

# An exploration of the impact of an online MBA course on intercultural sensitivity development

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AN EXPLORATION OF THE IMPACT OF AN ONLINE MBA COURSE ON  
INTERCULTURAL SENSITIVITY DEVELOPMENT

by

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AN EXPLORATION OF THE IMPACT OF AN ONLINE MBA COURSE ON  
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While research on online MBA courses is growing rapidly, teaching specific skills using online delivery formats is a relatively new stream of research in graduate business education. In this study, adult learning methods such as experiential activities, discussion, teamwork, and action learning were used in a seven-week online MBA course to explore in what ways intercultural sensitivity could be developed. A two-trial, pretest-posttest research mixed methods design was implemented in the summers of 2004 and 2005 at a Midwestern Jesuit university.

Quantitative and qualitative data were gathered and analyzed from thirty-eight participants (N=38). First, quantitative analysis of pretest-posttest scores from the Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI) (Hammer & Bennett, 1998, 2002, 2004), and demographic variables, revealed that sixty-eight percent (68%) of participants developed greater intercultural sensitivity while age, gender, and degrees of course engagement were predictors of IDI score change. Second, qualitative analysis of survey data found that the quality of virtual teamwork impacted perceived learning outcomes and most participants found the online MBA course to be a useful and complementary addition to “traditional” MBA face-to-face courses. Finally, six case studies were developed to explore IDI stage shift and construct explanatory schemas. Conclusions suggest that coping strategies, cooperative/collaborative efforts, flexible cognitive orientations, course engagement, introspective reflection, and cultural curiosity were factors that impacted intercultural sensitivity development.

The results of the study confirm that intercultural sensitivity can be learned and measured using an online delivery format and the IDI. Recommendations to further develop this online MBA course include: 1) expand length of course, 2) incorporate role of intercultural coach, 3) include synchronous components, 4) provide clearer course expectations, 5) structure purposeful teams, and 6) enrich course content. Four directions for future research that emerged from the study include testing course effectiveness using larger graduate student samples, examining the effects of different team composition on intercultural sensitivity development, comparing a blended learning environment with purely online delivery, and conducting longitudinal studies to measure behavioral change.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Suzanne Scaffidi Warell, B.A., M.A.

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## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

#### Producing Globally Competent Managers

This study tested an online educational alternative and its viability for developing intercultural sensitivity. Intercultural sensitivity is the ability to communicate more effectively across culturally diverse groups, understand one's own and another's cultural identity, and reconcile cultural difference in ways that maximize benefits to all stakeholders (Bhawuk & Brislin, 2000). Business leaders recognize the development of intercultural sensitivity as an important contribution to workforce performance and the realization of cross-company, cross-cultural objectives (Ballou, Bowers, Boyatzis, & Kolb, 1999; Banks, 2001; Bennis & Townsend, 1995; Clark & Pugh, 1999; Harris & Moran, 1996; Hofstede, 1980; Mendenhall, Kuhlman, & Stahl, 2001; Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 1998; Saghafi, 2001; Welch, 2001). By definition, an educational alternative that focuses on the role that cultural difference plays in communication interactions, could be a workforce solution for transcending ethnocentrism and establishing intercultural understanding in the global business environment (J. M. Bennett, 1996; Paige, 2003). The delivery of intercultural content using an online learning environment to guide instruction could facilitate the development of intercultural sensitivity and produce a cadre of globally competent managers.

Proponents of intercultural sensitivity development, an essential resource for success in the global marketplace, assume that as an individual's experience of cultural difference becomes more complex and sophisticated, intercultural competence increases (M. J. Bennett, 1986). Relating directly to personal, interpersonal and attitudinal

development, intercultural sensitivity is considered a soft skill that leads to managerial global competence. It is also argued that it helps managers support collaborative team work and it teaches them to act as a facilitator to solve global business problems and promote effective global business transactions (Henninger & Weingandt, 2003; Weiss, 2003).

Many studies that focus on managerial global competence identify criteria to assess the characteristics of an individual's intercultural effectiveness (Adler, 2002; Black, 1988; Black, Gregerson, & Mendenhall, 1992; Black & Mendenhall, 1990; Blake, Heslin, & Curtis, 1996; Kealey & Protheroe, 1996). They suggest that managers demonstrate empathy and possess characteristics indicative of intercultural competence such as tolerance of ambiguity and open-mindedness. As defined by Mendenhall and colleagues (2008) tolerance of ambiguity refers to the ability to manage uncertainty in new and complex situations where there is not necessarily a "right" way to interpret things. That is, individuals may be open-minded but not necessarily manage the ambiguity and uncertainty associated with complex work-related tasks. Managers with high tolerance of ambiguity are not threatened by complexity and enjoy taking on new challenges.

Empirical studies continue to examine intercultural effectiveness by using instruments to identify factors that could be used as predictors of successful intercultural performance. As managers learn to operationalize these communicative-behavior factors, they are better able to transfer competitive advantages to new situations, establish a presence in the location where a specific target market is best served, and more

effectively develop vital relationships with individuals from other cultures. Bhawak and Brislin (1992) further suggest:

To be effective in another culture, people must be interested in other cultures, be sensitive enough to notice cultural differences, and then also be willing to modify their behavior as an indication of respect for the people of other cultures. A reasonable term that summarizes these qualities of people is intercultural sensitivity, and we suggest that it may be a predictor of effectiveness. (p. 416)

Several researchers have argued that managers with higher levels of intercultural sensitivity experience fewer misunderstandings and financial losses due to communication failures and are more likely to acquire executive leadership positions (Black, 1988; Fluck, 2003; Harris & Moran, 1996; Mendenhall, Stevens, Bird, & Oddou, 2008). Although the role of intercultural sensitivity development in successful global business practices is identified in the research, few studies explore how to develop and measure this critical human resource requirement (Armstrong, 2000; Bi, 2000; Fluck, 2003; Landis & Brislin, 1983; Leonard & DeLacey, 2002; Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 1998). Only recently have researchers reviewed the global leadership literature to learn how to best assess and develop “foundational” intercultural competencies. For example, Mendenhall and colleagues (2008) ask whether developing intercultural competencies is a pipe dream, attainable goal, or somewhere in between. They categorize 56 factors into six dimensions that can be divided between those that involve intercultural interaction at the individual and group level, and those that involve the mastery of more macro global business knowledge and skills. This review of the research to date has not conclusively shown which methods are most effective or which educational alternatives can ensure across the board successful outcomes.



The purpose of this study was to understand how an online Masters of Business Administration (MBA) course, *Brainpool Online*, impacted intercultural sensitivity development, an essential component of intercultural competence. In order to conduct the research, I created *Brainpool Online* as a seven-week online MBA course to test whether it helped participants overcome ethnocentrism, acquire the ability to empathize with others, and acquire the flexibility to both communicate and cooperate across cultural boundaries. It was reasoned that participants completing the online MBA course would demonstrate increased levels of intercultural competence, such as proactively acquiring cultural information that contributed to their ways of knowing and understanding people and the communication rules, context, and normative expectations governing intercultural communications.

The findings from six cases developed in Chapter Four show that because of the complexity of the lessons that must be learned, individual motivation and the ability and willingness to learn and change are, in the end, most likely the essential factors that impacted significant intercultural sensitivity development despite moderate predictors of change such as age, gender, and degrees of course engagement.

#### Statement of the Problem

Many global businesses seek individuals with higher levels of intercultural competence and sensitivity to counteract the “severe deficit of business leaders equipped to deal with the complexities, volatility and new rules of the global marketplace” (Bennis & Townsend, 1995). To this end, individuals need both formal and informal educational opportunities in order “to develop new, accurate, and efficient, cultural software” (Mendenhall et al., 2001, p. 11). Every year global businesses lose millions of dollars

