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Talking to Strangers: A Mixed-Methods Evaluation Study of an Intercultural Intervention

Andrew Peter Camilleri
DePaul University, acamille@depaul.edu

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Talking to Strangers:
A Mixed-Methods Evaluation of
an Intercultural Intervention

A Dissertation

Presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements for
the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy
in Community Psychology

Presented to

The Department of Psychology

College of Science and Health

DePaul University

Chicago, Illinois

By

Andrew P. Camilleri

Dissertation Committee

Dn. Joseph R. Ferrari, PhD, Chairperson

Megan Greeson, PhD

Olya Glantsman, PhD

GianMario Besana, PhD.

Leah Bryant, PhD.

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Biography

Andrew Peter Camilleri (he/him) was born in Pieta`, Malta, January 5th, 1988. Andrew graduated from University of Malta, Malta and received his Bachelor of Laws degree in Law with a minor in Philosophy. He subsequently received a Doctorate in Laws at the University of Malta, Malta and obtained a Master of Science in Conflict Analysis and Resolution from George Mason University in Fairfax, Virginia. Andrew received his Master of Arts in Community Psychology from DePaul University in 2023.

Abstract

The globalized nature of the world we live in, and the rapidly evolving technologies we have become accustomed to, have resulted in a highly interconnected worlds where meeting persons hailing from different cultural backgrounds is not only possible but highly probable. Consequently, intercultural communication is an important and prized competence which allows for meaningful encounters that lead to better relationship outcomes. An important context where these dynamics often play out are educational institutions especially due their active recruitment of international students. Despite such a trend and the resulting greater likelihood of intercultural encounters, most students lack intercultural communication and relationship building skills. Such lack of intercultural competence often results in discrimination and misunderstandings between persons with significantly different cultural identities.

The present study evaluated an intercultural intervention held at a mid-size college in a Midwestern state in the United States of America. Utilizing the embedded approach within mixed methodology, the study assessed whether and how intercultural intervention achieved its goals in improving intercultural communication in its participants as well as fostering friendships between participants and international students.

The quantitative component ascertained three hypotheses, namely that; 1) participants' post personal report of intercultural communication apprehension (PRICA: Neuliep & McCroskey, 1997) scores were statistically lower post intervention; 2) that friendship across several dimensions had increased as a result of the intervention; and, 3) that there were no statistically significant differences in post-intervention PRICA scores throughout the various years the program was offered. A *paired samples T-test* assessed Hypothesis 1, while a Wilcoxon signed rank analysis was utilized to analyze differences in

friendship, and an *ANOVA* was utilized to identify any significant differences in mean post-intervention PRICA scores over the years. Results indicated that there were no significant differences between pre and post reports for intercultural communication apprehensions, as well no incremental differences in rates of friendships. Additionally, there were no statistically significant differences between the post scores for intercultural communication apprehension between the different years. Such a result indicated that 2 of our 3 hypotheses were rejected.

In the qualitative component, a second study, 14 former participants within the program were interviewed to understand the impact of the program on their intercultural communication and friendships with international students. Utilizing thematic analysis, transcripts of the interview were analyzed in an open-coding format to create codes. Once the codes were identified, they were categorized in themes and sub-themes and the transcript re-analyzed using the new themes and sub-themes. Four themes emerged from the analysis, namely: 1) coming into the program; 2) how the program achieved its goals; 3) impacts; and, 4) obstacles. Results indicated that overall improvement in intercultural communication was achieved but that friendship with international students was not meaningfully achieved. Participants offered several categories of reasons why this was the case, including cultural, logistical, programmatic, Covid-19, and demographic barriers.

Despite an imperfect convergence, results indicated that while a positive impact on intercultural communication was achieved through various events and the work culture of the program, meaningful increases in friendship between program participants and international students' objective were not achieved. Implications and recommendations were discussed.

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Introduction

The interconnectivity afforded by current and emerging technologies has resulted in a more globalized and multicultural world (Hong & Cheon, 2017, Autio et al., 2021). Consequently, the ability to nurture intercultural communication and competence becomes an often-prized objective (Barrett, 2013), particularly at educational institutions where intercultural encounters are more likely to occur, especially because of their active recruitment of international students (Cushner, 2015; Nastasi, 2017; Parkhouse et al., 2016). Despite the high likelihood of intercultural encounters, however, adult students lack intercultural competence and skills (Cushner, 2015; Peng et al., 2015; Yarosh et al., 2018). Lack of intercultural competence has been associated with discrimination and misunderstandings between persons of different cultural backgrounds (Barrett, 2013).

The present study evaluated an educational program at a private institute of higher education, located in the Midwest USA. The target program provided freshmen college students an opportunity to engage in an internship style experience within a specific department, with the present study focusing on International Student and Scholar Services. The aim of this program was to aid in the development of intercultural communication skills for incoming students as they provide support for international students (Drehle, 2022). In particular, the present proposed study explored two dimensions relevant for intercultural communication, namely: *intercultural communication apprehension* and the *formation of friendships* between program participants and international students.

In the following sections the conceptual frameworks will be set out, starting with internships and how these relate (or do not) to employability. Moving on from there an intercultural intervention conceptual framework will be considered by identifying the main factors that impact such interventions, namely the barriers that international students face to integrate, communicate, and form friendships with domestic students, and the reasons

provided by the literature for reticence shown by host students to form friendships with international students. Furthermore, this interaction was contextualized by understanding the most current debates on the role of International Student Services within Higher Education Institutions and in-depth analysis of the factors promoting and inhibiting intercultural communication, with a specific emphasis on intercultural communication apprehension. Finally, the findings were interpreted through a lens of the primary values and strengths of the field of community psychology.

Internships: What Role Do They Play for First Year Students?

Over the last few decades, internships have experienced an exponential rise in perceived importance and may be seen as a necessary first step to a career within the United States (Shoenfelt et al., 2013; Knouse et al., 1999). Higher Education Institutions (HEI), particularly in the United States, quickly harnessed this perception and frequently marketed internships as one of the commodities offered to students and their parents as part of the educational package (Einstein, 2015). Additionally, HEI's created entire infrastructures dedicated to the success and promotion of internships, including access to internship databases, career counseling, sessions or workshops, and access to expert faculty (Einstein, 2015). Furthermore, universities promoted their proximity to major cities or hubs which would therefore result in a greater likelihood for more prestigious internships (Einstein, 2015).

Internships were in existence since the nineteenth century (Auburn, 2007) and may take many forms including apprenticeships, cooperative education, experimental learning, field experience, industrial placement, placement learning, practica, sandwich courses (a term typically used within the UK for courses that have some form of a mandatory internship or placement as a condition for graduation), service learning, and workplace learning (Leslie 1991; Auburn et al., 1993; Auburn 2007, Wan et. al, 2013). Among the many alleged

advantages that internships confer: 1) expertise in the subject matter of the internships (Scholz et al., 2004), 2) development of entrepreneurial flair (Della Volpe et al., 2016), 3) social capital, in terms of networks and connection to employers and employment (Klein & Weiss, 2011), and 4) a knowledge of the informal and formal norms that exist within formal employment (Helyer & Lee, 2014).

Employability as the ultimate goal of internships. As stated previously, one of the key benefits of internships is employability, defined as the ability enter to into employment or be able to get new employment if required (Hogan et al., 2013). Despite the flourish of literature explaining why employability may be attractive to students, few empirical studies ascertained the actual causal link between internships and employability. Several studies, for instance, focused on student perceptions and satisfaction relating to the experience itself. Other studies explored long-term impact (for example Kim & Park, 2013, Tse, 2010, Rengenathan et al., 2010) sometimes using psychometric “stand-ins” such as using Liu and colleagues (2006) 19-item scale involving student perceptions of improved competencies instead of actual employment rates (Chen et al., 2018).

The few empirical studies on the impact of internships on employability in the published literature found differing results. Klein and Weiss (2011) found that there was no significant difference between those who engaged in mandatory internships (as per the German educational system) and those who did not. In two studies Silva and colleagues (2016, 2018) found that Portuguese internships presented significant advantages, particularly to students in polytechnic institutions. Reconciling these contradictory findings is not difficult given that internships may be impacted by unique historic events such as recessions. Furthermore, unique factors in different countries such as unemployment rate and types of industry available will impact the outcome of employability. Nonetheless, evaluators should heed the warning provided by Chillias and colleagues (2015) and ensure assumptions related

to internships, keep in mind that “universities are perhaps too complacent in their evaluation of internships and wedded to the notion that any work experience is a good experience for their students.” (p. 13).

Equity considerations in internships. As with many social interventions, internships should not be immune from considerations of equity, particularly when their promotion is near universal in HEI’s. One of the most obvious pitfalls that needs to be ascertained is that internships do not become a form of cheap labor that replaces stable and well-paying jobs using the near-infinite supply of students (Chillas et al., 2015). Additionally, internships might not impact all who experience them equally therefore, whenever promoting internships, consideration must be made of who can fully benefit from these internships. In their qualitative work, Allen and colleagues (2013) found that most internships are arbiters of class, race and ability, ensuring that middle-class jobs go to middle-class students. Such markers of privilege can be seen to be reproduced by the quality of internships that are available to those who are well connected, wealthy and white (Allen et al., 2013). Klein and Weiss (2011) termed this problem the selection problem which essentially states that internships will simply reproduce the class, race and ability outcomes that would occur anyway in the job market. Considerations of equity are therefore paramount to ensure that better educational and social mobility outcomes are ensured through internships as opposed to becoming a neo-liberal mis-en-scene.

Since this study will be evaluating a program housed within a larger employability initiative, a rigorous and critical understanding of student employability is important. Given the difficulties mentioned above in measuring employability and that other outcomes can be achieved with an internship, in this evaluation, we will not be looking at employability but rather whether there was an increase in intercultural communication competence and whether friendships were formed with international students.

International Students: Understanding Barriers to Intercultural Communication

International students were defined by Paige (1990) as any “*individual who temporarily reside in a country other than their country of citizenship or permanent residence in order to participate in international educational exchange as students, teacher and researchers*” p 162.). While not all international students have intentions of returning to their country of origin or move to a third country after the educational experience Paige’s point is well received in that as Berry (1990) corroborates, international students have different psychological reactions to host culture than other types of migrants such as refugees.

International students’ numbers increased since the 1950s, with the largest number of students registered in 2019-20 at 1.1 million student or 6% of the entire student body within the United States (Israel & Batlova, 2021). The largest numbers of international student from the previously mentioned figure were China (35%), India (18%), South Korea (5%) and Saudi Arabia (3%) (Israel & Batlova, 2021)

Some of the major issues that permeate the lived experience of international students were identified over a century ago, with the Committee on Friendly Relations Among Foreign Students highlighting a few of these issues as early as in 1922 (Hammer, 1992). Some of the issues international students face that emerge from the literature include: 1) difficulties surrounding academic and curricular issues (Hammer, 1992), 2) language issues (Yeh & Inose, 2003, Swagler & Ellis, 2003, Poyrazli et. al, 2004, Poyrazli & Grahame, 2007, Dao et al., 2007) 3) economic distress (Yeh & Inose, 2003), 4) housing difficulties (Glantsman et al., 2021) , 5) obstacles to social acceptance by host peers (McClure 2007; Sawir et al. 2008; Sherry et al., 2010), 6) issues of racial prejudice (Bonazzo & Wong, 2007, Constantine et al., 2005, Hanassab, 2006; Lee & Rice, 2007; Yakaboski, et al., 2018), 7) homesickness (Tochkov et al., 2010) and, 8) lack of institutional support (Misra et al., 2003) .

Such experiences negatively impacted the adjustment of international students into US HEI (Tan & Simpson, 2008) and consequent academic attainment (Poyrazli and Kavanaugh, 2006), as well as lowering levels of education satisfaction (Wasdworth et al., 2008). International students also experience increased acculturative stress (Yeh & Inose, 2003), depressive feelings (Dao et. al, 2007) and disorders (Han et al., 2013), eating disorders (Kawamoto et al., 2018) and experience high levels of psychological distress and mental health concerns (Mori, 2000; Pedersen, 1991; Prieto-Welch, 2016; Zhang & Goodson, 2011, Zhou et al., 2022). Furthermore, they are less likely to seek help when they are struggling (Zhou et al., 2022). Compounded with restrictive visas (Israel & Batlova, 2001) the likelihood of financial exploitation and being perceived as “cash cows” is high (Altbach & Teichler, 2001). Given that one of the indirect parties within the program evaluated is international students, it is important to understand the lived experience of international students. Assessing whether intercultural communication occurred requires a contextual understanding of the lived realities of all parties involved.

