issues, knowledge, and skills prior to their mobility, and continued practice upon return.

An IaH environment cannot prepare most at-home students with the equal quality in experiential learning as that of their mobile peers, who will spend minimally several weeks immersed in a different culture that will require the development of a variety of cognitive, affective, and behavioral modifications to their perspectives on and approaches to life and human interaction. While there is no guarantee that mobile students will develop IC competency as a result of their time abroad, a multitude of studies (see, e.g., Gmelch, 1997; Y. Y. Kim, 2001; Lustig & Koester, 1996) indicate that engagement within another culture will benefit the mobile student in many ways. Such learning can enhance how mobile students perceive, interact with, and live in not only in that particular host culture, but improves their ability to interact and live successfully and comfortably in other diverse cultures at home as well, since many IC skills and perspectives—both intrapersonal and interactional—learned in one culture can generalize to others.

It is clear to see, therefore, that IaH, even if fully implemented, cannot prepare domestic students adequately for living in other cultural environments. The IaH-prepared student may be more knowledgeable of cultural theory and practices, have first-hand experience in IC interaction, and possess some skills to lessen the learning curve in a new culture, but there will be many experiences and lessons that cannot be learned at home. IC competency requires that an individual live a period within a culturally dissimilar environment, to engage his/her full cognitive, emotional, and behavioral self in the experience of being the “other.” What IaH can do, however, is help prepare at-home students to interact more successfully and appropriately with people from around the globe who come to their environment, as well as establish a firm foundation upon which future IC learning and skills development can take place. But this progress comes with conditions.

The data suggests that at-home persons might be able to develop IC knowledge and skills through interaction with dissimilar others IF

- a) they interact fully, mindfully, and regularly;
- b) they are observant of the verbal, nonverbal, and contextual issues that transpire during these interactions;
- c) they are consciously aware of their own communication styles, behavioral norms, preconceptions, expectations, attitudes, and assumptions, many of which are culturally influenced;
- d) they are self-reflexive in interaction and reflective after the fact in learning to identify and understand the patterns and issues at play in IC interaction, and develop insights into what is similar and what is different in how they and culturally distinct others think, feel, behave, value, communicate, expect, etc.;
- e) they take what they have learned from reflection and use that information to prepare for and influence their decisions, attitudes, and behaviors in future interactions and on an ongoing basis with the same individuals and/or others; and
- f) all of the processes above result in the transformation of their perspectives, attitudes, knowledge, affective capacities, and behavior.

For most individuals, foundational assistance in the form of theoretical knowledge and skills development in advance of interaction will facilitate the

experiential learning process. To determine if these findings might be equally applicable to a broader group of at-home individuals, the outcomes of this research would need to be investigated with different methodologies to assure generalizability of results.

The Engaged Motivation construct described in Section 5.5 defines the multifaceted emotional/interactional investment that must initiate and sustain the IC learning process within interaction. Voluntary interaction requires a broader concept of motivation because simple interest does not necessarily result in ongoing or significant interaction. When interaction takes place within formal or semi-structured programs, organizational support may be needed to assist at-home interactants in maintaining contact. Surely the effort and success of interaction fundamentally resides with the individual, and this research study indicates that those who did apply the Engaged Motivation construct were those who most benefited from their experiences. The Engaged Motivation model not only explains one essential process intimately involved in developing IC learning and skills development through interaction with dissimilar others at home but also provides direction in how someone can develop him/herself.

Overall, this study suggests that, for some individuals, a level of IC development can result from their innate talents, personality characteristics, and internal motivational forces. This progress took place in absence of any assistance from academic or behavioral training in IC knowledge or skills. Even the less-developed informants demonstrated some experiential learning from interaction with dissimilar others. Moreover, the interview process provided to some of these informants their first debriefing-type experience, which helped them see aspects and outcomes of their experiences that they had not noticed previously. I posit, however, that additional benefit—both in the depth and breadth of IC learning and skills development—can come from providing basic theory and directed skills development to these students.

#### **7.4 Future Research**

J. D. Johnson and Tuttle (1989) note that while results of research are normally treated as endings, they are in fact transitions to thinking anew about the next study in a line of research. Findings and discussions, then, are simply a way of pausing to making note of where one has been and what has learned, but, more

importantly, to provide clear direction to how and where we can go forward.

This study filled a gap in two distinct areas of the literature. In the internationalization of higher education literature, this study explored and assessed the potential for IC competency development by at-home students by means of voluntary social engagement with dissimilar others within the home environment. And, in the area of IC competency theory and practice, this study analyzed the various components suggested by theorists and researchers to arrive at a clearly articulated distinction between intercultural competency and intercultural communication competency, as well as advanced a fuller concept of the nature of motivation in interaction (the Engaged Motivation construct).

Yet, despite the key findings and proposed refinement in concepts and constructs, this study raised more questions than it answered. In the following subsections, a few topics for future research are suggested for the areas regarding IC interaction between non-mobile students (particularly Finns) and foreigners on the host campus; the general conditions surrounding IC learning and skills development through interaction; and the need for clarification of terms and concepts regarding terminology related to intercultural issues and competency, as well as regarding the theoretical model posed in this thesis.