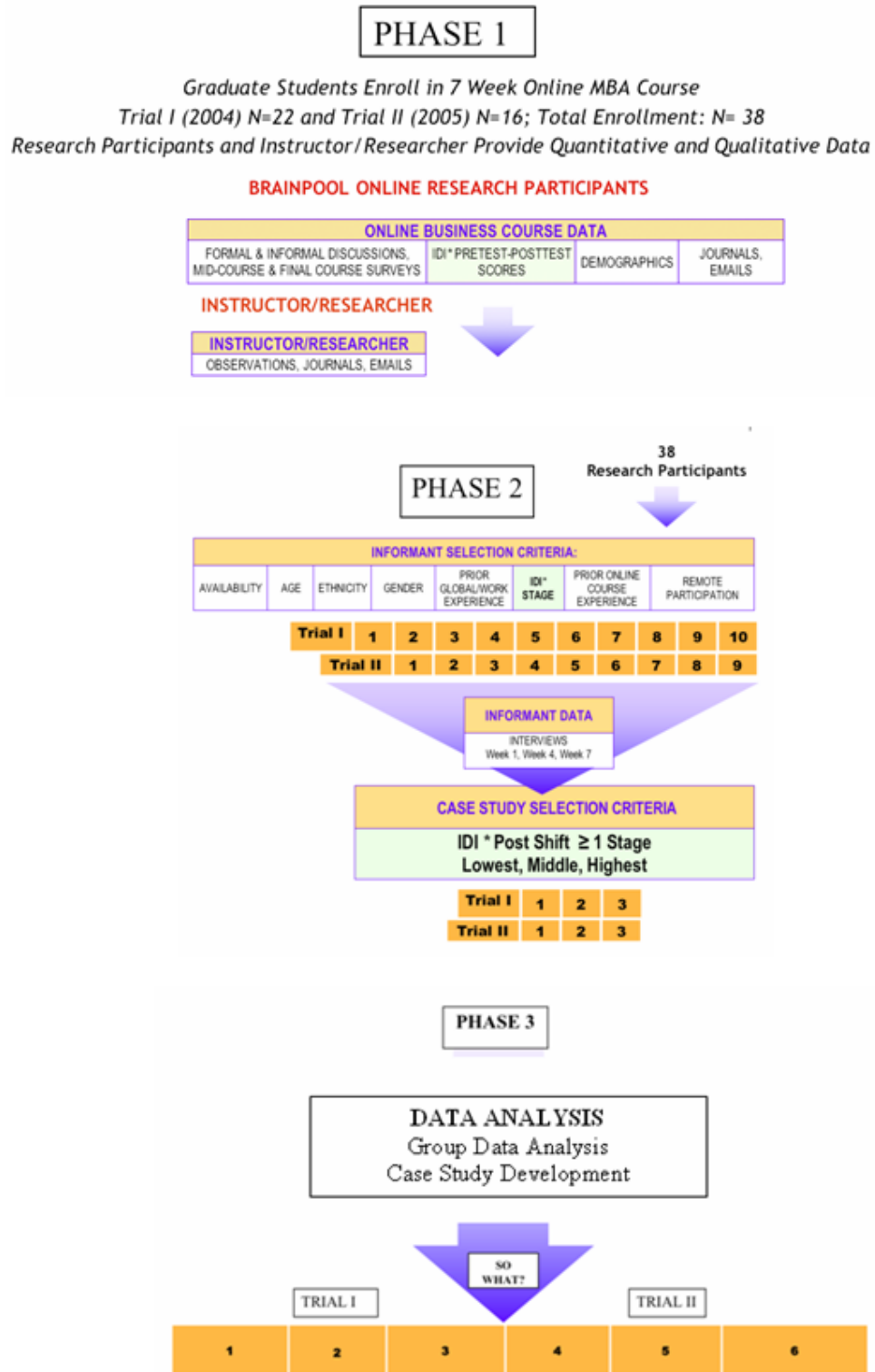
when mergers collapse, negotiations fail, and cross-cultural project teams cannot work together. Black and Mendenhall (1989) argue that American business leaders are unlikely to pick up intercultural competence and sensitivity “in the United States educational system, in their normal life experiences, or in their typical working career” (p. 512). Since this study tested an MBA educational alternative and its viability for impacting intercultural competence and sensitivity for its participants, it could be argued, for example, that an online MBA course could equip future business leaders with the necessary cultural fluency tools to raise cultural awareness and work more effectively on intercultural projects, handle international encounters, prevent cultural misunderstandings and culture shock, and increase profit margins and productivity in the workplace.

#### Research Question

The primary purpose of this study was to explore in what ways an online MBA course moved graduate students toward greater intercultural sensitivity development and to reveal the factors which impacted change. The research question that guided the study was: **In what ways did an online MBA course impact intercultural sensitivity development for graduate students along the intercultural continuum?**

Quantitative and qualitative data were collected during two seven-week trials in the summers of 2004 and 2005 and an interpretive case study methodology was employed to develop six cases. Figure 1 presents a visual model of the methodological approach and the three-phase, mixed methods research design.

Figure 1. *Mixed Methods Research Model*



Of these nineteen research participants, six were later identified as cases for in-depth analysis based on Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI) pretest-posttest scores for each trial, and Phase 3 involved the development of three cases from each trial, representing the lowest, middle, and highest degree of IDI stage shift (developmental progression or regression), to describe the online MBA course experience and its effectiveness for developing intercultural sensitivity. This mixed methods research model is described in more detail in Chapter Three.

### Research Constructs

To fully appreciate the design and delivery of an online MBA course designed to impact intercultural sensitivity development we must understand three key concepts: 1) intercultural competence and sensitivity, 2) Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS), and 3) adult learning theoretical assumptions. Since Bennett (1986) proposes that the capacity to exercise intercultural competence increases with intercultural sensitivity developmental stage progression, the Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS) is used to identify developmental stage progression and explain the experience learners have when confronted with cultural difference. Adult learning theoretical assumptions offer a basis for the design and delivery of the online MBA course used as a venue for this study. Together these three concepts formed the constructs for this research.

#### *Intercultural Competence and Sensitivity*

Wiseman, Hammer, and Nishida (1989) and other business management and intercultural communication scholars concur that intercultural competence and sensitivity require the existence of three components for individuals to become competent

intercultural communicators: affective motivation, behavioral skills, and cognitive knowledge (Henninger & Weingandt, 2003; Landis & Brislin, 1983). Appreciating cultural difference and adapting to cultural dilemmas are illustrative of an individual who has acquired these core competencies. Stated differently, individuals with intercultural competence and sensitivity will display attitudes, behavior, and knowledge that are consistent with an increased desire to engage in intercultural encounters with higher levels of cultural awareness and the use of appropriate cultural behavioral skills.

*Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS)*

In order to predict how participants might confront cultural difference and develop intercultural competence and sensitivity during the online MBA course, a framework developed by Milton Bennett (1986), was used to explain certain kinds of cognitive processing that would typically be associated with the development of a particular worldview. The Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS) forms a bridge between intercultural competence and the developmental sequences through which an individual develops intercultural sensitivity (Bennett, 1986; Paige, 2003). Bennett proposes developmental strategies that move a person from ethnocentric to ethnorelative levels of intercultural sensitivity development. For example, a person who operates in an ethnocentric stage does not recognize, appreciate, or respect cultural difference, while a person operating in an ethnorelative stage is more flexible and can adapt more effectively to solve intercultural conflict. This model represents an advance in the research base as it is the only model that addresses the phenomenology of an individual's cognitive construal and response to cultural difference (Landis, Bennett, & Bennett, 2004; Landis & Bhagat, 1996). It assumes that stage progression in intercultural

sensitivity development occurs when cultural difference challenges individuals to reconsider their preconceived views of the world and to negotiate intercultural interactions with an open mind. An individual's intercultural sensitivity development then, can be described as the process by which an individual becomes aware of his or her own worldview (or the way he or she explains and organizes the world) and the realization that this is an active process of meaning-making which "construes" reality in a particular cultural way (Bennett, 1986). An individual's worldview progresses toward the acceptance of cultural difference while cultural attitudes and behaviors adapt to meet normative expectations.

The DMIS consists of six developmental stage scales: three ethnocentric stages (denial of difference, defense against difference, and minimization of difference), and three ethnorelative stages (acceptance of difference, adaptation to difference, and integration of difference) (see Appendix A). Following is a description of each stage as described by Bennett (1986)

### *Denial*

Individuals in the denial stage experience their own culture as the only real one. Other cultures are avoided by maintaining psychological and/or physical isolation of differences. Individuals in this stage generally are not interested in cultural difference and may act aggressively to eliminate a difference if it impinges on them.

### *Defense*

Individuals in the defense stage experience their own culture (or an adopted culture) as the only good one. These individuals organize the world into "us and them," where "we" are superior and "they" are inferior. As positive interactions with other

cultures occur, individuals may experience the inverse of Defense, or *Reversal* which has often been referred to as the “Peace Corps syndrome,” where a dichotomous worldview persists, but with the poles reversed so that one’s own culture is viewed as inferior to other cultures.

#### *Minimization*

Individuals in the minimization stage experience elements of their worldview in terms of universal beliefs. These individuals use absolutes to obscure deep cultural differences and trivialize or even romanticize other cultures. Individuals in this stage expect similarities and often may become insistent about correcting others’ behavior to match their expectations.

#### *Acceptance*

Individuals in the acceptance stage experience their own culture in the context of other cultures. This does not mean that they are in agreement with cultural difference, i.e., they may judge cultural difference negatively but not with an ethnocentric perspective. Individuals in this stage are curious about cultural difference as well as respectful.

#### *Adaptation*

Individuals in the adaptation stage experience other cultures with appropriate behavior indicative of the culture. They maintain a worldview that is expanded to include multiple cultural perspectives. Individuals in this stage are able to look at the world “through different eyes” and generally change their behavior to communicate more effectively.

### *Integration*

Individuals in the integration stage experience different cultural worldviews and incorporate them into their identity. Here, individuals often deal with issues related to their own “cultural marginality.” This final stage is not necessarily better than *Adaptation* but it is common among individuals who are members of a non-dominant minority group, or have been a long-term expatriate or a “global nomad.”