International student services as facilitators of acculturation, or simply

“immigration police”?: International Students Services (ISS), or organizations within HEI’s with similar nomenclature, generally facilitate academic and nonacademic support to international students (Hammer, 1992). They aim to advise international students in their visa and immigration status while within the United States, as well as support the academic, social, and cultural transitions required of international students (Newsome & Cooper, 2016). As international students increased year-on-year, ISS has become a specialized and niche operation within HEI’s functioning (Ping, 1999).

Visa and immigration requirements are set by federal statute and are therefore operationally clear to execute. However, facilitating international student integration and acculturation is a much more abstract and variable aspect of the ISS’s mission. Culturally

responsive work carried by ISS should 1) empower students to manage issues adapting to American culture (Hammer, 1992), 2) support students by providing Multicultural psychological and adjustment counselling services (Mori, 2000; Quintrell & Westwood, 1994, Ammigan, 2019), provide information and broker communication to international students (Hammer, 1992), and help international students proactively by preparing host students and the university community as a whole for the reception of international students (Cho & Yu. 2015).

Carrying out these activities was severely complicated by the Covid-19 pandemic which required that ISS operations recalibrate to provide services online to support international students (Veerasamy & Ammigan, 2022). The pivot required from ISS offices was often insufficient, with most resources being focused on providing service remotely (Veerasamy & Ammigan, 2022). Unfortunately, this did little by way of providing the psychological resources required for a vulnerable population who could not return home in many instances (Veerasamy & Ammigan, 2022). Given that the site of the intervention being evaluated is the International Students and Scholar Services within a large private Midwest University, understanding the mission of ISS is paramount to situate the evaluation that will be carried out in this study appropriately. The values and resources dedicated to this intervention because of how this particular ISS understands its mission will most likely impact the outcome of this intervention and may account for the success or otherwise of the intervention.

Relational communication. An important distinction within communication literature is the distinction between the content aspects of communication which primarily relate to the substance of the message and its relational aspects (Dillard et al., 1999). Relational communication alternatively focuses on the relationship between participants and the impact or conditions of that relationship (Dillard et al., 1999). Literature defining this

posits two fundamental aspects, namely *appropriateness* and *effectiveness* (Rubin & Martin, 1983). Appropriateness relates to whether the communication fits into situational rules, with communication that defies such a rule being either intentional or an unintentional defiance of misunderstood rules (Rubin & Martin, 1983). Effectiveness on the other hand is defined as the impact of the communication to achieve a particular outcome (Rubin & Martin, 1983). Such concepts are particularly salient within communication between domestic and international students given the power disparities that exists between both types of students and the norm making ability of domestic students given their greater status and familiarity with the native context.

Intercultural communication. With the advent of globalization and mass migration, intercultural communication has come to play an important role in mediating relationships between persons with varied linguistic and cultural backgrounds (Ou & Gu, 2020). In particular, within HEI's, language and communication issues play an important role in international and domestic students' interaction and academic experiences (Baker, 2016; Jackson, 2008). Strong intercultural communication skills facilitate the acculturative process and friendship-making process for international students, providing key protective buffers and aid in contributing to satisfaction, contentment, social support as well as academic success for international students (Bochner et al., 1985; Kudo & Simkin, 2003; Ying, 2002).

Intercultural communication has been defined as the communicative ability to interact with a culture that is not one's own (Fantini, 2020). Neuliep (2020) proposed that the benefits of such an ability are great as it led to "healthier communities; increased international, national, and local commerce; reduced conflict; and personal growth through increased tolerance." (p. 37). Furthermore, Neuliep (2020) claimed that as one understands other cultures, a person begins to understand further their own culture. Permeating the field of intercultural communication according to Neuliep (2020) are several assumptions namely: 1)

intercultural communication poses challenges as when persons coming from different cultures communicate, what is meant is not always what is understood by the other party 2) Intercultural communication relies heavily on non-verbal communication and despite greater facility in communication if both speakers can speak a language fluently, many non-verbal elements will affect such a relationship. 3) Intercultural communication frequently involves a clash around the values placed on communication styles, such as direct or indirect styles of communication and collectivistic and individualistic approaches 4) intercultural communication will frequently hinge around stereotypes of associations we have around particular identities rather than seeing each individual as a unique expression and will therefore tailor our communication accordingly 5) intercultural communication goes through phases. Neuliep (2020) mentions three distinct phases namely stress, adaptation and growth. Elaborating on this process Ilie (2019) claims that there are a number of skills that allow for this to happen including, self-awareness, empathy, adaptability, tolerance of difference and self-respect. Such a list provides key insights for evaluating whether intercultural interventions are successful.

Despite the initially cohesive account provided by Neuliep (2020), several authors critiqued some of the underlying assumptions behind intercultural communication. Piller (2012), for instance, aimed at the assumption that culture is an essentialized monolithic property of an individual. In fact, Samovar and Porter (2003, as cited in Piller, 2012) claimed culture is “ubiquitous, multidimensional, complex and pervasive” (p.5) and is continuously in flux. Such an insight is important if intercultural communication is to become more than the mixing of stereotypes i.e., assigning particular attributes based simply on nationality and metastereotypes i.e., how one expects to be perceived and treated on the basis of belonging to a particular identity group.

Additionally, the field of intercultural communication is not immune from the social and political hierarchies that exist on a global level (R'Boul, 2021). Without acknowledgement socio-political and historical legacies of colonization and white, western supremacist practices, intercultural communication simply becomes an ethnocentric comparison of foreign cultures with one's own (R'boul, 2021). R'boul (2020) calls on the field of intercultural communication to open to new perspectives, methodologies and voices that deconstruct Western exclusivity. R'Boul (2020) also stated that the field of intercultural communication needed to move away from dubious dichotomies such as individualistic and collectivistic forms of communication while adopting more diverse outlooks on this form of communication from authors and researchers outside of the global north. Given that one of the main outcomes of the intervention is intercultural communication, understanding the theoretic construction of intercultural communication while being appreciative of critiques forwarded to the concept is important to ensure that an appropriate definition of intercultural communication is used, which subsequently impacts the outcome of the evaluation of the intervention. Such nuanced understanding of intercultural communication is thereby reflected in the chosen methodology which allows for a more inductive approach, through the qualitative component, which will subsequently allow for a critically nuanced understanding of the processes involved in intercultural communication.

Intercultural communication apprehension. Intercultural communication apprehension refers to anxiety frequently associated with communication between persons from different cultural or ethnic groups (Neuliep & Mcroskey, 1997). The apprehension might be real or anticipated, yet significantly impacts the relationship and may include stress and avoiding contact with others from an out-group (Neuliep, 2012; Neuliep & Ryan, 1998). The foundation of the intercultural communication apprehension may be found in the Anxiety/Uncertainty Management Theory (AUM) by Gudykunst (2005). AUM theory states that whenever persons encounter “strangers”, they are likely to experience anxiety and insecurity (Gudykunst, 2005). Such anxiety may lead to intercultural communication apprehension, which was negatively associated with the willingness to communicate with international peers (Lin & Rancer, 2003, Lu & Hsu, 2008, Matera & Catania, 2021) and was negatively associated with intercultural sensitivity (Chen, 2010). Such negative associations are particularly salient when negative metastereotypes as well as negative feelings and expectations about a particular intergroup interaction might lead to greater intercultural apprehension (Finchilescu, 2010, Imai, 2017).

Building on this body of literature, Neuliep and Mcroskey (1997) developed the *Intercultural Communication Apprehension Scale (ICA)*. ICA was associated positively with various types of uncertainty including that of future behavior, how the other will act, and how the actor will feel about a particular communication (Neuliep & Ryan, 1998). ICA has been negatively associated with responsive and assertive communicative behaviors (Neuliep & Ryan, 1998), intercultural willingness to communicate, and intercultural interactions (Lin & Rancer, 2003). For international students, ICA is particularly salient because persons scoring high in ICA tend to prefer intracultural interaction of intercultural strangers (Neuliep, 2012). For domestic students within Turkey, ICA was found to have cross-cultural reliability and validity (Ay et al., 2018).

ICA is not without its criticisms, however. For instance, the scale presumes that cultures are a reified homogenous object and that every individual aspect of the culture is personified by every individual within that culture (Alley-Young, 2005). Such a critique may be applied bi-directionally, the United States is not a homogenous culture, and neither are the cultures of international students. Furthermore, it presumes the universality of white western American cultural values on communication with a large emphasis on the spoken form of communication (Alley-Young, 2005). As an example, studies into Athabascan populations reveal that different cultural values permeate the nuances of speech, with Athabascan frowning on persons who talk too much and are prone to boasting, instead preferring longer period of silence between speech turns (Scollon & Scollon, 1981). Persons holding values similar to Athabascan populations might score highly on ICA however might not be experiencing the accompanying anxiety which normally associated with intercultural communication apprehension, but simply be less talkative.

Ethnocentrism is a construct that is frequently positively associated with ICA (Lin & Rancer, 2003). Neuliep and colleagues (2001) describe ethnocentrism as a descriptive construct and a universal phenomenon, which was experienced by all cultures, with some negative connotations such as feelings of superiority over outgroups, but also some positive effects such as patriotism and a willingness to sacrifice oneself for one's identified group. Such a conceptualization is extremely troubling and does not factor sufficiently the socio-historical impact of different levels of powers and privilege afforded to different groups.

While some groups such as white, heterosexual identities afford to be ethnocentric and suffer little consequence given the power and privilege afforded to such position, other identities both within and outside the United States are not equally shielded from consequences when they prioritize in-group interactions. Removing questions of equity from issues of intercultural communication apprehension therefore only serves to maintain a white

supremacist status quo. A better more equitable characterization might include a more just history of race relations and colonial experiences rather than a neutral in-group, out-group distance. Within this evaluation, we have addressed this consideration by introducing a qualitative component that will complement ICA by providing open-ended opportunities to critically examine whether intercultural communication has truly occurred, instead of merely relying on ICA.

As seen in this section, intercultural communication apprehension may become one of the major stumbling blocks within intercultural communication. Given that intercultural communication is one of the main aims being assessed within this evaluation, assessing for changes in intercultural communication apprehension before and after the intervention will provide a better picture of whether the goal of intercultural communication was achieved.

Friendships in a college setting. An important factor in the success and development of students in college is the group of friends they acquire (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991, 2005). Such a group of friends aided in the development and challenging of beliefs and values and aided students to evaluate and re-evaluate themselves (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). Antonio (2004) posits that students are most likely to compare themselves to their friendship groups and therefore friendship groups are more likely to impact the development of students by creating frames of success. Collegiate friendships were related to academic satisfaction (Fischer (2007), higher GPAS (Swenson Goguen et al., 2010) and lesser likelihood of dropout (Wilcox et al., 2005). Friendships also occur at different intensities and different levels of commitments and require maintenance at each level (albeit in different ways) in order to produce positive effects in the lives of students (McEwan & Guerrero, 2012). Further, perceived communication skills also aid in the formation of friendships, with students with higher level of communications opting for more self-disclosing strategies (McEwan & Guerrero, 2010). However not all students are able to access the benefits of

college friendships as easily and to the extent that majority students do (Fehr & Harasymchuk, 2022). Minority students including racial, gender, and sexual minorities face additional barriers and risks to access friendships with students with majority identities (Fehr & Harasymchuk, 2022).

Friendships between international students and domestic students: What factors influence this relationship? One of the key missions of ISS is to promote intercultural friendships between domestic students and international students. Friendship between international students and domestic students is an important process within the acculturation process for international students, providing key protective buffers and aid in contributing to satisfaction, contentment, social support as well as academic success for international students (Bochner et al., 1985; Kudo & Simkin, 2003; Ying, 2002).

Bochner and colleagues (1977) offer a three-category model categorizing international student experiences. namely: 1) a network developed with co-nationals which provides an opportunity for the affirmation and expression of the culture of origin, 2) a functional network with host nationals that facilitates academic and professional goals and 3) a multi-national recreational network. As seen above understanding the theoretic pathways within which friendships occur in international student networks, is important to provide key insights not only into whether a friendship occurred but how and in what way this happened. Given that this is a key research question of this evaluation, the results of such a finding will measure the success or otherwise of this intervention.

The first network provides an emotional support structure from same nationality peers going through similar experiences (Furnham & Alibhai, 1985; Maundeni, 2001; Neri & Ville, 2008). A consequence of such a group is that they may inhibit international students from developing friendship relationships with domestic students (Maundeni, 2001, Kim 2001), as they would be less willing to adapt to local customs (Ward & Searle, 1991). While beneficial

in the short-term, friendships with co-nationals (defined as international students from the same country) hindered long-term adaptation process of international students (Kim, 2001, Walsworth et al., 2021). Such reticence to engage with peers outside of the same nationality may also be due to international students perceived lack of time, due to the impermanent nature of the migration experience (the duration of the studies) (Hotta & Ting-Toomey, 2013).