#### **7.4.1 Future research on IC interaction and non-mobile students**

The limitations of this study provide clear areas that can be further researched to either corroborate or extend the findings of this study. The use of different subjects and/or methods provides obvious opportunities. For example, use of participant observation followed by in-depth interviews with observed informants, measuring the state of the informants prior to and following interaction, or gathering quantitative measures to establish the typicality of the informants in a qualitative study, would be just some options for future study. Further, a better understanding of the BP, in particular what is actually transpiring within the groups, would help identify factors that affect the interaction process—from the decision to join, or not, all the way to the natural end of the official cohort and beyond, if relationships continue. Longitudinal studies that investigate the nature of and IC learning processes through relationships formed by BP introductions, or that investigate the learning and interaction processes that result when the same participant takes part in multiple cohorts, would also be informative. Long-term study of how skills and

knowledge learned in the BP are applied in social and professional lives beyond university graduation would also be valuable.

Further study of individuals who appear successful in their IC interactions and relationship building, particularly those operating without the benefit of IC preparation, would be useful in identifying particular behaviors, skills, attitudes, and other factors that appear innate and facilitate competent communication. On the other hand, while research demonstrates that IC training (theory and practice) prior to interaction positively affects competent interaction (e.g., Bhawuk & Triandis, 1996; Byram, 1997), empirical study of whether and of what nature such IC preparation affects further IC knowledge and skills development toward competency would be quite useful. Investigations into the composition of such a preparatory program and what specific development tools could be useful, as well as whether any of these can be adequately applied by informants, would be worthy topics. Exploration of the individual expressions of commitment and motivation that affect interaction would help identify whether there are cultural differences at play, or if such individual perspectives result in some particular type of assertion about the other if expectations are not met. Further research into the culturally distinct embodiments of concepts such as commitment and motivation would be useful not only for creating voluntary programs but for assisting members of multicultural groups to understand and manage the impact of varying expressions of these constructs in any number of contexts.

Much of the prior research on intergroup interaction involves multiple representatives of primarily two groups. This research, however, focused on multiple representatives of the home culture interacting with varying numbers of a range of foreign persons. Investigation into whether the cultural background of one's buddies made a difference in the interaction or learning process or whether the multiple cultural patterns at play within any given group had impact would be good topics for further research. Moreover, since multicultural cooperation (and, by extension, IC learning and skills development) requires that participants understand the cultural backgrounds and identities of their peer participants (see Parkkinen & Sutinen, 1998), studying IC learning from interactions in which fewer cultural differences are at play but that informants are more consciously familiar with the backgrounds and identities of their coactors might provide deeper insight into the important cultural factors active in interaction as well as

whether informants are any better at applying more generally whatever is gleaned from interaction with the members of the specific cultures. Additionally, whether the cultural and communicative patterns of the coacting buddies could be influenced by, for example, Hofstede's (2001) dimensions of cultural variability, meaning would an individual learn more from a foreign buddy who was from an individualistic society rather than a communal society, a masculine as compared to feminine society, and so on, as compared to the dimensions for the home culture is worth exploring. The same question applies regarding the ramification of the Finnish culture on IC development of the at-home participants: Are there specific challenges or benefits expressed in the Finnish cultural dimensions socialized into the at-home individuals that might affect their perceptions, expectations and attitudes, communicative behaviors and norms, and so on, that affect the interaction and the ability of or process in how at-home Finns might perceive or react to IC interactions? This is particularly useful to know since few informants noted significant incidents in their interactions with foreign students. The study did not allow for determining whether this is reality, if the informants simply did not value such experiences, or if their memories had faded.

Finally, the use of English as a lingua franca in interaction by at-home students, particularly Finns, warrants further exploration. Is this a barrier to IC interaction at home and would another foreign language, perhaps, encourage more Finns to participate? What means can be identified to address any negative factors keeping Finns from interacting in a lingua franca? Would the results of this study be any different if the Finnish participants were from other language groups within Finland (i.e., Swedish-speaking or Sami minorities)? Is this behavior typical for at-home students if the lingua franca is not the home language? The IaH concept in Europe is built on the assumption that use of a lingua franca, often English, will facilitate interaction between domestic and foreign students. Is there validity to that assumption?