These developmental stages reflect a cognitive orientation that is expressed through culture-related attitudes and behaviors (Ibid, 1986). The model’s assumptions include the phenomenology of difference, the idea of process, and that ethical choices must be made to develop intercultural sensitivity. Since the goal of this study was to understand the ways an online MBA course moved participants through the progression of stages, it was critical to have an instrument that assessed the degree of change along the intercultural continuum to determine where individuals were developmentally both pre- and post- the online MBA course.

*Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI)*. Based on the Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS), the Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI) developed by Hammer (1997) has been successfully used since 1998 in corporate and academic settings to generate needs analyses for targeted training, create profiles for coaching and action planning, and to conduct course evaluations and other research. The IDI provides empirical data to assess individuals’ intercultural sensitivity development. It measures the degrees of change (IDI score change) and stage development (IDI stage shift), helps to evaluate the effectiveness of educational interventions, and collects demographic variables of participants (Hammer, Bennett, & Wiseman, 2003). The IDI



score is a composite of the six weighted stage scales, based on 10 items for each stage of development, that reflect the individual's placement on the intercultural continuum from ethnocentrism to ethnorelativism. Demographic variables are collected on age, gender, ethnicity, and work experience of participants (and can be modified to suit specific research needs). Several studies document the instrument's validity and reliability (Altshuler, Sussman, & Kachur, 2003; Endicott, Bock, & Narvaez, 2003; Hammer, Bennett, & Wiseman, 2003; Klak & Martin, 2003; Paige, Jacobs-Cassuto, Yershova, & De Jaeghere, 2003; Straffon, 2003). These IDI studies emphasize the role of contexting interviews to provide a baseline for understanding individual worldview orientations to cultural difference that the IDI measures. Hammer and Bennett (1998, 2002, 2004) also point out that administrators who attend IDI training sessions should be aware of the "Reversal" or "Peace Corps Syndrome" phenomenon which is common among participants who are in transition from ethnocentrism to ethnorelativism. Participants in transition often experience a "pendulum effect" when they begin to resolve conflicts within their worldview orientations as their appreciation for cultural differences becomes more sophisticated. The administration of posttests at the conclusion of an educational intervention can help administrators understand these discrepancies as well as provide evidence that these conflicts have been resolved.

The advantage of using this instrument for this study was that it allowed me to accomplish several objectives related to the design and delivery of the online MBA course. The IDI quantified the participants' pretest-posttest intercultural sensitivity development scores to show individual *developmental* intercultural sensitivity (DS) and *perceived* intercultural sensitivity (PS). The pretest measures provided pre-assessment

data to help describe participants' needs so that appropriate learning cues could be implemented during the online MBA course. Likewise, the posttest measures provided documentation of intercultural sensitivity development after online MBA course completion. IDI score change was the posttest measurement that indicated movement along the intercultural continuum, while IDI stage shift was posttest measurement that indicated substantive development in worldview structure, and was therefore, more significant. These pretest-posttest differences were then used to determine the significance of the impact of the online MBA course on intercultural sensitivity development. In addition, the IDI demographic data allowed me to make sampling decisions consistent with my research design criteria. Finally, I used the IDI results as formative measures to make andragogical decisions to enhance participants' intercultural sensitivity development. The adaptive flexibility, or intercultural competence and sensitivity, that is required to be successful in intercultural communication interactions depends on one's experience and growth over time. My responsibility as the instructor/researcher was to initiate learning activities with increasing degrees of difficulty to influence the developmental process along the intercultural continuum (Hammer & Bennett, 1998, 2002, 2004; Weiss, 2003). As a result, the IDI was "instrumental" in providing me with necessary guideposts for content and instruction. That is, my knowledge of a participant's pretest IDI stage allowed me to structure appropriate feedback that oriented participants towards the next stage of development.

#### *Adult Learning Theoretical Assumptions*

While graduate students, as adult learners, are characterized as self-directed, eager to learn, and able to bring a wealth of experience (Forrest & Peterson, 2006), the

literature on developing intercultural competence and sensitivity focuses on face-to-face practices (Hammer & Bennett, 1998, 2002, 2004; Paige, 2003; Hammer & Paige, 2007) such as experiential activities, discussion, teamwork, and action learning, rooted in adult learning theory and andragogical practices. “Andragogy,” a term contemporized by Malcolm Knowles (1970), is considered to be a learner-centered educational paradigm where individuals are capable of adaptation, free inquiry, and self-sufficiency (Forrest & Peterson, 2006). Knowles (1970) suggests that choice, self direction in the learning process, the ways in which experience compliments learning, readiness to learn, and orientation to learning are necessary participant attributes for effective course outcomes.

A consideration of these theoretical assumptions provided the foundation for the design and delivery of the online MBA course. The assumptions imply that graduate students as adult learners (a) are self-directed; (b) have a reservoir of experience which serves as a resource for learning; (c) have a readiness to learn that is based on a need to know spurred by developmental state and social role conditions; (d) have a changed perception of time that produces a need for learning which has immediate applicability and is thus performance or problem-centered instead of subject-matter oriented; and (e) are internally motivated (Ibid, 1970).

Good online course design and delivery, then, should be rooted in constructivist learning principles which establish a supportive learning environment where participants are asked critical and probing questions (Whipp, Schweizer, & Hayslett, 2002). Asking such questions prompts participants to reflect on the integrity of assumptions and beliefs based on prior experience (Taylor, 1994) and moves participants towards more inclusive

frames of reference around intercultural experiences, perspectives, and dominant cultural ideologies (Zeighan, 2005).

As participants practice new perspective taking they should share with one another cultural experiences including “disorienting dilemmas” and “aha! moments” that they encounter in the workplace and in their personal lives. Perspective transformation theory assumes that, as a result of bringing life experiences and personal reflection to the educational context, individuals will undergo a significant change in the way they perceive and make sense of the world (Garrison, Anderson, & Archer, 2000, 2001a, 2001b; Knowles, 1970; Mezirow, 1991). It occurs when adult learners reconsider their preconceived views of the world: *critical reflection* of one’s assumptions, followed by *rational discourse*, and *praxis* (Mezirow, 1991). That is, when individuals engage in critical discourse within a community and build new knowledge that informs and changes their practice, a shift in their thinking occurs. The theory suggests that when adult learners are confronted with cultural difference in their life experience, they first turn to traditional ways of understanding to make sense of it: when and if these ways of understanding fail to make sense, there is an opportunity for perspective transformation that occurs after critical reflection (Taylor, 1994).

Garrison and colleagues (2001) also suggest that building a context for higher-order learning, such as constructing experience and knowledge through critical analysis of subject matter, questioning, and challenging assumptions, is consistent with andragogical practice which is both reflective and collaborative (Knowles, 1970). The experiential learning activities should be assigned to examine socially constructed assumptions, beliefs, and values which require critical reflection on experiences.

Participants should then be challenged to solicit the opinions of others to gain further insight through dialogue which requires sharing and the raising of consciousness.

It follows then, that the online MBA course learning activities should provide participants with complex tasks that require using multiple perspectives, building a community of difference, and negotiating meaning through guided discussions in virtual teams. A community of difference values divergent opinions and beliefs. Participants confront the possibility of disagreement and opposition as constructive conflict through virtual teamwork may lead to greater intercultural sensitivity development.

Team projects should focus on promoting *praxis* or experimentation to allow participants to play on a practice field, or perform “dress rehearsals” that give rise to knowledge through systematic means of inquiry, self-learning, and self-discovery (Hunt & Weintraub, 2004). Social constructivist principles should be used to design and guide the required discussions. Finally, participants should be encouraged to incorporate ongoing cycles of reflection by using newly transformed perspectives to act and then critically reflect on the actions.

### *Summary*

The previous section presented the concepts of intercultural competence and sensitivity and the idea that intercultural sensitivity increases with developmental stage progression known as *developmental* intercultural sensitivity (DS). The Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS) is used to explain the developmental sequences that individuals experience when confronted with cultural difference. That is, as intercultural sensitivity develops, worldview structure changes, and individuals react to cultural difference with less ethnocentric responses. In this study, the Intercultural

Development Inventory (IDI), a Likert-type response scale, is an instrument that was used to assess an individual's worldview structure and reflected participant's placement on the intercultural continuum from ethnocentrism to ethnorelativism. An IDI *stage shift* is indicative of substantive developmental stage (DS) progression or regression after an educational intervention while IDI *score change* is indicative of movement along the intercultural continuum. Finally, an online MBA course called *Brainpool Online* was designed and delivered with adult learning methods to test its viability for developing intercultural sensitivity.