Conversely, international students within the US with more contact with host nationals were able to adapt better to life within the US and had fewer social difficulties as well as registering an improvement in communication competence (Ward & Kennedy, 1993). Moreover, international students with higher host friendships reported higher levels of satisfaction, lower levels of loneliness, and lower levels of homesickness (Walsworth et al., 2021). Zimmerman (1995) places such high importance on host friendships that they state, “The most important factor in international students’ adjustment to US American culture was frequency of interaction with US American students” (p. 329).

Despite the benefits of host national friendships, international students frequently reported frustration and disappointment when trying to establish such friendships (Gareis et al., 2011, Gareis, 2012). Several factors described by the literature as to why such friendship formation might be impaired were; poor linguistic skills in the host language (Montgomery & McDowell, 2009; Rienties et al., 2012), discrimination and racial and ethnic prejudice (Ruble & Zhang, 2013), and cultural distance i.e. the proximity in values and cultures between the international student’s culture and the host culture (Gareis, 2012), particularly when international students are not from Anglophone and European countries (Lee & Rice, 2007). Furthermore, if the host context insists on assimilation or is generally intolerant to diversity then more barriers are added to these interactions (Berry, 1997). Finally, international students entered social spaces wherein friendship and kinship networks were already formed

thereby contributing to less openness by host students to seek new relationships with international students (Kudo & Simkin, 2003). Forming friendships with other international students becomes therefore much easier than establishing friendships with students from host countries, thereby accounting for the reticence international students have, to forming relationships with host students. (Hendrickson et al., 2011).

Another factor that impacts the formation of international student friendships with host students is the systemic structures in place at the HEI. International students with the possibility to join study associations, fraternities/sororities, and sports clubs are also more likely to develop successful friendships with host students (Rienties et al., 2012; Russell et al., 2010, Hendrickson, 2018). From an academic perspective, friendships are also facilitated when curricula are developed that require students to work together (Rienties, et al., 2012, Dunne, 2009).

Host students' perspective on friendships with international students. Much of the literature on friendships between international students and host students focused on the perspective and experience of international students. However, a few studies looked friendship dynamic from host student perspective. Williams and Johnson (2011) suggested that understanding why friendships occur with international students may require looking at certain intercultural attitudes such as past experiences with and exposure to other cultures, intercultural apprehension, empathy, and open-mindedness. In their study, Williams and Johnson (2011) found that participants with more international friends tended to report elevated levels of open-mindedness than participants with no international friends. However, these researchers did not find significant differences with regards to cultural empathy, social initiative, emotional stability, and flexibility. Williams and Johnson (2011) suggested that their results may be explained by the fact that most participants claimed low to moderate contact and closeness with the international friends. Such a finding suggested that strong

friendships between international students and host students require more than personality traits and are also impacted by the frequency of contact and the depth of the relationship. Greater contact and depth within a relationship arguably provides more opportunities to navigate around cultural differences and personality traits incongruent with intercultural friendship (Williams & Johnson, 2011).

Several factors may account for the reasons why international and host students might have less frequent and deep friendships. One of the reasons provided by the literature is cultural attitudes towards friendship itself (Stewart & Bennett, 2005). Frequency of contact and depth of relationship might also be impacted by the host country's values (Fehr, 2004) with studies carried out in the United States finding American students to be friendly and warm but participating in less intense and shorter-lived friendships than those of others (Stewart & Bennett, 2005). Robinson (2020) contends that such shallow friendships may be a form of subtle cultural segregation.

An important study analyzing the reticence that host students have towards forming friendships with international students by Dunne (2009) sought to understand the construction of identity difference between host and national students. Dunne (2009) posits that academic motivations and educational values were used by the host students to differentiate themselves from international students. International students were perceived to be more engaged with clearer goals for their academic experience (spurred by greater financial pressures due to the international status) while host students perceived themselves to be more engaged with the social life intertwined with university life (Dunne, 2009). Most host students formed friendship networks earlier on at times before even formally registering thereby reducing opportunity for intercultural contact and friendship formation (Dunne, 2009). Host students frequently felt anxiety in dealing with intercultural friendships, and frequently censored themselves to avoid contentious topics when speaking to international

students (Dunne, 2009). Additionally, host students felt that intercultural friendships required a large amount of effort, with language frequently inhibiting the process (Dunne, 2009).

Understanding the reasons why host students fail to engage in friendships with international students is important as an intercultural intervention such as the one evaluated in this study will require overcoming these difficulties within host students. Ascertaining whether these barriers were overcome and how this was done or not will be the goal of evaluation.

Community Psychology and Intercultural Interventions

Community psychology has not been a very active contributor towards the fields of intercultural interventions aimed at host and international students in HEI's. The predominant contribution has been provided by Abe (2009, 2010, 2014) who has written extensively on international student experiences and interventions within their HEI in Japan. In their initial papers Abe (2009, 2010) discusses approaches they have taken within their university which included creating structured opportunities to interact with local communities, language courses and mentorship programs. In their final paper Abe (2014) takes an interesting approach and interviews returning Japanese students who experienced a compulsory period of study abroad. Abe (2014) highlights the importance of structural facilitation in the integration and the wellbeing of international students.

Another study (Ma, 2020) was not explicitly written from a community psychology perspective but used an ecological framework and the language of community intervention (O'Donnell et al., 1993) as a theoretic framework to inform their study. Furthermore, studies relating to international students published in community psychology journals do not explicitly mention their underlying community psychology framework (Lee et al., 2014, Ying, 2002).

Despite the lack of literature related specifically to international students, community psychology has much to offer to these discussions. Firstly, the ecological perspective offered by community psychology means that the “Global” experience will not be analyzed merely from an individualist perspective but will be analyzed within multiple systems of influence at the micro-, macro-, and the meso-level (Bronfenbrenner, 1977). Furthermore, the social justice perspective embraced as a central value of community psychology (Prillettensky & Prillettensky, 2006), particularly when working with marginalized groups (Camilleri et al., 2022) makes community psychology ideal for dealing with such marginalized groups. Such an orientation opens new ontological and epistemological opportunities from the traditional positivistic view of traditional psychology (Tebes, 2005) thereby grounding different analytical strategies such as qualitative and mixed methods well. Additionally, community psychology fully embraces intersectionality and holds space for various identities rooted in class, gender, sexual orientation, disability, race, and nationality (Birman & Bray, 2017).

Furthermore, community psychology embraces principles of prevention and promotion which seek to prevent issues and promote wellbeing prior to the occurrence of the issue as opposed to remedial action (Anderson et al., 2019). Community psychology borrows heavily from prevention science in order to formulate its interventions (Robinson et al., 2017). Using the framework delineated by the Institute of Medicine, interventions are generally understood to fall within three categories 1) universal interventions that target large segments of the population without consideration of risk, 2) selective prevention for those at larger risk of displaying the outcome that is sought to be avoided and 3) indicated prevention for those who already have the initial symptoms of the issue at hand (Robinson et al., 2017).

Within this intervention the second category is the applicable and in fact the intervention has as its recipient and immediate and intermediate target population. The immediate population that are the recipients of this intervention are the participants in the

Global program, but the intermediate recipients given the dual nature of intercultural communication (requires at least two parties) are international students. According to Robinson and colleagues (2017) selective interventions have several advantages in that they allow for greater efficiency and cost effectiveness (Offord, 2000) and more tailored approaches (Kumpfer, n.d.). However, the downside of selective interventions is that the selection or screening process might be more stigmatizing to the participants (especially international students in this study) given that it adds a deficit based at-risk label (Robinson et al., 2017). For greater success selected preventions need to consider social context within which the intervention is embedded, hence highlighting the need for ecological analyses provided by community psychology (Robinson et al., 2017). Understanding the various considerations regarding interventions is important, because despite the intervention already being designed, the selective category within which this intervention lies requires particular consideration to ensure that the intervention resulted in a net-benefit.

Assessing such a net-benefit requires that interventions are rigorously evaluated. Evaluations ensure that programs and interventions are in fact achieving their designed impacts and outcomes. Community psychology embraces program evaluation and sets it as one of the important competencies all community psychologists should have (Wolfe, 2019). Wolfe (2019) claims that all program evaluation carried out within community psychology is required to reach the high standards of “utility, feasibility, propriety, accuracy, and accountability” (Wolfe, 2019, p.132). Evaluations can also be primarily divided into four different types along two different axis (Chen, 1996). The two different axes are primarily whether the evaluation will be assessing outcomes and impacts, namely whether the goal of intervention has been achieved, and process evaluations, whether the process set out in the original formulation was carried out with fidelity (Chen, 1996). The second axis will take a summative dimension, which assesses merit or worth of the intervention or a formative

dimension which serves to makes recommendations for improvement of the intervention (Chen, 1996). In practice this taxonomy is less useful conceptually and is better understood as a multi-dimensional spectrum (Chen, 1996).

In the present evaluation there will be both summative considerations (i.e., did the program significantly increase friendship between participants and international students, was there a significant decrease in intercultural communication apprehension at the end of the intervention?). Furthermore, both outcome and process considerations will be evaluated, as not only whether the ultimate objective was achieved but also how the program went about achieving such a goal.

The Edge Program

The context of this study was the *Education and Development Grant for Employability (EDGE)* within the office of Student Employment at a Midwest university. The EDGE is a program that is offered to first-year undergraduate students that allows such student to undertake a year-long experience within several offices within the university. Participants were able to choose between several offices, which can be seen in appendix A.

The aim of the EDGE program is to provide experiences and opportunities for self-development particularly in regard to employability, by providing internship-style experiences that contribute to the University (Student n.d.). Participants are required to commit 10 hours a week within the offices they choose or are assigned and are required to attend workshops, events and site visits that occur on a quarterly basis (Student, n.d.). The intended result of all these activities was “to develop workplace competencies, money management knowledge and skills, and a connection to university resources.” (Student n.d., no page). Participants were discouraged from working outside of the program due to the

intensity of the program and were offered in return a tuition grant of a \$1,100 per quarter (Student, n.d.).

The Global EDGE Program

For the purposes of this proposed study, only participants within the Global team were considered. The Global team was housed within the International Student and Scholar Services Division at the University. The aim of the program was to serve international students and help them integrate into the university's community. Students from the broader EDGE program chose or were assigned to join the Global Program at the beginning of fall quarter. The aim of the Global Program was to help participants gain and improve their practice intercultural communication and event/program planning skills as well as form new intercultural friendships (Drehle, 2022).

Rationale for the Current Study

Intercultural Communication is a prized competence given the increasingly globalized and multi-cultural world we live in, especially within Higher Education Institutions where active recruitment of international students makes intercultural encounters more likely. Gaining intercultural communication skills may be acquired in numerous ways, but internship style experiences provide excellent opportunities (with some caveats) for students to acquire skills such as intercultural communication that will eventually increase participants' employability. Prior to engaging in an evaluation, clarifying different components of the intervention is important so that key assumptions are satisfied. Within this study the preceding section has attempted to provide a background on important theoretic constructs on the following: 1) operational clarity on the acculturative and facilitative mission of the intervention agency, namely the Office for International Student and Scholar Services, 2) awareness of the barriers that international students face when communicating with host

students, 3) awareness of the reasons why host students are reticent to engage in friendships with international students, 4) a conceptually coherent understanding of intercultural communication and, more specifically, intercultural communication apprehension. While these will not be the specific focus of the evaluation, they are important theoretic considerations within which the evaluation will be nested.

Utilizing a mixed-methods approach within a community psychology framework, the present study aimed to evaluate the Global EDGE program. As shown within the conceptual framework proposed below (figure 1) this study utilized an ecological framework which is cognizant of the effects of global events such as the Covid-19 pandemic and how this interacts with policies and laws at the state and federal level such as visa regulations. Narrowing down within the university the Global program was housed within the International Student and Scholar Services. The Global EDGE program was a subset of a broader employability intervention aimed at freshmen within university entitled the “EDGE Program” where participants frequently interact with the broader program to further gain employability skills.

The International Students and Scholars Services primarily aimed to provide visa and acculturation services and support to international students. However, it also housed the Global program that sought to provide intercultural communication skills to EDGE participants that choose or were selected to join this program by creating programming and forming friendships with international students (see also figure 1).