#### **7.4.2 Future research on IC learning and skills development from IC social interaction at home**

Understanding the attitudes, interaction processes, and adaptation means of native mono-ethnic citizens of emerging multicultural societies, particularly when the immigrants possess dramatically different cultural expressions than the domestic residents, is essential for providing a foundation for future research into

the adaptation and learning needs of the native citizens. Similarly, a deeper investigation into how and where IC learning takes place, the components of the learning, the affect of prior theoretical/skills preparation prior to interaction, and the effect of various learning styles on learning from experiential situations would improve understanding of and planning for future interaction in informal or semi-structured experiential settings. Relatedly, the identification of personal factors, such as prior learning on any number of topics, personality characteristics, and life experiences, such as short-term travel or interaction with dissimilar others as a child, would facilitate a fuller conceptualization of the individual learner. In addition, research into interaction in other venues—such as the Each One/Teach One programs, student union events, intradepartmental activities, as well as general situations like the classroom, internships, chat rooms, or e-mail lists—could shed light on how IC relationships and/or friendships are formed in interpersonal versus mediated environments and within different expectations of context, as well as what contextual factors are at play that affect IC learning from such activities. Whether the extended contact theory (see Liebkind & McAlister, 1999; Wright et al., 1997) applies at JyU as the result of volunteer social activity such as the BP needs to be investigated. What would be the IC outcome of such activity for the third-party Finn? Are there ways to influence this process for the benefit of all parties?

Finally, the perception that the Finnish exchange informants in this study had varying levels of IC abilities and development based on the nature of their personal network during their life abroad needs further objective investigation, since no conclusions can be drawn from just four individuals. It is quite possible that their responses actually reflect personality differences rather than any IC competency outcomes. Studying this phenomenon with a greater number of and diversity in informants, and with perhaps other methods, would help determine if the nature of one's network while abroad can truly affect the depth and breadth of an individual's IC learning within another culture. Such information could also affect planning in regard to IaH programming.

#### **7.4.3 Future research on IC competency issues**

In line with Chen and Starosta (1996), I strongly recommend standardizing the terminology of key concepts and constructs in intercultural studies to move the

field forward. With theorists and researchers understanding and applying IC terms in a similar fashion, research results would be more easily comparable. This is particularly crucial because many interculturalists are rightfully calling for researchers and theorists from non-Western cultures and languages to participate in the construction and understanding of the nature of intercultural practices, meaning these researchers will most likely conduct their studies in one language and then translate their results into a lingua franca (often English). Without clarity of concepts, the current circumstance of interpretation of results and conclusions being muddled by imprecise terminology will only be compounded. Clearly established terminology opens new avenues to research and interpretation across cultural boundaries, languages, and scientific disciplines.

The synthesis presented in Table 3.2 is a useful starting point for the consideration and evaluation. Research similar to Deardorff's (2004, 2006) Delphi study of IC competency components or Arasaratnam & Doerfel's (2005) use of semantic network analysis to seek a culture-general definition for ICC competency could further the discussion and clarification process. From the vantage of this research study, concepts that need further clarity involve the differences between competency and competence and their relationship to less stringent terms such as learning, development, growth, and effectiveness; between intercultural competency and intercultural communication competency; and regarding the core components of competency for the distinct intercultural and intercultural communication perspectives. Issues such as measurement, evaluation, and certification would also benefit from a field-wide discussion and agreement.

Separately, the Engaged Motivation construct was derived from the perception that some informants in this study behaved in a more engaged fashion as an expression of their motivation to interact with dissimilar others than did their peers. While all informants expressed motivation in the textbook definition, the informants who successfully established relationships, developed their IC learning and skills more clearly than their counterparts through the BP, and expressed satisfaction with the outcome of their interaction brought a greater breadth and depth to the motivation construct than interest, or even intention and action. As a theoretical model, the Engaged Motivation construct needs to be examined from a variety of perspectives and with diverse subjects and settings to test its validity in redefining the nature of motivation in IC interaction, and to determine if the



components proposed are appropriate, or if other components better define the interest, emotional, action, and commitment aspects of the construct.

### **7.5 Final Thoughts**

This thesis paper is the result of an arduous process of research and analysis. Despite the length, there is so much more information in the literature that could have been helpful in the discussion about attending to the at-home students within an IaH environment in HE and about the potential for IC learning taking place through social interaction with dissimilar others, but is necessarily limited here. I hope the most important elements are readily observable.

I sincerely appreciate the time and thoughtfulness of my informants, some of whom took real interest in the interview process. For some informants, the interview was their first experience of looking critically and reflectively at their experiences, and they found this enlightening and gratifying. I hope interview process has provided all of them new perspectives on, and motivation for, their intercultural growth, whether or not they ever take an exchange period. These individuals, if they are typical of their peers, bode well for the future growth and abilities of the Finnish young generation and, by extension, the Finnish society.

It would be interesting to see JyU take bold and innovative steps in creating a true IaH environment. This university possesses many strengths in regard to programs, institutes, and on-campus expertise that could be tapped to make this a reality. Such an environment could not only raise its international profile, but would also help chart the future toward truly authentic IC skills development and knowledge for a whole generation of Finnish university students. This would require that all faculties and departments acknowledge the need for and work towards revolutionizing the quality of and practices within their degree programs and research. Every major subject would benefit from an IaH revision, not only for the nature of the discipline but also for the development of the students within the programs. This process can also make JyU the flagship of internationalized institutions in Finland, and increase the likelihood of improved recruiting of high-caliber students, establishing high-quality international networks and partnerships, and in enhancing the outcomes of research. I encourage the Ministry of Education, which has been growing increasingly more aware and assertive in its pursuit of internationalization at all levels of education,

to seriously support JyU if that is the course that the university embraces. Finland can set the pace and serve as the beacon for the multiple values of IaH.