#### Online MBA Course

*Brainpool Online* was designed and delivered as an elective, one-credit, graduate level, online MBA course to develop intercultural sensitivity. It was offered to graduate students enrolled in the Masters of Business Administration (MBA) program over two separate trials in the summers of 2004 and 2005 at a Midwestern Jesuit University. The course consisted of seven weekly online instructional units that emphasized effective intercultural communication strategies. The course goals and objectives required that participants:

- Become familiar with the process of intercultural communication.
- Compare and contrast various cultures.
- Develop a deeper understanding of specific cultures.
- Use specific cultures to highlight similarities and differences.
- Understand dimensions of culture.
- Generate a set of solutions for a cultural case study.

- Apply cross-cultural business principles and relevant theoretical perspectives and concepts in intercultural communication.
- Build an online collaborative learning community that values cultural difference.

Since course content focused primarily on modeling effective Sino-American business practices, the course banner used Chinese characters to loosely convey “communication across cultures” or collaborative cross-cultural communication. The Chinese characters represent “different,” “cultures,” and “communication” (see Figure 2). Together the Chinese characters signified the essence of the online MBA course

Figure 2. *Brainpool Online Course Banner*



The design and delivery of the course was intended to create an anytime, anywhere workforce solution for understanding the intricacies of leveraging global brainpower and working collaboratively on cross-company, intercultural projects.

The course banner derived metaphoric significance from the game of pool. To begin, the logo incorporated a pool ball rack, which symbolized the triangulated curriculum model. The objective of the game of “Brainpool” was to solve intercultural communication dilemmas. Participants (Brainpoolers) were represented by the pool cues and worked on teams. The pool balls, as solids or stripes, represented United States (US)

and global perspectives of the team members. The instructor embodied the role of the cue ball. Each pocket on the pool table represented an assignment which demanded completion. Throughout the “game,” participants worked together to formulate strategies which served to direct their balls into the pockets.

Collaborative team interaction, or virtual teamwork, was an essential course component used to create a community of difference, thus impacting intercultural sensitivity development among participants. A successful instructor creates a community of difference by focusing on relationships, maintaining dialogue, and developing understanding between participants (Shields, 2004). As the instructor, I worked to provide learning cues (as the cue ball) to facilitate meaningful interaction by providing a template for each assignment to foster the acquisition of intercultural competence and sensitivity. In addition, I worked to systematically collect data over seven weeks. In turn, the participants’ roles were to participate in all aspects of the course including discussions, journals, and the completion of a final team presentation using the templates that I provided throughout the seven weeks.

The “gestalt” of the online MBA course was to provide participants with a cultural value dimension framework for doing business in China and model assignments to scaffold intercultural learning. To that end, I emphasized to participants the essence and strength of tapping multiple perspectives, both US and global-based, to complete assignments. Participants worked each week to compile final team presentations using this framework for a country of their choice.

The collaborative teamwork consisted of each participant choosing a US or global cultural perspective (solid or stripe) to complete assignments. In Trial I, twenty-two



participants collaborated on two teams to produce two final team presentations; Brainpool Online/Brazil and Brainpool Online/India. In Trial II, because there were only sixteen participants enrolled in the course, one team collaborated to produce one final team presentation; Brainpool Online/Indonesia. As each intact team for both trials moved along in the course, discussion postings reflected that participants were reading what others wrote and that they were thinking critically and analytically. During each week, participants generated a discussion posting about a current event, a case study analysis, or an intercultural communication business principle from the course materials which required that they do a lot of synthesis, analysis, integration, and/or evaluation. For example, each participant was required to explain a current event, a case study analysis, or an intercultural communication business principle with 2-3 paragraphs (250-300 words, approximately one page) and provide examples as to how these principles were operationalized in business practice. The principles generated from this weekly synthesis were then used to compile cultural information for a final team presentation. Therefore, each assignment provided building blocks for a final team presentation that generated a set of solutions for conducting business in Brazil, India, or Indonesia. As a result, the course served to test the effectiveness of incorporating online collaborative learning and teamwork to impact intercultural sensitivity development as well as to provide an informed agenda for MBA instructors to develop more courses with similar content and delivery.

Learning activities such as experiential activities, discussion, teamwork, and action learning rooted in adult learning theoretical frameworks were integrated throughout the course. During the course, participants were asked to pay attention to

their communicative interactions without imposing their own points of view or making value judgments. Weekly readings (book chapters, articles, and websites) along with discussions about the readings were also required. These discussions unpacked how various business principles could be applied to the workplace. Participants identified intercultural challenges in their workplace and generated a set of solutions to overcome them. Assessments were made throughout the course by using checklists and rubrics for weekly journal logs, discussion postings, communication interaction, and virtual teamwork.

### Significance of the Study

Recent changes in business drive educators to develop more courses that consider “globalization, disruptive technologies, demographic shifts, and deregulation” (Friga, Bettis, & Sullivan, 2003, p. 233). It is argued that the future of graduate management education in the 21<sup>st</sup> century relies on a list of critical success factors including the design and delivery of courses that teach managerial global competence. Therefore, such courses that consider supply and demand changes and the two major expanding business markets in India and China, and Russia where state sponsored economies have shifted to privatized industries, are most desirable. Additionally, it has been argued that courses focusing on intercultural content could help participants to develop the necessary skills to become more globally competent managers (Collins & Davidson, 2002; Mendenhall et al., 2008). Likewise, business schools could learn more about how to begin to structure necessary courses for success in the new millennium (Friga et al., 2003).

Therefore, I first suggest in what ways the online MBA course impacted intercultural sensitivity development for graduate students along the intercultural

continuum. Drawing on research from intercultural communication, graduate business education, and online learning, the prevalence of studies that explore the impact of online courses with the purpose of developing these soft skills was lacking in the literature. The first outcome of this study, then, is a set of ideas about online courses which can be used by individuals and/or groups of academic policymakers, to promote evaluation and reflection on current perspectives and practices towards online courses designed to promote the acquisition of intercultural competence and sensitivity. The ideas that are generated from the various data-gathering processes as well as from the analyses described in the methodology chapter culminate in six recommendations for developing online business courses with this content and delivery.

Second, I advance four different directions for future research in this area. I argue, for example, that future research needs to broaden the conceptualization of intercultural competence and sensitivity and that researchers must continue to investigate the effectiveness of online MBA courses for developing intercultural sensitivity. By identifying and understanding the factors that may contribute to intercultural competence and sensitivity, I expand the research base and the study's applicability to academia, business, and government. While these organizations now recognize the importance of intercultural competence and sensitivity, governmental organizations, for example, such as the US Army, still find that there is little data within the US military context that show a performance impact of these types of educational interventions (Abbe, Gulick, & Herman, 2007). US corporations also still find that measuring across the board outcomes has been problematic despite investing heavily in educational initiatives to develop intercultural competence and sensitivity (Mendenhall, Osland, Bird, Oddou, &

Maznevski, 2008). This study provides ideas for assessing and developing current and future educational alternatives.

Third, I propose that soft skills can be successfully developed online to a motivated group of participants who are willing to change from ethnocentric perspectives towards more inclusive perspectives producing an ethnorelative worldview. In this sample of thirty eight participants (nineteen females and nineteen males), the majority of participants (68%) experienced positive IDI *score change* with younger European American males experiencing greater change over their female and older counterparts. The six cases (three females and three males) presented in Chapter Four also illustrate that those with the greatest degree of change (positive IDI *stage shift*) were motivated participants who demonstrated high course engagement and introspective reflection. Also, it is argued that being something other than a European American was a moderate negative predictor of change since the sample revealed that non-European American participants possessed higher intercultural sensitivity levels at pretest. To ensure success for all participants, I suggest additional synchronous activities using the IDI as a “coaching tool” to guide and facilitate the development and implementation of individual intercultural learning plans.

Finally, the findings contribute to the online management education literature by not only examining the role of andragogical practice on non-traditional MBA courses but also by directing attention to participant acceptance of online courses designed and delivered to develop intercultural competence and sensitivity (Fluck, 2003). The soft skills that the majority of participants acquired using the online learning environment tended to be consistent with what Mendenhall and colleagues (2008) suggest are

“foundational” capabilities which serve as building blocks for managerial global competence. Business educators, trainers, and consultants need advances in this stream of research to learn how to successfully incorporate online delivery formats into educational alternatives for producing globally competent managers with higher levels of intercultural competence and sensitivity.

### Presentation of the Study

This Chapter presented the rationale for designing and delivering an online MBA course to develop intercultural competence and sensitivity. The research question and mixed-method research model were introduced to the reader. Key concepts of intercultural competence and sensitivity, the DMIS model, the IDI instrument, and the adult learning theoretical assumptions used to design the online MBA course were presented. A brief description of the online MBA course was also described to provide a backdrop for subsequent chapters with more detail in Chapter Three. This was followed by a discussion of the significance of the study.