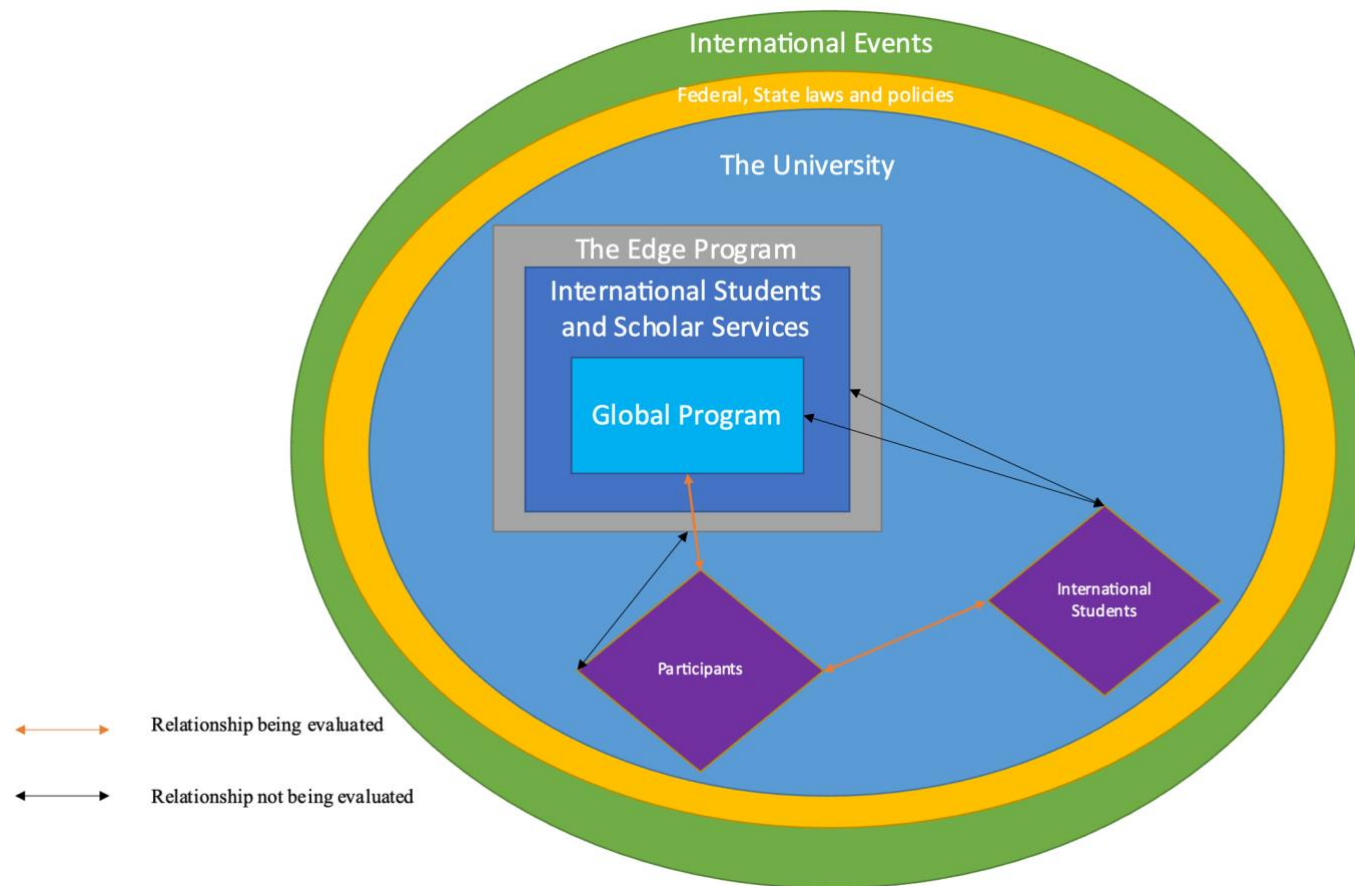
As can be seen within figure 1 the Global Program was nested in a series of relationships such as the relationship between international students and the International Students and Scholars Services, or the relationship between the participants of Global and the broader EDGE program. However, the present study only focused on two sets of

relationships, namely the relationship between the EDGE participants and Global DePaul, and EDGE participants and international students. Accordingly, the evaluation primarily investigated two research questions namely: 1) What was the impact of the Global program on participants intercultural communication and how this was achieved? and 2) What was the impact of the Global EDGE program on the formation of friendships between participants and international students and how this was achieved? The study used an archival quantitative dataset that was collected by the Global team as well as gathered new qualitative data from former Global participants.

Method

The present proposed study used an *embedded mixed-methods* design (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007) influenced by the pragmatic school of thought, at two different timepoints. The study evaluated the impact of a higher educational program housed within a medium-sized, faith-based university located in Chicago, Illinois – DePaul University. In particular, the study will analyzed the impact of the Global Program within the EDGE program (i.e. the *Education and Development Grant for Employability program*) as offered by the International Students and Scholar Services on participants' 1) intercultural skills and 2) their international intercultural friendships. The study will used an archival quantitative dataset collected before and after each placement of the participating student by the International Students Service Office and was combined with qualitative interviews to address the research questions.

Figure 1

Conceptual Framework of the Evaluation

Context and Rationale of the Global Program

The context within which the evaluation took place is the Global Program team participants, individuals who were part of the broader EDGE program at the target Midwest university. Program participants were first year students who had signed up to the Edge Program and who applied or were assigned to the more granular Global EDGE sub-program. Program participants were expected to participate in weekly meeting and events, to contribute to outreach activities and any marketing duties especially when working on the social media channels of the Global EDGE Program (Drehle, 2022).

Additionally, these participating students were to be involved with planning, leading and participating in student activities for international students while working on building informal and formal relationships with international students with the aim to integrate international student into the university's community (Drehle, 2022). Students spent every Friday afternoon between 1-5pm conducting or attending EDGE team meetings, workshop and/or events (Drehle, 2022). The skills that were to be obtained from this experience within the Global EDGE program included, job-readiness, intercultural communication and event planning and leadership (Drehle, 2022). Throughout the 5 years (2016-2021) that this program has taken place 89 students participated in the program.

Research Design and Philosophical Worldview

This study utilized an embedded mixed method design, which allowed for the findings of the quantitative component regarding the changes in intercultural openness and quality and quantity of friendship to support the qualitative findings. Creswell and Plano (2017) recommend embedded designs whenever one type of data predominantly subsumes the other. Given the scarcity of quantitative data available due to the small sample as well as the fact that only a few participants would be hypothetically available for further data

collection (particularly those within initial cohorts) an overall qualitative framework with a quantitative component was an excellent match for this study's aims.

The qualitative component (phase 2) was acquired through 14 semi-structured interviews with former participants of the intervention. In this part of the study, the main aim of the data collection was to attempt to answer whether the Global program improved participants intercultural communication skills and increased international friendships, and how it went about achieving it. The advantage of a qualitative approach over a quantitative approach is that the interviews provided an opportunity for the former participants to discuss their conceptualization of improvement in their intercultural skills (or lack thereof), how the program contributed to this success or otherwise, what worked well within the program and what could be improved. Similarly, when discussing the process of intercultural friendship formation as discussed in the previous sections, the qualitative approach contextualized and highlighted difficulties and hesitations that participants may have had starting out at the beginning of the program and highlighted how the program or other external events may have contributed to the success or otherwise of their intercultural friendship formation process. The answers to these research questions required thick descriptions (as defined by Ponterotto, 2016) that were not easily acquired from quantitative approaches, particularly when relating to how the program went about achieving any kind of impact. Consequently, a qualitative approach was excellent to address such a question. Furthermore, qualitative approaches shift the power dynamic when engaging with formative components of the evaluation by providing opportunities to participants to voice their ideas on how the program ought to improve, instead of merely relying on the evaluator's expertise.

Archival data was used for the quantitative component (phase 1), previously collected by the ISS office. The format of the data gathered were a series of self-reported pre and post surveys assessing whether there were significant changes in intercultural communication

apprehension (as conceptualized by Neuliep and Mcroskey, 1997) and to measure the quantity of international friendships formed, the depth of the friendship, the frequency of engagement and modality of the friendship (online/in-person). The results from analyzing the quantitative data provided an excellent starting point to the research by providing a summative evaluation and made it easier to arrive at judgement of merit of the program. Additionally, the longitudinal dimension of the pre and post surveys also provided a stronger empirical (although not perfect due to reasons such as maturation effects, social desirability etc.) basis to the causal relationship that the program had on its participants (or lack thereof).

Integrating different types of data within embedded mixed methods required that unequal weighting was given to the data (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007). Within the present study the initial research questions was addressed summatively by the quantitative data, while greater context and detail will be explained through the qualitative data. A visual model of how this took place is presented in figure 2. Data was gathered sequentially with preliminary quantitative data having already been gathered but more in-depth qualitative data being gathered at a later point.

Philosophical Worldview

Throughout this evaluation the philosophical framework utilized for the mixed methods approach is pragmatism (Biesta, 2010). Biesta (2010) claims that philosophical pragmatism is not a system of ideas that attempts to give answers on how the world works and what can be known but can rather be understood as a philosophical tool to address problems highlighted by other philosophical approaches and positions.

Pragmatism, therefore, concerns itself with dealing with problems as they are and attempts to find solution to such problems while expanding the knowledge about the problem (Morgan, 2007; Creswell & Plano Clark, 2017; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998). Given the

longitudinal dimension and the summative and formative dimensions of the inquiry at hand, a mixed-methods approach was deemed to enrich the research question rather than create contradictory findings. Additionally, given that the aim of this research was to provide recommendations as well as assess the effectiveness of the intervention itself, it was deemed that mixed methods (using a pragmatic approach) was more important than the ultimate ontological and epistemological ramifications.

An important factor to discuss within this work, given the predominantly qualitative component of the work is the role of the researcher. The researcher took an active role in gathering the qualitative data in the second part of the study but was not involved in the design or collection of the first part of the study. Such acknowledgement is critical particularly considering the researcher's positionality. The researcher is an international student at the university, pursuing their doctorate in community psychology. The researcher had a personal and vested interest in the outcome of this research given their lived experience as an international student within the United States and particularly at the university. Such a lived experience not only impacted the choice of topic for research but indubitably colored the interactions that the researcher had with the program participants. Additionally, this personal experience was the basis of a partnership between the ISS and the researcher, which led to this project.

Furthermore, the researcher worked on several projects dealing with issues of employability and working experiences particularly in higher education in their home country and in other countries. Such experiences gave them firsthand insights into the how such programs work and how they are implemented and experienced by a variety of stakeholders.

Indubitably, the researcher's experiences influenced how the researcher came to understand, treat, and interpret the data at hand. The researcher interacted firsthand with

several program participants throughout the second phase of the data gathering. The strength of this research design was that any bias that may be contained in the second phase of the research is minimized using quantitative data that was not gathered by the researcher but by the Global EDGE team.

Furthermore, reviews were carried out by the academic advisor of the researcher who consulted with the researcher after the first coding exercise to narrow down and focus on the truly important codes to create themes and sub-themes with. Such an approach aided to further mitigate any in the data analysis.