Most of all, I encourage the individual HE students. Expanding access to diverse experiences and perspectives are applicable not only for one's career but have personal benefits as well. Exploring the rich diversity of human perspectives and activity can empower one's approaches and behaviors in life, whether in Finland or abroad, and expand one's worldview and understanding. This study has demonstrated how seizing the opportunity to socially interact with dissimilar others can lead not only to deep and enduring friendships with people from other cultures but can further IC and personal learning and growth, and develop skills that have become essential in contemporary life. I hope all students are encouraged and motivated to get involved.

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## APPENDIX A: Buddy Project Flier

# BUDDIES

## All over the world



### Would you like to get to know Finnish and foreign Students?

Join the **Buddy Programme** and you will get to know students from different countries!

This programme is launched by Erasmus Student Network. The aim of the programme is to make it easier for Finnish and international students to get to know each other by forming mixed buddy groups of them. Hopefully, these groups of students will become "buddies" and will function as normal circles of friends

If you would like to be one of the international friends, contact Milla Haapala ([millaha@cc.jyu.fi](mailto:millaha@cc.jyu.fi)) by Friday 19.9. You can also join the programme in Internet in the ESN web page [www.jyu.fi/esn](http://www.jyu.fi/esn).

## APPENDIX B: Expanded Synthesis of Dimensions of Cultural Variability

Dimension	Expression	Source
<b>Innate Character of Human Nature</b>		
human nature orientation	Reflects how the members of the culture view the innate character of humans (evil, evil-and-good, good) and whether this nature is mutable.	Kluckhohn & Strodtbeck, 1961/1976: 11-12
<b>Humans versus Nature</b>		
man-nature orientation	Reflects the cultural members' attitude toward nature, such as the inevitability of acts of nature, whether or not there is a separation between humans, nature and the supernatural, or how humans seek to control nature (subjugation to nature, harmony with nature, mastery over nature).	Kluckhohn & Strodtbeck, 1961/1976: 13
harmony vs. mastery	Reflects how societies manage their relationships with the natural and social environments. Members of cultures that pursue harmony emphasize the need to fit into the world as it is, to understand and appreciate nature and society rather than change or exploit it, and value peaceful interaction and unity with and protection of the natural environment. Members of cultures who pursue mastery of the environment emphasize self-assertive actions in mastering, directing, or changing the natural or social environment to attain personal or group goals, and value ambition, risk-taking, competence, and success.	Schwartz, 2004; Schwartz, 2005
internal vs. external	Reflects relationship of self to nature as characteristic of control perceived in life and in destiny. Internalistic societies view nature as a complex entity that can be controlled by expertise, are "inner-directed," meaning they use personal resolution as the starting point for each action, and believe individuals can see and take advantage of opportunities as means to fulfillment. Members of externalistic societies view humankind as simply one of nature's forces and value harmony with the environment. These people do not believe they have much power to shape their destinies, and can be superstitious, and therefore they are "outer-directed" in adapting to circumstances deemed out of their control.	Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, n.d.
<b>Temporal Orientation</b>		
time orientation	Reflects how time is perceived and used in daily living, how time influences behaviors, and the members' attitudes toward/relationship regarding the events and people of the past, present, and future.	Kluckhohn & Strodtbeck, 1961/1976
monochronic and polychronic	Reflects two common systems for understanding and using the concept of time. People in monochronic cultures view time as linear, distinct units, and can compartmentalize its use; value the ability to schedule and devote attention to one task at a time; and perceive time as tangible, and with value that can be "spent" or "wasted." Members of polychronic cultures often are involved in multiple concurrent activities, value relationships more than time, and are less concerned about schedules or plans.	E.T. Hall, 1998: 60