In Chapter Two, I present three distinct bodies of literature that frame the study: intercultural communication, graduate business education, and online learning as well as a review of empirical and interpretive research methods used by scholars of online management learning. Numerous studies suggest that transitions to a culturally diverse work environment can be difficult, painful, and result in failures and lost profits without adequate coursework preparation. The literature review substantiates the use of adult learning frameworks, perspective transformation and social constructivism, as a basis for the design and delivery of an online MBA course to promote successful intercultural

business practices and transfer cultural awareness and the ability to respond to cultural difference appropriately.

In Chapter Three, I present a detailed explanation of the research methodology used to address the research question. Both quantitative and qualitative data were collected from multiple sources including the IDI, online MBA course, informants, and by me functioning as the instructor/researcher. A three-phase, mixed methods research model is detailed to analyze selected informants' experiences.

In Chapter Four, I integrate two steps of analyses with three kinds of raw data. *Interview data, online MBA course data, and instructor/researcher data* are combined to present 1) group data, and 2) case study development. Six cases were selected from nineteen informants after analysis of IDI pretest-posttest scores. These informants represented the lowest, middle, and highest degrees of IDI stage shift for each trial to showcase a variety of participant experiences. The case study methodology was used to describe selected informants' experiences as the seven-week course unfolded, and how the online MBA course impacted intercultural sensitivity development.

Finally, in Chapter Five, I detail the study's implications for MBA instructors. I argue that the challenge for MBA instructors is to design and deliver online courses that give participants the time and the opportunity to practice what they are learning while establishing a learning environment suitable for meaningful dialogue through virtual teamwork. I show how online collaborative learning activities can be used to improve intercultural competence and sensitivity, explore the construct of cultural difference, and reveal how participants experience IDI stage shift after the seven-week intervention. Ultimately, I suggest that online MBA courses can successfully impact intercultural

sensitivity development and potentially produce more globally competent managers when the quality of virtual teamwork and team composition are maximized to create a community of difference.

## CHAPTER TWO

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### Three Distinct Literatures

There exists an increasing need for managers who can demonstrate intercultural competence and sensitivity in an ever-changing global business environment. It follows that an online MBA course designed to develop intercultural sensitivity could provide a workforce solution to address this emerging need. Three distinct bodies of literature -- intercultural communication, graduate business education, and online learning – are used to frame the focus of this project.

I begin the literature review by examining studies in intercultural communication. The stream of intercultural competence and sensitivity research became a discrete area of interest for intercultural communication scholars after World War Two when the US government wanted to better understand why US citizens were not highly regarded by the global community (Hall & Gudykunst, 1989). Much of the research efforts in this area have continued to express concern over US ethnocentric perspectives prevalent in US education (Adler, 1997, Engler & Hunt, 2004) and research institutions (Stone, 2006). This intercultural communication review is then followed by examinations of the literature bases in graduate management education and online learning.

#### *Intercultural Communication*

Professional associations for teaching intercultural communication came to the forefront in the early 1980's.<sup>1</sup> The rise of women and minorities in the American workforce after World War II acted as a catalyst for the development of professional

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<sup>1</sup> The International Society for Intercultural Education, SIETAR International, and the International Journal of Intercultural Relations were founded by 1982.



“interculturalists.” Businesses were forced to rethink their human resource development strategies and needed to hire instructors to initiate programs to produce more culturally responsive business leaders. In addition, the “shrinking global village” required these professionals to design and deliver courses to create a more informed global workforce (York, 1994). By 1981, a proliferation of intercultural communication courses appeared in the corporate world and in graduate business education, with over 20,000 courses available in more than seventy-three countries (York, 1994; Landis, Bennett, & Bennett, 2004).

Intercultural, cross-cultural, or global competence training, interchangeable terms used to define these courses, became a necessary prerequisite for many different groups of people who desired to become effective intercultural communicators. Various methods for this purpose were dedicated to enhancing individuals’ effectiveness in communicating and establishing personal relationships beyond their own cultures (Weiss, 2003). These courses evolved over time to incorporate the concept of cultural difference.

Geert Hofstede (1980), a management researcher, investigated the concept of cultural difference and the success rates of individuals conducting business across cultures. He found that the greater the differences in value orientations, the more challenging and stressful it was for individuals to conduct business successfully across cultures. He developed a cultural fluency tool from data collected from over 100,000 IBM workers around the world and provided the first conceptual framework for dealing with the business implications of culture. Hofstede explored the values of 372 managers from 40 countries and identified cultural clusters from their responses. The results were a set of four, and later five, cultural value dimensions, found to operate on a continuum:

- individualism-collectivism
- uncertainty avoidance
- power distance
- masculinity-femininity
- time orientation

Hofstede's pioneering work led to the publication of *Culture's Consequences* (1980) and helped managers develop a new mindset for working with people from other cultures. Manager's heightened awareness of cultural value dimensions often led to a change in behavior that improved intercultural communication. Hofstede's son, Gert Jan Hofstede, assisted in extending his research through the publication of *Exploring Culture* (Hofstede, Pederson, & Hofstede, 2002), which provided a variety of anecdotal stories and exercises to illustrate the differences among cultures. Gert Jan Hofstede hypothesized that, through understanding of the value that people attribute to cultural dimensions, managers could gain insight into the varied value system of others and acquire a deeper understanding of their own cultural behavior.

The framework originally conceptualized by Hofstede (1980) and adapted by Triandis (1995) was criticized by the academic establishment. It was widely used to design simulations for role plays and to help explain individuals' response to cultural difference; however, it was argued that the categorization of national cultures was insufficient to differentiate cultural attributes of group members. Despite its weaknesses, including the social science bias rooted in Western thought, their work laid the foundation for later studies that focused on cultural difference in business contexts. Abbott, Stening, Atkins, and Grant (2006) still caution that it is important not to over-

generalize the results from cross-cultural value dimensions. As cited by Callen (2008), they suggest that the knowledge of cultural value dimensions is “a starting point or base from which managers can explore inevitable cultural paradoxes and develop intelligently complex explanations of the behaviors they observe (and display) in the new cultures” (p. 13).

Trompenaars and Woolliams (2003) developed a more complete framework for understanding how one adapts to cultural difference around the turn of the millennium. They advanced a cultural fluency tool for recognizing, respecting, and reconciling cultural difference by suggesting that “all values are fundamentally within each of us but they manifest themselves as a series of dilemmas” (p. 7). In their book *Business Across Cultures*, they argued that the earlier bi-polar linear frameworks based on the Anglo-Saxon business model “often produce stereotypical descriptions that fail to explain many facets of the actual culture that they are trying to represent” (p. 5). Today, ethical dilemmas in business contexts have been found to be effective ways to teach graduate students how to identify and analyze management problems (Schumann, Scott, & Anderson, 2006; Butler, 2007).

Despite differences in cultural models and frameworks, scholars suggest that intercultural communication courses could impact intercultural sensitivity development and the success rates for individuals who live and work in diverse work environments (Hammer & Bennett, 1998, 2002, 2004; Bhawuk & Brislin, 2000; Ting-Toomey, 1994, Ting-Toomey & Kurogi, 1998). The theories viewed to be foundational to intercultural competence and sensitivity have moved away from psychology (exemplified by Triandis), communication (exemplified by Gudykunst), and value dimensions

(exemplified by Hofstede), to cultural difference (exemplified by Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner).

The business implications of cultural difference require new and practical toolkits for working across cultures (Trompenaars & Woolliams, 2003). This entails the creation of new mindsets for individuals and the provision of cultural fluency tools that move beyond the simple recognition of cultural differences in the workplace. Individuals must adopt the concept of *complementarity* -- that no value can be fluid without the tension of opposites, (e.g., change versus continuity). Once individuals see difference on a values' continuum, they can take the first step toward respecting cultural differences and later move towards the reconciliation of cultural differences. This alternative approach to thinking enhances creativity and gets people to think "outside the box" to solve problems (Trompenaars & Woolliams, 2003; Weaver, 2000).

Accepting the theory of complementarity requires that individuals "get inside the heads" of people from other cultures. This ability depends on an individual's flexibility. He or she must put himself or herself in the psychological and cultural shoes of those who are different (Chen & Starosta, 1996, 1997). These empathetic skills can be acquired (when the participant is willing) through intercultural management experiential learning, cross-cultural work assignments, and learning opportunities devoted to understanding what culture is and how culture dictates the way people solve common problems. The existence of affective motivation, behavioral skills, and cognitive knowledge cause shifts in intercultural sensitivity development which leads to intercultural effectiveness (J. M. Bennett & M. J. Bennett, 2004; Lustig & Koester, 1996; Ting-Toomey, 1988; Trompenaars & Woolliams, 2003).