Study 1: Pre/Post Surveys

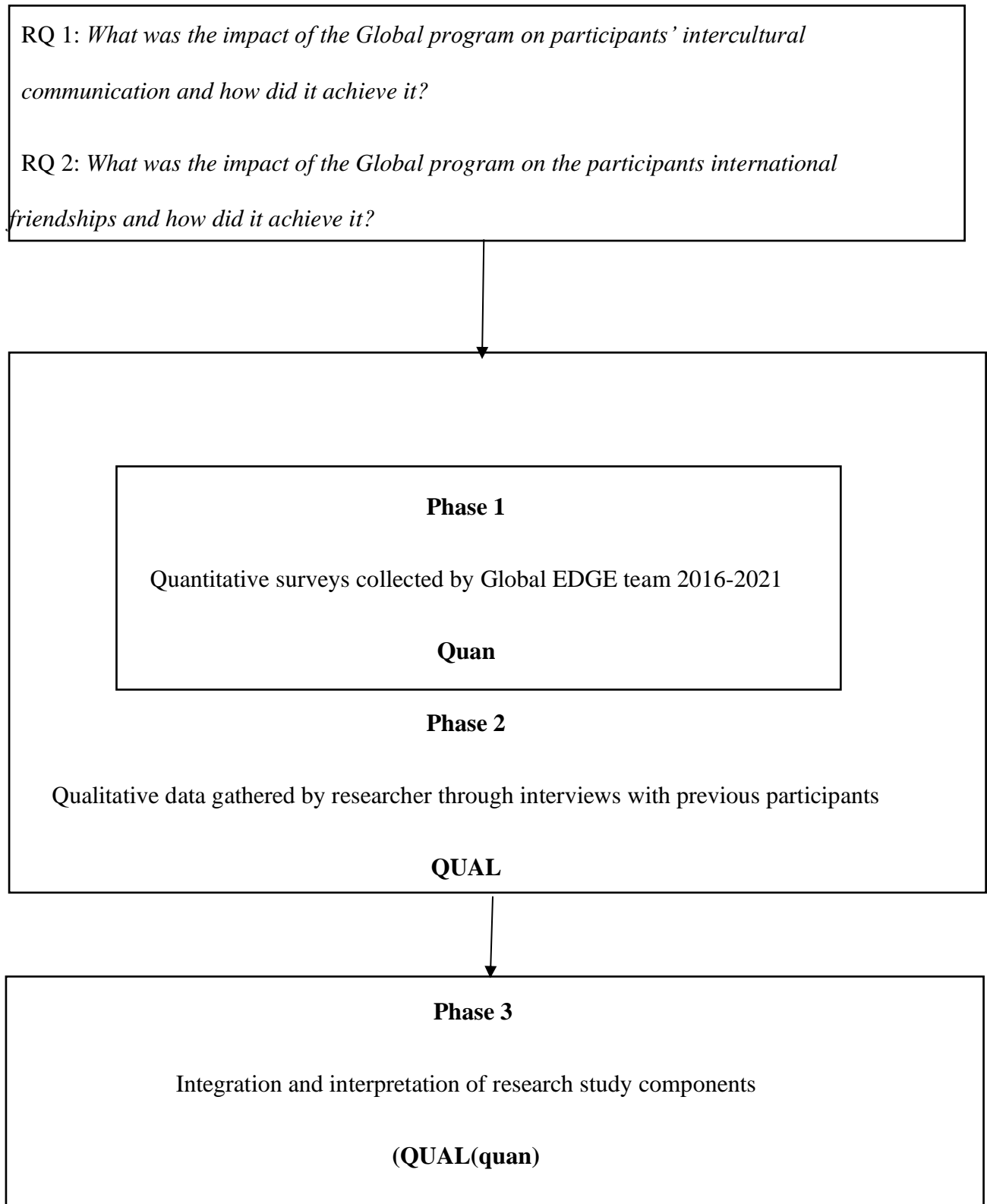
Over the 5 years (2016-2021) that this program was offered, staff at the Global EDGE program gathered survey data at the beginning and at the end of the program. The goal of this survey was to measure whether there were statistically significant improvements in participants intercultural abilities and to assess whether there were statistically significant changes in the number, quality, and modality of interaction of international friendships that the participants engaged in. The following hypotheses were selected for this study:

H₁: Participants will have statistically significant lower mean post scores for intercultural communication apprehension

H₂: There will not be a statistically significant different mean post score for intercultural communication apprehension for each year the program was offered.

H₃: Participants will have statistically stronger and more numerous relationships with international students, across all modalities of interaction (social media and in person) at the end of the program.

Figure 2

Mixed-Methods Framework

Participants

Participants were first-year students at the University who participated in the EDGE program within the University. More specifically, participants were students ($n = 89$) who worked within the Global program team between 2016-2021. All students were freshmen and therefore predominantly aged 18-19 years old and most were domestic students with only one student being an international student. Unfortunately, both the broader Edge program and Global program did not retain demographic data of the participants.

Procedure

Program participants were first year students who were required to participate in weekly meeting and events, to contribute to outreach activities and any marketing duties especially when working on the social media channels of the *Global EDGE Program* (Drehle, 2022). The participants duties involved; planning, leading and participating in student activities for international students while working on building informal and formal relationships with international students with the aim to integrate international students into the university's community (Drehle, 202). Participants met every Friday afternoon between 1-5pm conducting or attending EDGE team meetings, workshop and/or events (Drehle, 2022). Throughout the 5 years (2016-2021) that this program has taken place 89 students participated in the program, however only 65 students responded to the surveys, with only 54 students having complete pre and post data.

Surveys were given to participants at the beginning of fall through a google form in September of each academic year and were then administered in June of all academic years except for the year 2017 where the post survey was administered in the last week of May. Participant's data was linked on an individual basis to assess differences before and after the intervention based on their initials and the year in which they had participated in.

Psychometric Measures

The *Personal Report of Intercultural Communication Apprehension (PRICA)* is a unidimensional 14-item scale that measures the fear or anxiety that accompanies anticipated or real communication with different cultural groups (Neuliep & McCroskey, 1997). It is a 14-item scale with item responses that ranged from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). Sample items included “Generally, I am comfortable interacting with a group of people from different cultures” and “Engaging in a group discussion with people from different cultures makes me nervous”. Neuliep and McCroskey (1997) suggest that calculating the PRICA scores should be carried out by adding the scores for items 1, 3, 5, 7, 9, 10, and 12 (step 1), then adding scores for items 2, 4, 6, 8, 11, 13, and 14 (step 2). Finally the PRICA score should be calculated using the following formula $42 - \text{Total from Step 1} + \text{Total from Step 2}$. The authors suggest that scores below 32 results in low intercultural communication apprehension, while scores above 52 suggests high intercultural communication. Scores between 32-52 indicate a moderate level of apprehension. Using the formula indicated by the authors, the mean for the PRICA score before the intervention was calculated at 24.31 ($SD = 8.32$). The PRICA score after intervention had a mean of 26.05 ($SD = 9.28$). Both scores fall within the low intercultural communication apprehension range. The internal consistency reliability score was calculated at .626.

For the *friendship* component of the survey 4 questions were asked; 1) How many international friends do you have? Answers for the first question included 0, 1-2, 3-4, 5-6, more than 6 friends 2) How frequently do you interact with your international friends on social media? Answers included never, 1, 2-3, 4-5 more than 5 times a month. 3) How frequently do you interact with your international friends in person? Answers included never, 1, 2-3, 4-5 more than 5 times a month. 4) How would you describe the depth or quality of your international friendships? Answers included very close, close, neutral, not close, and not

at all close. Most participants had 1-2 friendships with international ($n = 18$), never interacted with international students on social media ($n = 18$), never interacted with an international student in person ($n = 33$) and had neutral closeness with regards to the depth of friendship ($n = 25$). The descriptives indicate an anticipated profile of the typical student with most not having deep friendships with international students. Further results for the friendship questions can be seen below in Table 1.

Study 2: Qualitative Interviews with Previous Participants

Phase 2 consisted of qualitative semi-structured interviews conducted with previous participants of the program (2015-2022) and similarly to the previous phase sought to understand the impact of the program on intercultural communication and friendships with international students. Even though no quantitative data were gathered for the last cohort of participants (year 2022-2023) this group of participants were more likely to be accessible than participants in previous academic years and therefore the last cohort was included as part of the sample. Semi-structured interviews are an important tool within qualitative research as they allow for the themed exploration of questions with an adequate balance to be found in the direction of the inquiry while nonetheless being flexible to explore issues and perspectives that are unplanned in the initial inquiry (Low, 2013).

The qualitative interviews endeavored to answer the following questions:

- 1) *What was the impact of the program on your intercultural communication?*
- 2) *How did the program achieve such an outcome?*
- 3) *What has been the long-term impact of the program on your intercultural communication?*
- 4) *What was the impact of the program on your international friendships?*
- 5) *How did the program achieve such an outcome?*
- 6) *What was the long-term impact of the program on your international friendships?*

Table 1*Quantitative Study Descriptives*

	Pre (n)	Post (n)		Pre (n)	Post (n)
Number of International Student Friends			Frequency of Interaction in Person		
0	15	6	Never	33	18
1-2	18	16	1 time/month	10	20
3-4	12	15	2-3 times/month	12	9
5-6	4	8	4-5 times/month	1	2
More than 6	12	11	More than 5 times/month	5	7
Frequency of Interaction on Social Media			Depth of Friendship		
Never	18	6	Not at all close	8	4
1 time/month	12	11	Not Close	6	4
2-3 times/month	13	17	Neutral	25	27
4-5 times/month	3	8	Close	12	13
More than 5 times/month	15	14	Very Close	9	8

N = 65

Further details can be found in the interview schedule located in Appendix B. Interviews lasted between 60-70 minutes.

Participants and Recruitment

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 14 previous participants of the Global EDGE program. Despite the initial goal of recruiting at least 15 participants, research saturation was achieved with the final interviews reinforcing previous themes and no emergence of new themes. The mean age of the participants was 21.92 years ($SD = 2.56$ years). Most participants identified as women ($n = 11$), heterosexual ($n = 10$), white ($n = 5$), participated in the program between 2021 – 2022 ($n = 3$), and were domestic students ($n = 13$). One participant did not disclose socio-demographic information, and none of them identified as transgender. Further details can be viewed in Table 2 below.

Institutional Review Board approval was obtained for the second phase and retroactively for the first phase of this study. A purposive sampling was to be adopted with participants from each year of the program interviewed. However, given the small overall pool of participants (89), later years of the program were more highly represented than earlier years as was expected. Recruitment took place through an email and a LinkedIn post sent by the Global DePaul Team, who provided a Qualtrics link for participants who wished to be contacted for an interview.

Procedure

Interviewing procedures. The semi-structured interviews were carried out by the researcher with each individual participant over Zoom. Informed consent form was explained at the beginning of each interview with the alternative procedure used to acquire consent prior to the beginning of the interview.

Interviewing protocol. An interview protocol was developed and included demographic questions, whether the participant is currently a student at the University or not, and their year at the University, with subsequent questions on the impact of the program in intercultural communication, and the impact of the program on making international friends. Interview protocol and questions can be found in Appendix B.

Table 2

Qualitative Component Descriptives

Descriptive		Descriptive	
Age (<i>M</i>)		Race and Ethnicity (<i>n</i>)	
Mean	21.92	Latine	2
SD	2.56	Multi-racial	2
		Asian	2
		African	
Gender (<i>n</i>)		American	2
Man	2	White	5
Woman	11		
		Year Participated in the program	
Sexual Orientation (<i>n</i>)		2014 -2015	1
Heterosexual	10	2015 - 2016	1
Gay	1	2016 - 2017	1
Lesbian	1	2018 - 2019	2
Bi-Sexual	1	2019 - 2020	2
		2020 - 2021	2
Transgender (<i>n</i>)		2021 - 2022	3
No	13	2022 - 2023	2
		Domestic Students	13
Prefer not to disclose	1	International Student	1

N = 14

Analysis for Study 2

The interview sessions were recorded digitally and then transcribed by a professional transcription service. Dedoose software was used to analyze the data set. Thematic analysis was used to analyze the data given the flexibility it offers researchers both as an inductive, deductive or hybrid tool (Pearse, 2019; Braun & Clarke 2006; Fereday & Muir-Cochrane 2006; Rishi, et al., 2015). Within this study, given the narrow scope of the questions asked as part of the evaluative goals of this research design, a hybrid approach was utilized with the main research questions influencing theme development in the analysis. However, an iterative and reflexive approach was taken as prescribed by Fereday and Muir-Cochrane (2006) allowing for changes, additions and modifications to the themes and sub-codes.

The researcher engaged in this process by listening to the audio of each interview and coding openly all the text within the 14 transcripts. Subsequently all of the codes were re-read and over-arching themes and sub-themes were developed by selecting which codes became themes, and which others became subsumed as sub-themes and codes. The codes that were chosen to become themes either related to the two primary research questions of the study namely the impact of the program on intercultural communication, and friendship, or because they encapsulated other codes. Certain codes were amalgamated as they were describing the same concept, simply with slightly different words. All themes, sub-themes and codes contained within the second phase or project were subsequently defined. Once a codebook was finalized, all the data from all 14 transcripts was re-analyzed using the codes within the codebook. All the data was coded by a single coder, given that the interviews were carried out by one single interviewer and the importance and weight of different codes could not be satisfactorily explained within the timeframe and budget of this particular project (Morse, 1997)

Major themes and sub-themes were then presented in the results section of this dissertation. Given the small population and their strong relationship with the Global DePaul

program, it was felt that anonymizing all quotes was a more ethical manner of reporting the results. Consequently, despite the loss of further insights that might result from having more information on the identities of the participants who are quoted, we have opted not reveal identifying information.

Results

Phase 1

The data were analyzed using two-sample signed pair rank for data found in ordinal categorical format, while *paired t-tests* were used to analyze mean differences in PRICA. Finally, an *ANOVA* was carried out to calculate the mean differences in post PRICA scores for the various years of the program.

H₁: Participants will have statistically significant lower mean post scores for intercultural communication apprehension

A *paired sample t-test* was conducted to compare PRICA scores pre and post the intervention. There was an insignificant difference in the scores for PRICA pre ($M = 24.31$, $SD = 8.32$) and post ($M = 26.06$, $SD = 9.28$) scores; $t(52) = 1.33$, $p = .189$. The hypothesis was therefore rejected.

H₂: There will not be a statistically significant different mean post score for intercultural communication apprehension for each year the program.