sequential vs. synchronic	<p>Reflects not only the culture's approach toward structuring time, but also the importance members place on the dimensions of time. Synchronous cultures view time moving forward at a regular pace, marked by objective units; members structure their time to handle activities sequentially, view time as tangible, divisible, and valuable; and place emphasis on maintaining commitments and the schedule. Members of synchronous cultures usually undertake several tasks simultaneously; view time as flexible and intangible, and commitments and plans as desirable but adaptable; and value promptness as a reflection of the relationship rather than the clock.</p> <p>Past-oriented cultures believe the future repeats past experiences, and hold reverence for ancestors and the group's historical experiences. Present-oriented cultures place little value on past experiences or future potential and focus primarily on current realities. Future-oriented cultures direct their activity toward future potential; the past is not considered vital to the future outcomes, and current planning for the future is a major activity.</p>	Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, n.d.
<b>Mode of Human Activity</b>		
activity orientation	Reflects how a person is valued within a society--and what the role of activity is in human existence (being, being-in-becoming, or doing). Also, what is valued--spontaneity of action or action for accomplishment?	Kluckhohn & Strodtbeck, 1961/1976: 15-17
achievement vs. ascription	Reflects how cultures determine status among members of their society. In achievement-oriented cultures, members derive their status through accomplishments, and therefore an individual needs to prove worth repeatedly through action. In ascriptive cultures, members derive status from their birth, gender, wealth or age. This status is not earned but is bestowed on the individual simply on the basis of living.	Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, n.d.
uncertainty avoidance	Reflects the extent to which the unknown or the uncertainty in situations makes members of the culture feel threatened, how the culture establishes rules to guide life and decrease uncertainty, how tolerant members of the culture are toward deviant behavior or ideas, and how strangers are viewed and treated.	Hofstede, 2001: 161, 147
long-term / short-term orientation	Reflects how the members of the culture view the timing of rewards for activity. Long-term oriented cultures value future reward, and emphasize thrift and perseverance, whereas short-term oriented cultures value the present and the past, and emphasize respect for tradition, the preservation of "face," and the need to fulfill obligations. This dimension also reflects a culture's perspective on the search for virtue, the universality of guidelines regarding what is good or evil, and how truth and rationality are perceived and valued.	Hofstede, 2001: 359; Ting-Toomey, 1999: 74-75;
Confucian work dynamism	Reflects a person's orientation toward work and life and how these relate to others. On one end of the continuum are those who value persistence, thriftiness, a sense of shame, and status differences within interpersonal relationships, while those at the other end hold a deep appreciation for tradition, personal stability, maintaining the "face" of self and others, and balance in reciprocity regarding greetings, gifts, and favors.	Bond (1987, cited in Lustig & Koester, 1996: 141)

specific vs. diffuse	Reflects how cultural members view elements of events and activities around them. People in specific cultures approach situations by looking at the specific elements, and then view the whole as a sum of its parts. As a result, life is composed of many fairly independent elements and therefore interactions with others is well-defined and purposeful, relationships from one aspect of life are not necessarily related to other aspects of life, and they value hard facts, recognized standards, and contracts. Individuals from diffuse cultures approach situations by looking at the whole and view parts only in relation to the whole and, as a result, the sum is greater than the elements. As a result, even though it might be difficult to get to know a member of this culture, once accepted, the friend is involved in all areas of life, and therefore style, trust, understanding, demeanor, and other ways of acting and being are highly valued.	Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, n.d.
<b>Mode of Human Relationships</b>		
relational orientation	Reflects the cultural members' responsibility toward or relationship (lineal, collateral, or individualistic) with family members, extended family, in-group members, and out-group members.	Kluckhohn & Strodtbeck, 1961/1976: 17-19
individualism / collectivism	Reflects the role of the individual within the community and the responsibility of the individual to others within the community, how members of cultures view themselves and their personal goals in relation to others, how the individual's behavior is viewed and managed by others, and how wide one's web of affiliation is with others. In individualistic societies, the ties among individuals are loose and people primarily take care of themselves and their immediate family, whereas in collectivistic societies, people are born into cohesive in-groups which protect them throughout their lives in exchange for complete loyalty to the group.	Hofstede, 2001: 225; Gudykunst & Matsumoto, 1996: 21, 23; Lustig and Koester, 1996: 138-139; Ting-Toomey, 1999: 67-69
integration	Reflects the elements that undergird a sense of social stability. Behaviors are related to the expression tolerance, interpersonal harmony, intergroup solidarity, and noncompetitiveness. (Similar to Hofstede's individualism-collectivism dimension)	Bond (1987, cited in Lustig & Koester, 1996: 141)
autonomy vs. embeddedness	Reflects the boundaries between the person and the group. Members of autonomous cultures are encouraged to cultivate and express their own feelings, preferences, ideas, talents and abilities, and find meaning in their own uniqueness; these values are embodied within intellectual autonomy and affective autonomy. Members of embedded cultures find meaning in life through social relationships, shared goals, and group identity, and emphasize maintaining the status quo, social order, respect for tradition, obedience, and wisdom.	Schwartz, 2004; Schwartz, 2005
individualism vs. communitarianism	Reflects how members of a society view themselves in relation to others. In individualistic societies, people value the individual over the community, expressed through emphasis on individual choice, happiness, fulfillment and welfare, and care primarily for themselves and their families. Communitarian cultures, however, emphasize that people are born into families, and therefore they place the community as a priority, and emphasize the responsibility of individuals to serve society, to care for others, and act in ways that do not upset society; individual needs are cared for "naturally."	Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, n.d.
power distance	Reflects the extent to which less powerful members of a culture accept or expect that power is distributed unequally among the members of that society, and finds expression in the hierarchical or egalitarian nature of the society, the generational relationships within families, and the appropriateness of emotional expression in certain relationships or situations.	Hofstede, 2001: 98