### *Intercultural Effectiveness*

Numerous studies suggest that *intercultural effectiveness* requires the existence of various competencies. The general term used to define these competencies is known as intercultural competence. For example, intercultural competence studies have examined the US Peace Corps (Harris, 1973), technical staff (Ruben & Kealey, 1979), military personnel (Abbe, Gulick, & Herman, 2007), and business personnel (Brislin, Cushner, Cherrie, & Yong, 1986). These empirical studies carried out surveys and investigated expatriate adjustment within each respective organization. The expatriates were assigned overseas to complete assigned tasks that related to technical skills, whether it was “building a dam, running a business, converting others to one’s religion, or teaching English” (p. 41, Mendenhall & Oddou, 1995). While technical skill was identified as a significant dimension that affects acculturation, reviews of these studies suggest that indicators of intercultural competence also include empathy, respect, interest in culture, flexibility, tolerance, and desire to engage in intercultural encounters. Cornes (2004) takes the indicators from all of these studies and further arranges them into ten categories which were then used as this study’s primary coding framework.

### *Intercultural Sensitivity Development*

To fully appreciate the importance of intercultural effectiveness as it relates to intercultural sensitivity development, we must understand that intercultural sensitivity is an essential element that contributes to an individual’s capacity to function effectively in a new culture and resolve disorienting dilemmas. Chen and Starosta (1997) propose that effective and appropriate behavioral performance is regulated by the cognitive understanding and affective sensitivity of cultural similarities and differences.

Purportedly, individuals cannot develop a positive emotion for understanding and appreciating cultural difference among people nor can they exercise intercultural competence without possessing an intercultural sensitivity that incorporates self-esteem, self-monitoring, open-mindedness, empathy, interaction involvement, and non-judgment (Chen & Starosta, 1996, 1997; Ruben, 1976). It follows that understanding one's own and other cultures can lead to more effective intercultural communication and greater intercultural sensitivity development (Landis, Bennett, & Bennett, 2004, p. 163).

The term intercultural sensitivity refers to the combination of affective, behavioral and cognitive components necessary for effective intercultural communication and individuals then exhibit behavior that reflects appropriate personal characteristics of both a cognitive and an affective nature (Chen & Starosta, 1996, 1997; Taylor, 1994; Ting-Toomey, 1994; Wiseman & Koester, 1993). It is argued that, to work and live successfully in the global environment, a theoretical model for identifying, understanding, and respecting a myriad of factors that deal with affective, behavioral, and cognitive components of culture is needed to cope with the complexities of cultural difference (Hofstede, 1980; Henninger & Weingandt, 2003; Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 1998). Attitude, behavior, and knowledge must work together to develop intercultural sensitivity (J. M. Bennett & M. J Bennett, 2004; M. J. Bennett, 2001; Lustig & Koester, 1996; Ting-Toomey, 1994).

*Affective.* The affective component refers to one's attitude, motivation, set of feelings, intentions, or needs associated with the anticipation of an intercultural communication interaction. Individuals who have a positive motivation towards cultural

difference will seek out intercultural communication interactions (Morreale, Spitzberg, & Barge, 2001).

*Behavioral Skills.* The behavioral component refers to one's behavior in an intercultural context. For example, several behaviors are positively correlated with intercultural competence and sensitivity: mindfulness (Gudykunst, 1992), adroitness (Chen & Starosta, 1996), interaction involvement (Cegala, 1984), recognition of non-verbal messages (Anderson, 1994), appropriate self-disclosure (Li, 1999), behavioral flexibility (Bochner & Kelly, 1974), interaction management (Wiseman, 1977), identity maintenance (Ting-Toomey, 1994), uncertainty reduction strategies (Sanders, Wiseman, & Matz, 1991), appropriate display of respect (Ruben, 1976), immediacy skills (Benson, 1978), ability to establish interpersonal relationships (Hammer, 1987), and expressing clarity and face support (Kim, 1993). The actual performance and application of behavioral skills, or the operationalization of the effective and appropriate behaviors, must be repeatable and goal-oriented (Spitzberg, 2000).

*Cognitive.* The cognitive component refers to one's knowledge. For example, awareness of other cultures (Wiseman, Hammer, & Nishida, 1989), or forms of cross-cultural cognitive intelligence, such as host language fluency (Giles, 1977), facilitate the acquisition of intercultural competence. Multiple cognitive orientations have been found to promote perspective-taking and adaptation to new information that include open-mindedness (Adler, 1975), self-monitoring ability (Snyder, 1987), problem-solving ability (Brislin, 1981), and cognitive complexity (Wiseman & Abe, 1985).

*Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS).* Milton Bennett (1986) proposes the Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS) to form a bridge

between intercultural competence and the structured developmental sequences through which these competencies are attained. Bennett's DMIS advances developmental strategies that move a person from ethnocentric to ethnorelative levels of intercultural sensitivity development. A person who operates in an ethnocentric stage does not recognize, appreciate, or act respectfully toward cultural difference, while a person operating in an ethnorelative stage has the most flexibility in solving cross-cultural conflict. This theory represents an advance in the research base since the model frames it in the phenomenology of an individual's affective, behavioral, and cognitive construal and response to cultural difference. The model constitutes a progression of one's worldview toward cultural difference and suggests that individuals with cognitive orientations where one's culture is experienced in the context of other cultures will have a more sophisticated ability to be competent intercultural communicators (Hammer, Bennett, & Wiseman, 2003).

*Assessing Intercultural Sensitivity.* While there is a large theoretical literature base on intercultural communication courses, there is a much smaller body of knowledge on how to assess or measure courses developing intercultural sensitivity (Landis, Bennett & Bennett, 2004; Greenholtz, 2000; Paige, 1993; York, 1994). Intercultural instruments have been reported in the literature since the emergence of the field in the 1970's. Over the past 50 years, more than 35 instruments have been used to address a variety of research purposes and to measure the qualities and characteristics of groups or individuals. A commonly cited advantage of using standardized instruments is that they provide a database and bring elements of objectivity and credibility to the educational intervention.



Milton Bennett's DMIS (1986, 1993) depicts changes in worldview structure, but it is not a descriptive model of changes in attitudes and behavior. A criticism of the model is that it emphasizes experiential worldviews and is somewhat vague in explaining how the worldview of adaptation actually translates into actual adaptive behavior. Therefore, intercultural sensitivity development is indicative of the state of the underlying worldview which becomes more complex and sophisticated as the resolution of relevant issues activates the emergence of the next orientation. A useful instrument to assess this intercultural sensitivity development is the Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI).

*Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI)*. The Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI) (Hammer & Bennett, 1998, 2002, 2004) enables learners to better understand their intercultural issues and challenges through the measurement of constructs such as overall *perceived* intercultural sensitivity development (PS) and overall *developmental* intercultural sensitivity development (DS). PS scores reflect individual perceptions of overall *perceived* intercultural sensitivity while DS scores reflect *actual* intercultural sensitivity stage development. Total scores range from 55 to 145, with higher scores indicating greater intercultural sensitivity development. Three stages of development, Denial/Defense, Minimization, and Acceptance/Adaptation represent the range of scores.

1. Denial/Defense-Reversal (D/D-R), scores between 55-85
2. Minimization (M), scores between 85-115
3. Acceptance/Adaptation (A/A), scores between 115-145

Several studies document the IDI'S reliability (Paige, 2003). These studies demonstrate that learners are more willing to reflect on their own ethnocentrism when given

appropriate learning activities to enhance affective, behavioral, and cognitive components of intercultural sensitivity development. That is, if learners have the concepts to guide them and if they have a supportive learning environment, they will be more likely to explore their own ethnocentrism (Landis, Bennett, & Bennett, 2004; Paige & Hammer, 2007).

Theoretically, the IDI and DMIS stages do reflect some overlap; it is designed to be an empirical measure of intercultural sensitivity development as conceptualized by the DMIS and represents one's worldview orientation to difference, or capacity to operationalize intercultural competence. The IDI generates a profile that is an indicator of how individuals construe cultural difference in contrast with a broad set of self-attributes related to cultural identification. An individual's orientation towards cultural difference is largely framed by social category or national identity (e.g., the United States). Bennett (1993) states, "new cultural differences, once they are defined as cultural, will be treated in more or less the same way as familiar differences" (p. 27). Therefore, an individual who is reevaluating their orientation toward cultural difference could "straddle" two stages. For example, an individual in Denial-Defense/Minimization (IDI score between 80 and 90) could actually be in Defense/Reversal. These individuals tend to be undergoing a reevaluation of unfamiliar cultural differences and are experiencing a "pendulum swing" towards a developmental transition as they resolve issues at the Defense stage and move into Minimization (Hammer & Bennett, 1998, 2002, 2004).

### *Intercultural Communication Summary*

Despite differences in concepts, elements or categories of behavior found in the intercultural communication literature, researchers agree that survival in the global society of the 21st century depends on the development of attitudes, behavior, and knowledge related to intercultural sensitivity development. A person with high levels of intercultural sensitivity development is an individual who is adaptable, flexible, tolerant, empathetic, sensitive, and patient, and has perseverance, humor, curiosity, self-confidence, initiative, and a facility in foreign languages.

Researchers suggest that intercultural competencies are considered to be predictors of success in working and living in intercultural environments and reducing the failure rate of communication interactions. Intercultural sensitivity development is clearly important for a range of projects, programs, and industrial enterprises that take managers and entrepreneurs from their home base to other countries of the world.