A *one-way ANOVA* was carried out to detect whether there were statistically significant different means for post PRICA scores among the various years (2016, 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020). Mean test scores and standard deviations were 2016 ($M = 31$, $SD = 10.9$), 2017 ($M = 21$, $SD = 8.32$), 2018 ($M = 27.8$, $SD = 11.1$), 2019 ($M = 27.4$, $SD = 6.49$), 2020 ($M = 22.8$, $SD = 7.45$). The one-way ANOVA revealed an insignificant difference between

mean scores between the various years, $F(1,55) = 1.54, p = .219$, with all the assumptions of an ANOVA satisfied. The hypothesis was therefore supported.

H₃: Participants will have statistically stronger and more numerous relationships with international students, across all modalities of interaction (social media and in person) at the end of the program.

Four *two-sample signed paired rank analyses* were carried out to assess number of friendships, social media interaction, in-person interactions and depth of friendships before and after the intervention. All analyses were not significant with number of friendships returning $V = 572, p = .534$, frequency of interaction over social media returning $V = 599, p = .216$, frequency of interaction in-person returning $V = 473.5, p = .390$, and depth of friendship returning $V = 542, p = .991$. The hypothesis was consequently rejected.

Phase 2

Following analysis of the data, the following themes were identified: 1) Coming into the program, 2) How the program achieved its goals, 3) Program impacts, and 4) Barriers. The first theme relates to common factors and motivations that participants shared when joining the program. The second theme relates to the events, activities, and outputs that the program utilized to achieve its impacts, while the third theme highlights the impacts of the program. Finally, the theme relating to barriers highlights issues that arose that prevented the program from achieving its desired impacts.

Coming into the program. When discussing why and how they chose to work at Global DePaul, two things particularly stood out, namely factors those participants had in common, and the motivations they had when joining Global DePaul.

Given the varied choices that EDGE participants had to choose from when deciding which office to work with, the participants that chose Global DePaul had several factors that were common to most of the participants. Firstly, many participants exhibited extroverted traits which aided their interactions with international students and helped them navigate some of anxiety such communication.

I just... I think I'm pretty outgoing when I meet new people. So I kind of try not to make it awkward, or anything...But I have never... I don't think I've had issues, like, kind of getting myself out there with the international students. (Participant 4, Woman)

Figure 3

Thematic Framework of Study 2

Theme	Sub-Theme	Code
Coming into the program	Motivation for Joining the Program	Motivation for joining EDGE
		Motivation for joining Global DePaul

	Background of Persons joining the program	Exposure to International Persons Background Disposition to be extraverted
Implementation	Leadership and Staff	Assistant Director
		Supportive Environment Created by leaders
		Student leadership
	Preparation	Global Workshops
		Debriefing
	Events	Events of the program
		Conflict Resolution
		Requiring participants to interact with international students
		provision of prompts
	Working Culture	Differences between Classes and Program
		Openness to ideas from new people
		Vincentian Values
Opportunities for connection		
Program Impacts	Intercultural Communication Impact	Cultural and Linguistic Differences faced by International Students

		Differences between American and International Students various Cultures
		Diminished anxiety around communicating with international students
		Improved Perspective taking
		Increased desire to make international students feel welcome
	Friendships with International Students	Superficial connection
	Friendships at DePaul	Friendships with cohort
		Increasing sense of community at DePaul
		Getting to know Chicago
	Long Term Impact of Program	Improved Communication Skills
		Improvement of pre-existing skills
		More Confidence
		Visit more places abroad
	Barriers	Cultural Barriers
Cultural Differences		
Language barrier		
International students formed friendships with peers from the same country		
Demographic Barriers		Difference in Age
		Different subjects
		Gender Barriers
		Undergraduate lack of commitment
Program Barriers		Program was too short
		Large amount of time required

		Lack of incentive to remain connected outside of program
		Perceived requirement to be professional
	Logistical Barriers	Distance from Lincoln Park Campus
		Scheduling Conflicts
	Barriers due to Covid	The impact of Covid on the program
		Meetings on Zoom

Secondly, almost all of the participants in the research study had some form of exposure to international persons, either through being second generation migrants themselves, or through having lived abroad, or through prior exposure to international students or by living in highly diverse areas. For second generation migrants joining Global DePaul had a personal aspect, possibly providing the help that their parents never received.

I was born and raised in the States, but my mom was, uh, she immigrated to the United States from, uh, [country]. And so, she was telling me about her experiences when she was first coming here.

And I ... thought it'd be a good experience to be able to mediate or facilitate, like, a smooth transition, um, for, like, international students seeing as, like, I know so many international students, like, back at my high school, and I, my mother herself was an international student. (Participant 12, Woman)

With regards to motivation for joining the program, participants differentiated why they joined the EDGE program and specifically why they chose Global DePaul. Participants joined the EDGE component because of the tuition benefits, however they chose Global

DePaul component because it seemed more interesting than the alternatives, they wished to gain intercultural competencies and wished to experience event planning.

Implementation. An important way in which the program achieved its goals was through the many events that participants were required to attend and participate in. These events provided numerous opportunities for the participants to get hands-on experiences communicating with international students, as well as to manage their anxiety around such experiences. The wide variety of events ranging from greeting international students at the airport when they first arrived to meeting for coffee hours and facilitating peer mentorship group ensured that participants gained a variety of experiences and were forced out of their comfort zones. A common factor among numerous events was that participants were required to initiate or facilitate conversations with international students, which although intimidating was made much easier through the provision of prompts.

We had a lot of experiences in which we practiced and like not only discussed it [intercultural communication], we had a lot of opportunities to like practice these skills with all the events and like meetings, so I would say it had a positive, like, positive outcome. I think if we didn't participate in all those events and like we were just talking about it [intercultural communication], it wouldn't have been beneficial. So, I think just like the hands-on approach was really beneficial (Participant 10, Woman).

Achieving positive results within the events however required two things; strong training prior to the events themselves and critical debriefings after each event. Debriefings were very important as they allowed for an assessment of the event that had just occurred and ensured that goals were being met and issues would be immediately tackled so that the events would keep on being improved. The workshops were also very important, especially to help

students gain an understanding of some of the issues they might encounter and ways in which they can resolve them or mitigate them.

Through some of our workshops, I definitely think like, the workshops Jenny [assistant director] had us do were actually very, very helpful. Um, and um, and 'cause we learned like o-, like I remember we talked about culture shock forever. And there is just like, i-, some things where I was like oh, that's a culture shock. Like, I didn't even realize. Um, so, Jenny's workshops I think have been uh, a major help. (Participant 7, Woman)

Another feature which enabled Global DePaul to achieve its impact was the supportive environment created by the leaders, with special mention of the assistant director of the program “Like, um, yeah. Just, like, meeting, um, Jenny, who's, like, m- my biggest mentor now. Like, I- I will probably never stop connecting with her” (Participant 4, Woman). Furthermore, such an environment was also fostered by the fact that many leaders with Global DePaul were current students and former participants themselves.

What I think was really great about it were, well, A, all the people in the office, I think they had a really good understanding of how to take a bunch of, you know, like 18 and 19 year old Amer- like United States, like a US passport holders, like (laughs), like who maybe have not had to meet a lot of people from different contexts. I think they did a really phenomenal job (Participant 1, Man).

Overall, the way the program set about achieving its goal related to the work culture it instituted. The program offered significant opportunities for connection between participants, staff and international students, rooted in Vincentian values. Such a connection led to greater openness to ideas from the participants, which helped them feel valued and provided opportunities for growth. Whenever conflicts did arise, the program ensured that it was dealt with effectively and ensured that such disagreements, which were par for the course in an

intercultural setting, were destigmatized. The culture of understanding and empowerment is perhaps best understood within the comparisons that participants drew between classroom environments and the program when one particular participant contracted COVID-19:

But they [Global DePaul] were very respectful of that. I think a reason, a part of the reason for it is because they were from the Global DePaul, um, communi- community and they understood what it was like to, like, what the world was like during COVID, and other parts of the world with the rules and regulations over there, um, different from what's happening in America. I feel like they were very, uh, they were a lot more understanding because they were a part of the Global DePaul community.

(Participant 14, Woman).

Whereas a different attitude prevailed within classrooms:

It was just, a couple of my professors seemed to get tired of the fact (laughs) that I couldn't make it to class even though I couldn't fly in. Um, they were all, like, very accommodating, yes. Um, but I feel like I had the least amount of trouble and the least amount of keeping up with Global DePaul (Participant 14, Woman).

Impacts. The most important impact of the program is undoubtedly an improvement in intercultural communication skills. Such an impact takes many forms but occurs on a more abstract level with an improvement in the ability to take the perspective of others.

I think it's just, like a honestly, like a broader, like, understanding of like, just like, I don't know how to, I don't know how to say. Um, I guess just a sense of, like, trying to understand where people are coming from and that even if, you know, they are not, quote unquote, like, from a different culture than me, like, that we have different experiences and that can shape a variety of things that they do or how they interact or

what they say. And I guess, just being a little bit more patient and understanding in approaching conversations and interactions with people (Participant 11, Woman).

As participants increased their abilities to put themselves in others' shoes, in this instance international students, participants reported a greater increase in the unique challenges that international students face.

I think definitely it may like a, as you get like firsthand experience interacting with international students, it made me become a lot more aware of like my, my privilege in the US. Like both being white and a native English speaker. Like that comes with a lot of privilege and, you know, it, it's made me more aware of how other, how international, how the international student experience differs from mine, you know? (Participant 2, did not disclose gender)

With this greater understanding, participants felt less anxious in starting and facilitating conversations with international students. Such decrease in anxiety was also due to the fact that international students were perceived to be open and willing to engage, especially after participants received training through the workshops within the program.

I think that I learned or really got better at maneuvering situations where, um, where I kind of felt like, uh, I think I just got better at being more open to, like, conversation if, if that makes sense.

Like, I think beforehand and even now sometimes, I struggle with being nervous when I'm talking to people. Um, but working with Global DePaul, especially at all our events, everyone that came to our events was so open and so ready to, like, make friends and, like, talk about things. And that was a really, really great experience (Participant 12, Woman).

Concurrently, as participants interacted with international students with greater ease, participants became more aware of their own cultural backgrounds as well as developed a deeper understanding of how such a cultural background was not necessarily ubiquitous.

I think it made me really aware of also the different facets of my perspective that are unique to the United States versus elsewhere. Like maybe I wouldn't have realized that... I'm trying to, now I can't think of a specific example. But like maybe I wouldn't have realized that like one specific thing I referenced that maybe everyone in the United States would understand is unique to the United States (Participant 1, Man)

Other participants felt that the program helped them reflect on cultural aspects that they would not have otherwise thought about.

For me personally at least, um, it exposed me to aspects of other cultures that I probably otherwise wouldn't have gotten on my own. Um, so like I said, like exposing me to, to food from other cultures, activities from other cultures, um, making sure we were like culturally a like aware of some of the customs of other countries. Um, things like that (Participant 3, Woman).

Additionally, the program increased the desire of the participants to support and appreciate international students that they interacted with.

So individually for me, mm, I think becoming more compassionate toward... Not that I was like not compassionate to people who are different than me, but like it's grown. Like my compassion has grown. Not that it was in a bad place before, but like it's definitely made me appreciate and admire what they're doing as students to come over and the risk they're taking for their self-improvement...So it's, I would say it's bolstered my appreciation for them as people because they have the courage to do what a lot of people don't. So that, that I would say (Participant 2, did not disclose gender).

Despite registering important and significant impacts in intercultural communication, the program, for the most part, did not achieve its other intended goal of fostering friendships between international students and program participants. While many participants interacted with international students outside of the program, it often took the form of following each other on social media, and rarely translated to deeper friendships. Only one participant formed a deep friendship that survived the program and was still thriving many years later.

It just goes back to what I said earlier about how, um, I think friendships were great, but they were limited to when, like, EDGE events were happening. When you were put together through EDGE. I think, at least for me, I didn't really have outside friendships, um, outside of EDGE with them because, I don't know, we just didn't really, like, meet up anywhere. Um, it was just a little more difficult with timing (Participant 4, Woman).

Additionally, the relationships that were developed were not deep.

Interviewer: Do you consider it a deep friendship or is it more superficial?

Speaker 2:

Um, I would say it's more superficial. Um, they're not, I don't meet up with anyone like regularly, but definitely like when I see them in passing, I'm like, oh my God. Like, like I saw one of them, um, like the other day at a party and we just like chit chatted for a while, you know? So it's definitely like I'm comfortable with approaching and like talking to them, but I wouldn't say i- i- like any deep... (Participant 2, did not disclose gender).

Furthermore, given that international students tended to be in the Loop campus and the participants were located in the Lincoln Park Campus, opportunities for spontaneous meetings were diminished.