egalitarianism vs. hierarchy	Reflects the behavior considered responsible in preserving the social fabric and managing interdependencies. Members of egalitarian cultures view others as moral equals, seek to cooperate, are concerned with everyone's welfare, and value equality, responsibility, honesty and social justice. Members of hierarchical cultures rely on a system of ascribed roles to ensure responsible behavior, validates unequal distribution of power and resources, and value authority, social power, humility and wealth.	Schwartz, 2004; Schwartz, 2005
universalism vs. particularism	Reflects how members of the culture expect rules and codes to be applied. In universalistic cultures, people believe that rules, codes, standards and values take precedence over the particular needs of individuals, even family and friends: Rules apply equally to every member of the society and exceptions weaken the rule. Members of particularistic societies value human friendship, unique situations and achievements, and value the "spirit" of the law as opposed to the "letter" of the law.	Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, n.d.
masculinity / femininity	Reflects the gender-based expectations for the behaviors of men and women in societies (particularly regarding gender roles), how success is viewed, how the nature of interaction and equality between the sexes is viewed, and the nature of interpersonal encouragement, support and nurturance.	Hofstede, 2001: 297
<b>Communicative or Emotional Expressiveness</b>		
high-context vs. low-context communication	Reflects the effect of context on meaning within interaction. Members of cultures that use high-context communication view that most of the information of a message is already within the recipient while very little information is explicit in the transmitted code, and the onus is on the recipient to derive meaning from the context, participants, and from within him/herself. Members of low-context cultures communicate explicitly, with the majority of the information encoded within the message; the onus is on the sender to embed meaning.	Hall, 1998: 61
human-heartedness	Reflects the expression of gentleness, compassion, patience, kindness, and courtesy toward others.	Bond (1987, cited in Lustig & Koester, 1996: 141)
affective vs. neutral	Reflects the acceptability of emotional displays by members of the culture. In affective cultures, the display of emotion is acceptable, whereas in neutral cultures, members are taught that it is unacceptable to show one's feelings overtly and that emotional display can erode one's power to interest others; they learn to control their emotional expressiveness.	Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, n.d.
moral discipline	Reflects the elements regarding one's restraint and moderation in daily activities. Those high in this dimension tend to regard personal desires as a negative attribute and strive to keep themselves disinterested and pure in activities and relationships. (Similar to Hofstede's power distance dimension)	Bond (1987, cited in Lustig & Koester, 1996: 141)

## APPENDIX C: General Questions for All Informants

### (Interview Questions, revised)

- ◇ Would you please state your name, so that I can identify the tape?
- ◇ And have you read and signed the permission slip agreeing to this interview and the use of quotes from our interview as part of the study?
- ◇ Are you a native Finn? Are your immediate ancestors native Finns?
- ◇ How old are you? What is your major?
- ◇ How many years have you been studying at the university level? all at JYU?
  
- ◇ Have you ever lived in a country other than Finland? (Details)
- ◇ Have you ever traveled to a country outside of Finland? (Details)
- ◇ Do you intend to travel to another country at some point? (Details)
- ◇ Do you intend to live in another country at some point? (Details) Why?
  
- ◇ Have you taken any communication courses? (Details)
- ◇ Have you taken any IC or similar courses? (Details)
  
- ◇ Is this the first time you've participated in the Buddy Program? (Details)
- ◇ Describe what your group is like (number of Finns/international students; male/female ratio; where international students from; exchange students or degree students; how long will they be in Finland, etc.)
- ◇ Why did you participate in this Buddy Program?
- ◇ What were your expectations of the program?
- ◇ How did your orientation evening go with your international buddies?
- ◇ How did you feel at the orientation evening? How about at the first meeting afterward? And now?
- ◇ Describe the process of building relationships with your other buddies, particularly the international buddies.
  
- ◇ How would you describe the workings of the group?
- ◇ What is going well? Are there problems, incidents?
- ◇ Have you heard of any incidents or issues with other buddies this year?
- ◇ If you had had a problem with interacting with an international student, do you think there is someplace on campus that could have assisted you in improving with that?
- ◇ Have you noticed any difference in the way you interact with the international students versus, say, your Finnish buddies or your Finnish friends?
- ◇ How did you deal with any of the differences that you perceived?
- ◇ What emotions do you feel during the interactions? What about thoughts that might cross your mind?
- ◇ Do you have any "system" or process that might help you interact well with people of other cultures?
- ◇ What characteristics, in your opinion, are essential to good communication with the international students?

- ◇ Did you ever perceive situations in which the international students were reacting to any comment, thought or action you were doing?
- ◇ Why do you think certain groups work and others don't?
- ◇ How was it communicating in a second language? Did it help or hurt group cohesion?
  
- ◇ How would you describe culture?
- ◇ Did you have any preconceptions about what people from your buddy group's cultures are like? How has interacting with someone from that culture affected those preconceptions?
- ◇ Did you ever "step back" during the course of your buddy evenings and look at how the communication was going? If so, what did you see? How did you feel?
- ◇ Do you think you changed any part of your behavior or communication in any way to interact with international students, are particularly different than how you might deal with Finns?
- ◇ What did you learn about other cultures through the Buddy Project (the French, Italians, etc., keeping in mind that one individual does not define a culture)?
- ◇ Did you feel prepared to undertake this program? Why?
- ◇ What about now?
- ◇ What skills do you think are necessary to interact well with people from other cultures?
  