### *Graduate Business Education*

Graduate business education generally refers to Master of Business Administration (MBA) programs offered by universities and colleges and including some executive education programs. A typical full-time MBA student is in his or her late 20s and has several years experience in the business world. Participants enrolling in part-time MBA programs tend to be older and are working in management roles or hope to be on a career path toward an executive role (Ballou, Bowers, Boyatzis, & Kolb, 1999; Black, Gregersen, Mendenhall, & Stroh, 1999; Mendenhall, Kuhlman, & Stahl, 2001; Welch, 2001).

Graduate students enrolled in MBA programs are generally interested in raising their level of awareness of business strategies and developing a depth of understanding about how other businesses are competing in the global marketplace (Alavi & Leidner, 2001; Arbaugh & Benbunan-Fich, 2006; Leidner & Jarvenpaa, 1995). They are often drawn to MBA programs for information technology (IT), such as online management learning and virtual teamwork, to expand the lifelong network of executives who are instrumental in developing initiatives at their organizations.

MBA program trends suggest that participants are not necessarily interested in face-to-face classroom learning (Ballou et al., 1999; Dash, 2000) and business schools could benefit from courses that are more responsive to the changes in their competitive environments (Lorange, 2005). The impact of the global economy has caused corporate universities to turn to MBA programs where more and more courses develop managerial *global competence* through *action learning* and *online management learning*. Teamwork is now part of most MBA programs with leadership and communication coursework emphasizing soft skills and qualitative learning (Butler, 2007). According to a survey conducted by the Graduate Management Admission Council in 2006, two-fifths of employers say important criteria for selection and hiring include such coursework (Ibid, 2007). These initiatives have created an agenda for graduate business schools to respond with offerings in communication, negotiation, persuasion, ethics, and business writing (Friga et al., 2003).

### *Global Competence*

An organization's need to recruit globally competent managers has become greater as workforces have become more diversified. The "global village" accelerates the

integration of a world market where globalizing business and services lead to an increasing number of people working in cross-cultural settings (Seelye, 1995). The competitive global marketplace creates conditions for corporate consolidation and global partnering.

The business climate of the 21<sup>st</sup> century requires managers to be more sensitive and understanding with respect to the ethnic, cultural and gender difference within the workplace. As China and India attract the biggest share of manufacturing-related Research and Development work, the job market, job functions, and job descriptions for graduate students have changed (Williams, 1998; Butler, 2000). US companies need managers who can motivate diverse workforces as they seek the best methods to get performance results from overseas operations (Boo, 2004). They must have the ability to work within cross-cultural workforces, handle global assignments, and deal with people from differing cultural backgrounds. Black and colleagues (1999) and Harris and Moran (1996) point out the importance of managerial global competence to prevent botched negotiations, cultural misunderstandings, and financial losses due to premature return from global assignments

Several leadership skills contribute directly to one's business success in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. These include the ability to operate with ease across boundaries and forge relationships among organizations (Collins & Davidson, 2002). The acquisition of managerial global competence often results in a senior level executive position at headquarters with Chief Executive Officer (CEO) potential (Dreifus, 1997). Managers who are well-traveled global citizens, have open minds, and are receptive to information outside their current framework, are valuable organizational assets. In the US, globally

competent managers who are bi- or multi-lingual and can understand the global marketplace are in great demand. Some corporate CEOs believe that managers with global competence are more likely to advance their careers. The challenge for managers in the business world is to be effective cross-cultural communicators. They must “possess the patience of a diplomat, zeal of a missionary, and the linguistic skill of a United Nation’s interpreter (Goldstein, 1989, p. 447). These globally competent managers look beyond obvious difference among organizations, resolve conflicts, encourage employees to work together, bring the best from one place to another, and are smart enough to see new possibilities (Harris & Moran, 1996, p. 91).

### *Action Learning*

Action learning is another MBA program initiative that has become the mantra of business educators (Ballou et al., 1999; Conger & Xin, 2000; Welch, 2001). It is an andragogical technique, or adult learner-centered approach (Knowles, 1970), that is being widely used in online management programs (Forrest & Petersen, 2006). Action learning refers to a variety of approaches in which participants use issues from their own work experience as a basis for learning. Business education programs should bring real-life problems specific to the participant’s work experience and require a journal to document learning (Arbaugh & Stelzer, 2003). Such strategies almost always provide short-term benefits, but also stimulate learning over the long-term. They link learning to the dynamics of the workplace and use problem-solving to create learning. For example, participants find specific solutions to real work problems that are closely aligned to the corporate strategy. Action learning teaches participants how to implement work-related decisions after reflecting on various leadership strategies. Participants link work-related

problems to coursework and then can immediately operationalize cross-company, cross-cultural business principles in practice while improving decision-making skills and productivity.

### *Online Management Learning*

MBA courses are needed to teach participants how to become a global leader, act entrepreneurially, and collaborate on projects using the Internet (Reingold, 1999). Online management learning via the Internet can provide links with drills, simulations, assessment, video lectures, and learning portals to teach MBA participants team collaboration techniques (Dineen, 2005). Online courses could promote a company's competitiveness, productivity, recruitment and retention, cost savings and market size as well as improve employee performance and maintain a competitive edge over competitors (Bradshaw, 1998). Participants can access interactive, multimedia instruction from remote locations and build online communities where they can share questions and answers with instructors and colleagues via e-mail, video-conferencing, chat rooms, and bulletin boards (Gotschall, 2000). Most online MBA participants prefer computer mediated courses because of their flexibility, convenience, and cost-effectiveness. Participants can access MBA coursework via a computer and Internet connection at work, at home, in a hotel, or at a library. Online MBA courses allow participants to study when they want, where they want, and for as long as they want. Should they need to postpone their studies, they can pick up right where they left off. In addition, every participant enrolled in an online MBA course has access to the same information and explanations, as well as access to the same reference library.

Online management learning programs incorporate information technology that combines satellite broadcasting with videoconferencing, the Internet, and PC networking for a hands-on management experience (Wankel & DeFillippi, 2003). The successful integration of these technologies (Martins & Kellermanns, 2004) and the factors that lead to effective online instruction (Arbaugh, 2004, 2005a, 2005b; Clouse & Evans, 2003; Eom, Wen, & Ashill, 2006) have been studied by numerous scholars from online management education. Factors found to influence participant acceptance of coursework using Web-based information and communication technologies into the instructional processes include perceived incentive to use it, perceived faculty encouragement to use it, and peer encouragement to use it. It has been argued that awareness of the technology's capabilities, availability of technical support, and prior computer and Web-based experience were positively related to perceived ease of use of technology (Martins & Kellermanns, 2004). The theoretical and conceptual frameworks proposed by several authors suggest that online delivery formats are highly supportive of the use of asynchronous methods and collaborative learning activities (Alavi et al., 1997; Leidner & Jarvenpaa, 1995; Lengnick-Hall & Sanders, 1997).

Virtual teamwork activities are currently being implemented into online management learning programs across the country and many business schools have invested heavily in initiatives to develop online MBA programs (Dos Santos & Wright, 2001; Ives & Jarvenpaa, 1996; Leidner & Jarvenpaa, 1995; Shrivastava, 1999). However, the rapidly emerging stream of online graduate management education research tends to focus at the course and program levels rather than examining whether specific skills can be developed online through virtual teamwork (Warell & Arbaugh,



2007). For this reason, J. B. Arbaugh and I have recognized the need to design courses dedicated to addressing the issue of intercultural sensitivity development while other researchers have begun to focus course components on teaching particular skills sets (Adams & Morgan, 2007a) that could be marketed to both degree-seeking and non-degree seeking participants. The issue of developing soft skills successfully online has not been widely studied.

#### *Graduate Business Education Summary*

A review of the literature related to graduate business education reveals a need for courses designed to develop intercultural competence and sensitivity. Online MBA courses that deal with how to become a global leader, how to act entrepreneurially, how to deal with intercultural teams, and how to collaborate with project teams using the Internet could be of great value. However, current MBA courses focus little attention on navigating the difficult terrain of cultural complexity and do not fit the requirements demanded by changes in business and society. As business schools begin to move more and more of their courses online, research is needed to determine whether soft skill courses, such as developing intercultural sensitivity, can be taught effectively using an online delivery format.

#### *Online Learning*

Online learning is a form of learning or instruction that is delivered electronically (Tyler, 2001). Proponents claim that it provides the benefits of a two-way interaction between teacher and student and the freedom from the restrictions of time and place. To date, no single term defines the format. Virtual learning platforms or course management systems (CMSs) located on the Internet are used to store, maintain, and disseminate

instructional units. Instructors use the Internet to deliver different skills or information that is systematically organized for people who may be widely dispersed geographically. Despite its diversity, there are several primary characteristics that distinguish it from its more traditional counterpart. These have to do with: 1) course design, 2) course delivery, 3) the role of instructor, 4) online interaction, and 5) the role of community.