So, like we wouldn't necessarily see them out and about on campus to be able to interact with them a little bit more. Um, so it would kind of like fall to then like setting up meetings, like getting coffee, getting lunch, things like that. Which we did try to do, but I think it was hindered a little bit by like not seeing them so much that if you like ran into them on campus, you'd be like, "Oh, hey, like how are you?" That kind of thing (Participant 3, Woman).

Some participants did form friendships with international students. but not through the program.

On my international friendships. So, I feel like I w-, I have a couple international friends that I just, just kind of met through, um, unprofessional channels, um, that I kind of just stumbled about. (Participant 14, Woman)

Interestingly, however, the program did form unanticipated connections however these mostly resulted through friendships between participants of the same cohort. Participants claimed that the many hours working together on projects led to the development of a bond and for some also provided a much-needed sense of community among program participants. The program also aided students to get to know the structures of DePaul as well as get around and get used to the city of Chicago.

I feel like, even before choosing DePaul, I chose DePaul, and I didn't visit the school; COVID happened. Um, it was a school that gave me more money in scholarship, and I'm a first-generation college student, and I, uh, read that they cater to first generation. So, I was like, "Okay, you know what? Chicago's a great city. Let's, let's go for it." And I did, and it was all so new. I didn't live on campus, um, I didn't really know where to get my information from, at least through DePaul. Um, I remember, even before, I would look up videos of, like, "Oh," like, "A day in the life of a college

student." I really couldn't find much. Um, I found outdated videos. And I think Global DePaul felt, um, like they were comforting, or like a way of introducing DePaul from a global lens, um, while also highlighting what they already offer. Um, so I guess it was my only in to the, that world of DePaul (Participant 9, Woman).

In the long-term, participants reported that the communication skills that they had previously developed had improved significantly as well as developing new intercultural dimensions that they may not have previously been acquainted with. Additionally, most participants reported an increase in their confidence as a result of the program which has spurred them to embrace new challenges and visit more places around the world.

Barriers. Given the finding that participants did not form friendships with international students in a meaningful manner, participants were queried about what they perceived to be barriers to the achievement of such a goal. Participants noted that particular differences relating to age meant that forming friendships proved more arduous than anticipated. All of the participants were freshmen aged 18 or 19 years old when they participated in the program, however many of the international students they interacted with were older graduate students, who at times had families and had much more life experience than the participants. This difference in age and life experience proved to be a very daunting barrier for the participants to navigate, with many participants feeling intimidated.

Um, barriers? I think it would just be the age. Like because I think since EDGE is tailored to freshman and like a lot of international students are of upper age, I think that would be like an only barrier 'cause like, for example, I found myself as an EDGE student as a freshman like I was tackling my own struggles with like being in a new college student but they're talking about um, sorry, but um they're talking about when I would talk to international students they were talking about like

apartments and like figuring out like I don't know like adulthood. Like they were talking about their real big boy, girl jobs and I'm here like I'm just struggling through finals, you know. So I think that would be the obstacle (Participant 10, Woman).

Furthermore, given the fact that all the participants were freshmen, some participants felt that members of their cohort would have a diminished commitment to the program given that they would want to experience other things within freshman life. Additionally, some of the participants did not feel safe enough giving their personal details to international students, while others felt they had very little in common given that international students had different majors to most of the participants.

Another highly important barrier to the formation of friendship related to the logistical aspect that given most of international students had classes in the Loop Campus, while participants were all based in the Lincoln Park Campus. Such a geographic barrier meant that the chances of meeting spontaneously on campus were highly diminished if not null. Additionally, meeting outside of the campus required a lot of effort and initiative on behalf of both international students and domestic students and therefore continued to diminish the likelihood of external meetings and thus the formation of friendship. Making matter more complicated was the fact that the different campuses also could result in conflict schedules which continued to disincentivize participants in investing in friendships with international students.

I think it's just because of, like, um... For me, like, we're just not seeing each other. Like, I go to a completely different school as them, uh, and we live, like... I lived in Lincoln Park. They lived in Downtown ... Downtown Chicago. And I think the biggest factor is when you're in EDGE, you're a freshman. You're 18, and international

students are in grad- master's programs, or grad school. Um, just in different places in life, different- different courses (Participant 4, Woman).

Another issue that was perceived by the participants related to cultural barriers. Despite the preparation given by the program, participants did not always fully overcome their anxiety around communicating with international students, especially when there were significant language barriers. These cultural differences were than further amplified when international students would gather in groups of co-nationals and multi-nationals making cultivating of a friendship even more difficult.

Um, I think it was still pretty awkward for a lot of international students. And um, at times, kind of intimidating. I think that um, we, yeah, um, I just remember it being a little bit more difficult to strike up conversations with international students. And I don't know if it's because um, at a table, there's a couple of Americans who were just talking really fast. Or um, talking, I don't know if it's like a language barrier thing. Or um, it's, it's just, like a personality thing where they're just kinda shy or something like that. (Participant 7, Woman)

A further barrier related to the Covid-19 pandemic, with participants who were within the program between 2020-2021 noting that it had several negative impacts on the program. Firstly, participants noted that engagement in the events declined from all parties particularly as these shifted online with certain events not being possible due to the digital nature. Furthermore, the shift to zoom meetings further alienated the friendship process because participants felt that “when you practice intercultural communication, the physical of someone is highly important” (Participant, 9).

I think it was hard to navigate from like, 'cause when you're in person a lot, a lot more engagement was there, but when we started doing the, the like events online,

you could tell the disengagement, you could also like see, like they had time changes differences, some people wouldn't turn on their cameras. You know, there was a lot with regards to like engagement. (Participant 10, Woman)

The largest barrier toward the formation of friendships between participants and international students was programmatic. Apart from having a large time commitment, participants felt that many events and activities were set up in a very short time, with very little incentive for participants to remain connected outside of the program. However, the largest obstacle towards the development of friendships emanated from a program design conflict between the broader EDGE program and Global DePaul. While the former placed a great emphasis on professional development, and being “professional”, the latter had broader more experiential aims such as the formation of friendships. Participants were conflicted by these goals and given the funding component felt that being too informal might be perceived as not taking the program seriously enough and therefore opted to view international students as clients as opposed to acquaintances with the potential for friendship.

Um, I think there was a, a, at the beginning of the program, ... um, the, like, EDGE leader, she really, like, pounded it into us that, like, this is, like, a professional development, uh, like, uh, opportunity and that they're not, like, paying us, like, through, like, a, a stipend.

They're, like, paying for our tuition. And I understood that at any moment, they could, like, you know, like, take it away, like, if we were starting to, like, neglect our duties or if we started to, like, not contribute positively to our team. Like, they could, like, kick us out.

And so because of that, I treated, like, my role at Global DePaul EDGE as a job, and I treated it as, like, something that, like, was really, like, important and, like, I needed

to be, like, this, this, this, and that, like, not so much as, like, a free, like, uh, opportunity, if that makes sense. And, like, we had, like, deadlines, and we had, you know, we had, uh, f- um, pr- like a b- like a... How do you say this? Like assignments we had to complete and stuff like that. (Participant 12, Woman)

Such a quote indicates the level of conflict the two disparate program theories elicited in the participant and how impacted why certain impacts were not achieved.

Data Integration

The integration of Phases 1 and 2 revolved around two main research questions namely 1) What was the impact of the Global program on participants' intercultural communication and how did it achieve it? and 2) What was the impact of the Global program on the participants international friendships and how did it achieve it? Due to the embedded mixed-methods design chosen for this study with the qualitative component subsuming the quantitative component, the data were merged with the qualitative component being given more prominence and the quantitative serving a more confirmatory role. Below is a convergence/divergence table indicating the way such an integration was carried out.

Table 3

Divergence/Convergence Matrix

Topic		
	Intercultural Communication	International Friendships
Quantitative Finding	The T-Test for the pre and post PRICA showed insignificant changes while the ANOVA analysis showed there were no	The Two-sample signed pair rank, showed insignificant difference between pre and post frequencies for number,

	significant changes between the various cohorts for their post-PRICA scores	depth, quantity of meeting and modality of meeting with international friends,
Qualitative Themes	Improved Perspective Taking, Greater awareness of the cultural and linguistic difficulties faced by international students, Diminished anxiety around communicating with international students, increased awareness of the differences between American and International Students’ various cultures, increased desire to make international students feel welcome	Superficial connection, cultural barriers, demographic barriers, program barriers, logistical barriers, barriers due to Covid
Convergence/Divergence	Divergence	Convergence
Meaningfulness	Participants overestimated their pre PRICA scores leading to inflated values and non-significant changes in scores. Improvement in intercultural communication did not	Both methods confirm that friendship did not occur in a meaningful manner as a result of the program.

	<p>completely nullify anxiety.</p> <p>Given the type of mixed method chosen, greater prominence ought to be given to the qualitative result.</p>	
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Research Question 1: Intercultural Impact and How This was Obtained

The first research question produced divergent results in the qualitative and quantitative study. Within the qualitative study, participants indicated that their intercultural communication had indeed improved and had done so by increasing their ability to take on the perspective of others, particularly international students with their particular lived experiences. Subsequently they had experienced diminished anxiety around communicating with international students as well as a greater awareness around the differences between their and international students' cultures, which finally resulted in an increased desire to make international student feel welcome.

The quantitative component of this study conversely found that there was a non-significant increase in participants PRICA scores, however both scores in accordance to Neuliep and McCroskey's (1997) instructions within the lower range and indicated low intercultural communication apprehension. There are numerous reasons why the hypothesis that the PRICA post score was not significantly lower than the pre score, but an important one may be that participants over-estimated their lack of intercultural apprehension leading to an inflated pre-score. Such validity concern is supported by the literature namely in Lam and Bengo (2003) who claim that pre-test overestimation might lead to a situation where participants more critically assess their ability and thereby lower their post score to adjust

accordingly. Additionally, Lam and Bengo (2003) also claim that at times, participants are simply not knowledgeable enough about the attribute or behavior the intervention wishes to target to accurately assess their prior level, thus resulting in over-inflation. Given the population at hand, namely freshman students who although may have been exposed some international settings or persons were probably not fully prepared for the intensity and discomfort Global DePaul would cause, it is highly likely that such an over-estimation has taken effect.

Furthermore, given the choice of mixed-method design employed in this study, the qualitative component ought to subsume the quantitative. Such a design choice leads this researcher to conclude that while a positive impact on participants intercultural communication did indeed occur, it was neither complete, nor uniform across all participants. It is likely that a mixture of previous exposure to international persons or situations, extraversion, and level of investment in the program are likely to be account for the variability in intercultural communication impact.

Research Question 2: The Lack Impact on International Friendships and What May have Prevented it

Both the quantitative component and the qualitative component are convergent with insignificant increases in friendship as confirmed by participants perceptions. Given the lack of impact, it is useful to leverage the flexible and far-reaching nature of the qualitative component to ascertain why, this impact has not occurred. Participants identified numerous barriers including anticipated ones such as the impact of the pandemic and the shift to online modalities, and cultural differences especially around linguistic barriers preventing friendship formation to less foreseeable barriers. Within the latter category two important barriers were the age difference between participants and international students which fostered a feeling of

intimidation and thus obstructed friendship formation, and geographical distances.

Participants were primarily based within the Lincoln Park Campus while international students were primarily based in the Loop Campus, which severely diminished opportunities for random encounters on campus and more importantly the possibility of making social plans outside the program easily.

Looking beyond logistical and socio-demographic factors and looking at program theory factors, participants claimed that the goals and objectives of the broader EDGE program were in conflict with the more granular Global DePaul program. The former insisted on professionalism and professional development, while the latter encouraged more experiential goals such as making friends with international students. Given the funding and scholarship conditions tied with the EDGE program, it seems that this consideration played a more influential role in the minds of the participants.

Discussion

The present study evaluated an internship-style program entitled *Global DePaul* within the broader EDGE initiative. Specifically, it focused on the relationship between Global DePaul and the participants of Global DePaul, and the relationship between participants and international students. Given the community psychology approach and values, broader ecological contexts such as DePaul University considerations, neighborhood factors, national and international issues were considered, thus providing a truly ecological approach.

Looking at the program from a broader perspective, it seemed that the program managed to achieve one of its stated impacts; namely, *the improvement of greater intercultural communication* (which emerged from the qualitative component of this study but not the quantitative one). However, the program did not achieve its other primary

objective namely, to *foster friendships between international students and program participants*. Such a finding was confirmed by both the quantitative and qualitative components.

The theoretical implications of this finding are numerous but require a critical lens to be able to tease out such insights (Allen et al, 2013). Most students partaking in the EDGE program and others involved in the Global DePaul did not choose to participate in the program simply because they believed it would be a fun extracurricular activity to engage in. Instead, participants claimed they joined to mitigate the tuition costs of their education. Furthermore, participants spoke at length during the qualitative component on the professional development aspect of the program and how this would aid them in their future career prospects. Such a finding indicates that economic considerations were more important than experiential considerations and confirms the importance of internship style programs described in the literature (Shoenfelt et al., 2013; Knouse et al., 1999).