- ◇ Are there any things you'd change about the program?
- ◇ What are your overall impressions about the program?
- ◇ Did you learn anything that surprised you? Did you not learn something that you wanted to?
- ◇ Now that this cohort group is officially over, what now? Do you plan to keep in contact with your international buddies?
- ◇ Do you intend to participate in future cohort groups of this program?
- ◇ How do you think this experience has helped you as a person?
- ◇ Are there uses for this experience in your future?
  
- ◇ Did you learn anything about your own culture as a result of this program?
- ◇ If you could use a magic wand to make your buddy experience more beneficial for YOU, how would change it and why? How about making it more useful for your future?
- ◇ Do you think more formal, larger get-togethers would be helpful in getting Finns and international students together?
- ◇ Do or did you participate in other programs on campus that brought international students together with Finns (EOTO, tutor program, Stammtisches, etc.?)
- ◇ Have you met international students through other channels at the university? (Explain) And how would you characterize those relationships? Are you keeping in contact with them? How is this experience different from your buddy experience?
- ◇ I've noticed that Finnish men are not as active in this activity as are the women. What does that mean for the process? And why do you think they might not participate at a higher rate?

**After explaining thesis topic:**

- ◇ If you had an opportunity to get a short, couple of hours, introduction into intercultural skills before the buddy group started, would you have taken it?
- ◇ If this course has been required, would you have still joined the buddy project?
- ◇ What if there was an opportunity to reflect with others when the semester was over?
- ◇ Even if the buddy project does help develop intercultural skills, is it a concern that your intercultural experience would be primarily with other Europeans rather than from more the distinct cultures that more of the immigrants are from?
- ◇ Do you feel this experience has prepared you in any way to deal with a multicultural society, particularly as Finland is slowly moving in that direction? How might the program be more of that?
- ◇ When I did my initial questionnaire, to find out who was in the program, I received just 38 responses from more than 100 Finns participating. About 2/3 had already been abroad for at least 3 months. The other third had not gone abroad yet, but all but one intended to. Do you think this program draws to it people who see they will go abroad? Why?
- ◇ If yes above, why do you think those who don't intend to go abroad don't participate? How might we encourage them to?
- ◇ Now that you know the topic of my thesis and how this research fits in, is there anything you'd want to say to help me take your buddy experience into this perspective?
  
- ◇ Is there something you thought I'd ask, but didn't?

**(For those who have gone abroad)**

- ◇ Have you learned anything through this experience that expands your study abroad growth?
- ◇ If you had never had a study abroad experience, do you feel you would be prepared to interact well with people of other cultures simply from the buddy project?
- ◇ How might the program be changed specifically to provide more beneficial outcomes for those who will not go abroad?
- ◇ How do you think your time abroad changed how you interacted with the Int'l students in your buddy group?
- ◇ Did you notice any behavior by others in your group that you might not have noticed had you not lived abroad for a while?

**APPENDIX D: Informed Consent Form**

I, \_\_\_\_\_ (*name printed*), have voluntarily agreed to participate in an interview conducted by Barbara J. Crawford on \_\_\_\_\_ (*date*) as part of her master's degree thesis of the Buddy Project at the University of Jyväskylä. I understand that what I say can be used, in whole or in part, in the completion of the study. Additionally, I understand that I may be directly quoted, in whole or in part, in the subsequent thesis paper, although my identity will be concealed. I also understand that the information and data gained by this researcher in this project may be used in future studies by this researcher, but my identity will remain concealed.

\_\_\_\_\_  
(signature)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(date)

**APPENDIX E: DATA ANALYSIS CODED TERMS, and CATEGORIES**

<b>CATEGORY</b>	<b>CODED TERM</b>	<b>DESCRIPTION</b>
<b>BP Experience</b>	Barriers2Interaction	Any barriers to interpersonal, not group, interaction
	BPAgain	If and why would participate in BP again
	BPExpectations	Reasons for participating; expectation of the program; what they wanted from the experience of interacting with foreign peers, etc.
	BPPurpose	What is actual purpose of BP, and is it not currently (or shouldn't be)
	BPPurpose_Exchange	If BP is a "training ground" for future exchange or experiences in other international arenas
	FewFinns	Why so few Finns participate, (but recognizing program couldn't accommodate many more)
	FewMen	Disproportionate number of women to men in BP participation; what affect, if any, this has on interaction; thoughts on why imbalance exists or how to change it, if desired.
	GroupDynamics	How chemistry and other interpersonal factors (leadership; commitment) affect group
	GroupMakeup	The nationalities of international buddies in group/s (past and present)
	GroupWorkings	How the group actually worked: how often met, what they did, etc.
	HostGuestRelationship	Aspects of how being a host or guest affects relationship building
	IngroupOutgoup	Issues of how Finns view other groups or other groups view Finns and how that affects interaction
	OrganizedVsNatural	Nature of organized groups vs. natural meetings; includes BP and other means of meeting (e.g., class, at bar, etc.)
	WhyGroupsFail	Reasons why groups fall apart.
<b>BP Outcomes</b>	BPValue2Abroad	How BP experience may affect living abroad
	CareerBenefit	How BP experience (learning) can benefit their career or affect future plans
	ExpandingICNetwork	How contacts expand beyond the university and may continue to exist later in life, allowing further/broader IC interaction and continued IC learning
	ICFriends	Includes nature of, the process of making, definition of friends, as well as the desire to have them
	RelationshipLevel	How deep is the relationship with IC others; how is this relationship assessed (i.e., satisfaction/dissatisfaction with depth)
	LongtermRelationship	Whether they view these relationships as long-term (indicating depth/connection)
	PersonalBenefit	What they personally benefited from BP experience