Such a finding echoes Allen and colleagues' (2013) warning that internships or internship style programs may become reproducers of the inequities associated with race, class, and ability. While at face value, the EDGE program and specifically Global DePaul within it, seem like a great idea with noble goals, Global DePaul and the EDGE program, more broadly, are unwittingly participating in continuing the capitalist cycle of making the have-nots struggle more to achieve what they have accomplished with a fraction of the effort (see also Klein & Weiss', 2013, selection problem). While some of the participants benefit in the short-term, the lack of a systemic component that addresses inequities on a structural level means that the long-term advantage for some of the participants might be less than envisaged.

Within the Global DePaul program, the barriers mentioned in relation to the formation of friendship point towards the possibility of mild ethnocentrism amongst the participants, given that none of the barriers were truly insurmountable. Such a finding confirms Dunne's (2009) study that domestic students do not see equal value in investing time and energy with international students as they do with domestic peers, especially when additional difficulties such as geographic distances make the relationship more difficult. While lower levels of ethnocentrism are not shocking, as was seen by participants reluctance to overcome barriers to form friendship with international students, for Global DePaul to become truly equitable a strong self-assessment and reflection is required of the program to query why it did not invest further in promoting such friendships but also to provide more critical spaces for participants to assess their power, privilege and positionality.

Implications for Community Psychology and Evaluation

Community psychology literature has been surprisingly sparse on the subject of intercultural interventions within university settings. The current study offered an opportunity for community psychology to start establishing a corpus of theory and findings within this field. Given community psychologies decolonial and social justice orientation (Birman & Bray, 2017), the field is well placed to ensure that programming aimed at increasing intercultural communication competence does not exacerbate Global North/South divides placing a primacy or "normalizing" American modes of communication while othering other forms of communication. Such a lens will prove imperative to provide critical analysis that will aid organizations developing intercultural programs to avoid explicit or implicit colonial designs or actions.

Furthermore, community psychology is well-placed to evaluate and provide critical feedback on such initiatives (Wolfe, 2019). Unlike other more positivistic and solely

quantitative fields of psychology (Tebes, 2005), community psychology embraces a multitude of methods that allow for in-depth multi-perspective exploration which is vital to ensure that disempowered voices are heard (Birman & Bray, 2017).

Additionally, community psychology might offer further theories and models to explain why and how intercultural communication interventions work within a particular context. The ecological perspective that community psychology brings to scholarly understanding (Birman & Bray, 2017) gives greater explanatory power to particular programs as they work in their eco-system thus being able to draw on influences both at the meso and the macro level. Such an approach avoids the pitfall of concentrating solely on individual level variables such as personality factors and instead proposes ideas and conceptualizations that capture the interplay between individual and context.

With regards to evaluation, the current study highlighted the importance of designing the appropriate measurement methods which suit not only the requirements of rigor, but also which are useful and feasible for the evaluation clients. Within this study using an embedded approach addressed well the limitations of the pre-post quantitative design and the lack of socio-demographics. Furthermore, using mixed methods also provided additional benefits to the research by providing insights about the program that were not obviously connected to the research question but have significant value for the evaluation client such as the importance of nested program theory coherence for successful programs (Fetters & Molina-Azorin, 2020)

Implications for Universities, Education and Administration

The present study offers numerous insights for educators, administrators and universities in general. Universities must think deeply about the equitable basis for internship programs and ensure that such programs do not reproduce or exacerbate inequities but rather tackle them (Allen et al., 2013).

From an implementation perspective, universities and administrators would do well to follow these insights that emerged from the study:

- 1) Advertise well the advantages of such an intervention ensuring that prospective participants understand the personal, professional, and leisurely benefits of participation.
- 2) Ensure clear coordination on theories of change when multiple entities are involved, ensuring that objectives are aligned.
- 3) Offer programs to students of all ages, given that freshman year might not be the best year to receive the benefits of such a program.
- 4) Encourage and facilitate the participation of international students within the program not merely as passive recipients. Given the strong friendship formation amongst cohorts, the presence of international students amongst cohorts will increase the opportunities for significant improvement in intercultural communication and improve the program.
- 5) Evaluate and monitor such programs frequently to ensure proper goal alignment and quick course correction.

Limitations of the Present Study

As with any study, a number of limitations need to be acknowledged. First, only 54 participants out of the 89 (compliance rate of 61 %) fully completed the standardized measure analyzed in the quantitative section of Study 1, *thus rendering what was already a small population of potential respondents even smaller*. The inadequacy of this component was further exacerbated by the fact that the data did not have a socio-demographic component, thus leading to limited generalizability both due to the small sample, and because it is impossible to determine how representative of the whole population of the participants the sample was. Addressing such a limitation was done through choosing an embedded mixed-

method design which allows for the mixing of methods, but with a predominance of one over the other. In this case the qualitative component was given further prominence given the limitations of the quantitative component mentioned above.

Second, most participants interviewed in the qualitative Phase 2 claimed they had a great experience within the program, possibly indicating that there was an over representation of person who had positive experiences within the program, while having an underrepresentation of dissenting views and/or negative experiences. An evaluation with greater resources would have permitted further, targeted, interviewing to ensure that a continuum of experiences was represented, thus reaching research saturation. The findings that would emerge would be more balanced and nuanced and thus more authoritative.

Thirdly, and perhaps the greatest methodological limitation with the present pair of studies, is that an important stakeholder of this evaluation was not consulted due to logistical limitations, namely the international students. Given that both outcomes being evaluated required bi-directional relationships, not including international students' perspective is a major limitation of this study.

Fifth, mixed-method studies bring with it certain methodological limitations, namely that the epistemological differences that comprise the two approaches are not compatible for any meaningful inquiry into a subject matter (Heslehurst et al., 2015). Despite these critiques given the applied nature, time constraints and the university setting of this study, pragmatism despite its limitations was still felt to be the best approach.

At a theoretic level one of the major limitations of this study has been reconciling the various findings. In the quantitative component both intercultural communication improvement and friendship formation was not found to have occurred. However, in the qualitative component, some level of intercultural communication occurred (thus

contradicting the quantitative component) and no friendship formation occurring (thus confirming the quantitative component). It is likely that experiential programs (such as Global DePaul) with experiential goals such as forming new friendships or improving intercultural communication skills, require more open-ended, egalitarian relationships instead of imbalanced relationships. Such a finding is supported by literature where a quasi-experiment carried out in Australia, found that contact was not enough to promote friendship and intercultural contact, but that activities that promoted egalitarian collaboration and close proximity were vital to increase desire for intercultural contact in domestic students (Nesdale & Todd, 2000).

Conversely the professional development goals that were espoused by the broader EDGE program aim to create participants who are more “professional” (Schwartz and Bryan, 1998) contribute to creating a power imbalance between the participants and international students, with participants perceiving international students as “clients” as opposed to peers to form connections with. Given that the Global DePaul participants perceived themselves to be the “professional” and the international students as “clients”, this was hardly conducive to the formation of friendship and broader intercultural communication improvement. The theoretic implications of such a finding are twofold. Firstly, internship style programs, with a focus on professional development are not conducive to the formation of friendship with international students as they create and exacerbate power imbalances. Secondly, when dealing with programs nested in one another, great care needs to be taken when forming the program theory to ensure that the activities, outputs and desired impacts and outcomes are harmonious at each level of the program, instead of creating tension and conflict, thus rendering the program less effective.

Future Research Directions, Based on the Present Studies

Future studies should employ broader research designs with greater resources and include international students, both as a matter of equity (given they are the ultimate users of this intervention) and as a matter of rigor to triangulate findings. Furthermore, carrying out longitudinal assessments at multiple timepoints of PRICA and friendship can give a clearer idea of the impact of the program as well as neutralize any initial over-inflation.

Future concepts that might to be studied from a community psychology point of view is the impact of geographic distances from on-campus experiences, especially for international students (Ward et al., 2009). Furthermore, more in-depth qualitative investigations can uncover deeper structural reasons why it seems that DePaul University (and, even at other institutions with similar programs) segregates most of its international students to the Loop Campus and many of its domestic students to the Lincoln Park Campus. While it is likely that the result of such a study will initially point towards administrative expedience, strategic in-depth probing will most likely reveal more structural reasons for this administrative arrangement.

Finally, future studies can further elaborate on the barriers to friendship between domestic and international students. Investigating in greater depth why such relationships do not occur with greater ease naturally, and what can be done at a systemic level to promote the development of these friendships in an organic manner is an important area for future studies.

Conclusion

The present study evaluated an intercultural intervention held at a mid-size college in a Mid-Western state in the United States of America. Utilizing a mixed methodology, the study assessed whether and how intercultural intervention achieved its goals in improving intercultural communication in its participants as well as fostering friendships with international students. Despite an imperfect convergence, results indicated that while a

positive impact on intercultural communication was achieved through various events and the work culture of the program with the quantitative component indicating that no reduction in intercultural communication apprehension occurred, but the qualitative component indicating that there was an increase in intercultural communication proficiency. With regards to the friendship with international students' objective, both the qualitative and the quantitative component indicated that such an objective was not achieved. The reason posited for the interventions failure to achieve the friendship formation with international students, and some discrepancy with regards to intercultural communication between the quantitative and qualitative component, might be because Global DePaul and the broader EDGE programs had incompatible goals which obstructed the formers goals.

The main implication of this evaluation most related to the fact that when programs are nested in one another, great care must be taken to ensure that program goals are well aligned. Furthermore, community psychology ought to use its social justice orientation and its decolonial lens to contribute both theory and program evaluation to ensure that these programs achieve their goals in a just manner.

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Appendix A – List of Edge Program Office Possibilities

1. Campus Recreation
2. Career Center
3. Center for Sales Leadership
4. Center for Teaching & Learning
5. Commuter Student Services
6. Athletics
7. Division of Mission & Ministry
8. Global Program
9. Housing Services Green Team
10. Housing Services Marketing & Media
11. Idea Realization Lab
12. Kellstadt Marketing Center
13. Office of Advancement
14. Office of Multicultural Student Success (OMSS)
15. Office of Student Involvement-Connect
16. Office of Student Involvement-Programming
17. Office of Student Involvement-Voter Engagement
18. The Theatre School
19. Undergraduate Admissions

20. Undergraduate Recruitment Marketing & Communication (URMC)
21. University Marketing Communications (Content Crew) (Students, n.d.)

Appendix B – Study 1: Personal Report of Intercultural Communication Apprehension (PRICA) (Neuliep & McCroskey, 1997)

1. Generally, I am comfortable interacting with a group of people from different cultures.
2. I am tense and nervous while interacting with people from different cultures.
3. I like to get involved in group discussion with others who are from different cultures.
4. Engaging in a group discussion with people from different cultures makes me nervous.
5. I am calm and relaxed with interacting with a group of people who are from different cultures.
6. While participating in a conversation with a person from a different culture, I get nervous.
7. I have no fear of speaking up in a conversation with a person from a different culture.
8. Ordinarily I am very tense and nervous in a conversation with person from a different culture.
9. Ordinarily I am very calm and relaxed in conversations with a person from a different culture.
10. While conversing with a person from a different culture, I feel very relaxed.
11. I am afraid to speak up in conversations with a person from a different culture.
12. I face the prospect of interacting with people from different cultures with confidence.
13. My thoughts become confused and jumbled when interacting with people from different cultures.
14. Communicating with people from different cultures makes me feel uncomfortable.

Appendix C – Study 2: Interview Schedule

- 1) How old are you?
- 2) Are you currently a student at the University?
- 3) What course are you studying/ have you graduated from?
- 4) Are you an international student?
- 5) What year did you participate in the Global Edge program?
- 6) What was the impact, *if any*, of the program on your intercultural communication?
 - a. Prompt, your comfort level
 - b. Prompt, Your apprehension level
- 7) How did the program achieve such an outcome?
 - a. *Were there any other barriers related to this outcome? If yes what where they?*
- 8) What was the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on such an outcome?
- 9) What has been the long-term impact of the program on your intercultural communication?
- 10) What was the impact, *if any*, of the program on your international friendships?
- 11) How did the program achieve such an outcome?
- 12) What was the long-term impact of the program on your international friendships?
- 13) What was the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on such an outcome?
 - a. *Were there any other barriers related to this outcome? If yes what where they?*
- 14) What would you improve in the program?
- 15) Were there any unanticipated effects of the program? If yes, what where they?
- 16) What improvements would you recommend related to the two outcomes (intercultural communication apprehension and friendships).

17) What was the most significant impact of the program in your experience?