<b>CATEGORY</b>	<b>CODED TERM</b>	<b>DESCRIPTION</b>
<b>IC Perspectives</b>	AwarenessOfCulture	Aware that something exists and they name it as culture; includes definition of culture
	CulturesNoDifferent	Whether they think all cultures are about the same or are distinct
	EuropeVsWorld	Are Europeans more alike than different, and how this affects interaction and IC learning
	Experience2Understanding	How BP experience helped them understand and apply IC learning and skills
	ICBenefitsOfBP	The various IC benefits of BP participation
	ICEmpowered	Comments that indicate they feel able to interact well interculturally; includes positive experiences encouraging more interaction
	ICExpectation	What IC skills/insights they expect from interacting with culturally dissimilar others
	ICExpectations_Others	What they expect in interacting with culturally dissimilar others
	ICLearning	Specific points of IC knowledge learned (conceptual); demonstrations that they learned something
	ICSkills	Specific IC skills learned and applied (concrete); can name some skills
	ICTraits	Traits named as necessary for IC interaction and communication
	LearnedAnotherCulture	Learned something new/different about another culture through interaction
	LearnedByDoing	Comments that they learned through action rather than from reading/being taught
	Motivation	Anything that indicates that they were driven to learn, interact, reflect, be committed, etc.
	MotivationOfOther	Any issue regarding the motivation in the other that affects interaction
	PerceivedChange	What changes did they see in themselves?
	PersonalityVsCulture	Whether the actions of others are perceived as result of the others' personality or culture; also interplay between personality and culture
	Reflection	Any references or inference to their reflecting (before, during, after) on actions, events, behaviors, perceptions, etc.
Self/ownCultureInsight	Comments that reflect perceptions of self from interaction	
SignificantIncident	Significant incident or particularly insightful comment	
Stereotype	Applying or recognizing stereotypes (positive or negative)	
<b>Preparation to Interact</b>	Prepared2Interaction	Felt they had skills, knowledge, ability to interact well with international friends
	PrepCourse	The value and/or interest in the proposed introductory/debriefing courses

<b>CATEGORY</b>	<b>CODE TERM</b>	<b>DESCRIPTION</b>
<b>Personal Characteristics</b>	Emotions	Emotions used in meeting (or avoiding) challenge of interaction; how emotions affect motivation, learning, application of IC knowledge/skills, etc.
	PersonalityVsLearning	Whether emotions, motivation, interest, etc. are personality traits or something learned
<b>BP and Exchange</b>	BPExperiencePostExchange	How BP experience is different because of time abroad; different perspective on things; difference in how one used to think, etc.
	BPVsExchange	How BP experience is different than that abroad
	ErasmusFoundation	Erasmus "characteristics" that affect interaction & BP; includes "Erasmus ghetto," mentality, exchange students hanging with their own,, etc.
	HomeVsAwayLifestyle	How living at home is different from living away and effects on interaction
	WhyExchange	Why they want an exchange experience and why and where they chose
	WhyNotExchange	Why they or their friends would NOT take an exchange
<b>Finnish Elements</b>	FinnLive&LetLive	Finns' "live & let live" attitude; don't presume that they can/should affect others; take problems in stride; not to worry; deal with issues with peers rather than through official channels/support
	FinnCommunicationStyle	How Finnish communication style affects interaction
	FinnCulture	"Typical" Finns, and other elements of culture affecting interaction
	FinnFriendEffect	How BP experience expands to Finnish friends
	MulticulturalFinland	Whether/how BP prepares them to live in multicultural Finland
<b>Language</b>	InterviewEnglish	How interview in English affected their answers; also examples of problems in expression that appear related to speaking in 2nd language
	LanguageUse	Issues of 2nd language use in BP/IC interaction
<b>Demographics</b>	OtherCulturesKnown	Familiarity with other cultures
	ICAvenues	Participated in other programs/opportunities for IC interaction on/off campus
	PreviousExperience	Previous experience, attempts at interaction (successful or unsuccessful); does not include travel experiences nor exchange experiences
	PriorICSkillsDevelopment	What courses, etc., taken; how they view theory vs. practice, etc.
	Travel	Where, when, and anything to do with experiences while traveling
<b>Misc.</b>		Things of significance that fit other categories