These aforementioned characteristics are deeply rooted in social constructivism which assumes that individuals as transformative learners are active meaning-makers and reflect on experience to transform and apply new cognitive perspectives to their lives (Lambert, Walter, Zimmerman, Cooper, Lambert, Gardner, & Slack, 1995; Mezirow, 1991). It is a perspective closely associated with the developmental theories of Vygotsky and Bruner, and Bandura's social cognitive theory which suggest that social interaction and language are necessary for cognitive development. Constructivist learners share personal experiences with a community of learners which lead to shared multiple perspectives and socially constructed meanings (Wegeriff, 1998). Constructivism emphasizes the importance of culture and context in understanding what occurs in society (Derry & DuRussel, 1999) and that meaningful learning can only occur in social activities. Therefore, as it relates to intercultural sensitivity development, it assumes that learners are both reflective thinkers and social beings. They are like travelers who consciously and voluntarily seek cross-cultural knowledge; this knowledge informs their behavior when they are confronted with ambiguity or cultural difference (Knowles, 1970, Landis, Bennett, & Bennett; 2004; Mendenhall, Stevens, Bird, & Oddou, 2008).

### *Course Design*

The successful implementation of online courses has been described by numerous authors and includes affective, behavioral, and cognitive design principles (Carlton, Ryan, & Siktbert, 1998; Peters & Sikorski, 1997). Online learning activities, influence attitudes, impact participant performance, and transfer concepts when they are structured to promote group discussion and communicative interactions (Arbaugh, 2000b, Hiltz & Shea, 2005; Lengnick-Hall & Sanders, 1997).

Chickering and Ehrman (1996) and Forrest and Peterson (2006) believe that good face-to-face and online course design principles are rooted in successful andragogical practice which include project-based learning, collaborative learning, and learning through repeated revisions of written work. Andragogical practice respects diverse talents, ways of learning, and the multiple intelligences that participants bring to the learning environment: “Good learning, like good work, is collaborative and social, not competitive and isolated” (Chickering and Ehrman, as cited in Bender, 2003, p. 27). Forrest and Peterson (2006) clarify the differences between design principles rooted in andragogical versus traditional pedagogical practice:

Instead of preparing participants to work on their own, a pedagogical mind-set simply looks to fill empty, passive minds with the instructor’s knowledge. Thus, a pedagogical way of viewing education directly counters the new management teaching methods which are focused on learning for application and work in the adult world. Andragogy is dedicated to teaching humans who perform socially productive roles and have assumed primary responsibility for their own lives. Thus, while pedagogy focuses on issues of children, the andragogical mind-set puts primacy on the issues of application of knowledge to real life. (p. 114)

Collaborative learning through virtual teamwork, therefore, can improve thinking and deepen understanding. Following andragogical principles, participants become co-producers of knowledge when they collaborate with others and learning and performance-based outcomes are enhanced.

An essential characteristic that distinguishes well-designed online courses from poorly-designed varieties is the use of collaborative activities to enhance “interactivity” between online course colleagues (Garrison & Anderson, 2003). These activities may consist of a learner accessing a page of text via an Internet interface, reading some content, and the instructor requiring the learner and learning system to respond dynamically to one another (Hirumi, 2002). The design and sequence of collaborative activities, known as virtual teamwork (Dineen, 2005), must be meaningful to participants to promote online interaction. Since learning is largely a social activity and humans are social animals, many participants need group activity to make their learning meaningful (Leonard & DeLacey, 2002).

Finally, assessment techniques embedded in the course design help to investigate whether course goals have been met and learning and performance-based outcomes have been achieved (Bender, 2003). For example, a clear and explicit statement of course learning goals and weekly objectives, matched to appropriate assessments, such as discussion, projects, or simulations, improve overall course design.

### *Course Delivery*

The growth in online course delivery has been recently examined by Allen and Seaman in the Sloan Report: *Online Nation: Five Years of Growth in Online Learning* (2006). Courses can be delivered in a variety of ways and often use a combination of

approaches. The authors address questions related to the number of participants learning online, the number of institutions offering online courses, and the prospects for future enrollment growth. The report represents the state of online learning in US higher education and is based on responses from more than 2,500 colleges and universities. The authors suggest that there are now four prototypical course delivery classifications:

1. **Traditional.** A face-to-face course, or a traditional classroom-based course, delivers content systematically. Participants meet regularly once, twice, or three times weekly (more often for accelerated programs) throughout the quarter or semester. The course does not use online technology, i.e., the content is written or oral.
2. **Web Facilitated.** A Web facilitated course uses Web-based technology to augment a face-to-face course with the use of a Course Management System (CMS) or web pages to post course documents or assignments.
3. **Hybrid/Blended.** A hybrid/blended course blends online and face-to-face components but a substantial portion of the course is delivered online. It typically includes a series of videotaped lectures or guest expert presentations to supplement the traditional course reading materials. The hybrid course format requires participants to meet at least once for an orientation and up to as many as four or five times during a term and often incorporates online supplements.
4. **Online.** A Web-based course, or purely online course, usually has no meetings in face-to-face settings. All content is delivered online. However, variations do exist and some instructors may require an orientation and a final

face-to-face meeting to deliver supplemental course materials (DVDs) and/or administer pre and posttests or course evaluations.

Referred to as asynchronous learning networks (ALN's), online learning environments incorporate a variety of Web-based approaches that emphasize computer mediated technology to facilitate communicative interactions between an instructor and student in an online learning environment (Lorenzo & Moore, 2002). Courses that are completely online tend to be “asynchronous,” that is to say, the instructor offers questions or prompts to the class during one time period, while the participants respond over a range of time periods.

Other approaches blend traditional, face-to-face, or “synchronous” instruction, with an online supplement that facilitates the learning process by “pushing back the classroom walls” (Bender, 2003). The hybrid delivery format presents distinct problems; some disadvantages include participant confusion with mode-switching and problems associated with participant expectations and course design viability (Reasons, Valadares, Slavkin, 2004). Conversely, the asynchronous or non-contemporary nature of the online learning environment may be a more appropriate forum for participants to reflect and conceptualize ideas as well as participate in collaborative group activity. Benefits of blended learning environments in management education, in particular, have recently fared well and suggest encouraging results (Bonk & Graham, 2006; Klein, Noe & Wang, 2006, Picciano & Dziuban, 2007; Terry, 2007).

### *Role of Instructor*

The online instructor/facilitator balances all activities within the online learning environment and acts as a guide and instructor through the delegation and negotiation of

learning activities (Collison, Elbaum, Haavind, & Tinker, 2000). A skilled online facilitator creates a sense of community to foster learning, demonstrates that participants do not need to be physically face-to-face to form trusting relationships, manages discussion threads, and moderates pragmatic dialogue. Important strategies for optimizing learning include responding quickly to discussion posts, synthesizing and refocusing discussion content, and using metaphors, paradoxes, and humorous dialogue to capture the attention of participants. These important functions serve to build community and cultivate reasoned discourse among participants.

There is some evidence that using a more facilitation-oriented approach, as opposed to direct teaching style, is conducive to the greater success of online learning. A successful online learning experience depends on the online instructor's ability to convey "social presence" as a facilitator, as well as to be a "guide on the side" rather than a "sage on the stage" (Swan, 2002). The concept of social presence is documented by several authors and is defined as the perceived psychological distance between asynchronous communication participants (Gunawardena & Zittle, 1997; Poole, 2000; Richardson & Swan, 2003; Rourke, Anderson, Garrison, & Archer, 2001, Swan, 2002; Walther, 1994). Many studies report a direct relationship between an instructor's verbal immediacy behaviors (i.e., giving praise, soliciting viewpoints, use of humor, self-disclosure, etc.) and participants' increased cognitive and affective learning (Swan, 2002). An active role as a "facilitator" and participants' perceived immediacy behaviors of the instructor build or sustain a sense of group commitment.

The instructor's role includes tasks such as providing clear goals and expectations, requiring assignments to demonstrate multiple representations of

knowledge, promoting active learning, and offering feedback, learner control, and guidance and support (Chickering & Ehrmann, 1996; Janicki & Leigle, 2001; Keeton, Scheckley, & Griggs, 2002). The role also includes attention to course design factors, such as clear structure, navigational transparency, consistency, communication potential, and active learning (Eastmond, 1995; Irani, 1998; Picciano, 2002; Romiszowski & Cheng, 1992; Swan, Shea, Frederickson, Pickett, Pelz, & Maher, 2000), which are directly related to effectiveness in online learning. Active learning requires that participants interact with the instructor and other participants by participating synchronously via chat rooms or video conferencing as well as asynchronously via message boards, Web sites and e-mail. Online courses require participants to be active meaning-makers and constructors of knowledge, and not passive recipients of knowledge (Whipp, Schweizer, & Hayslett, 2002). Evidence suggests that there are potential negative effects of online courses, such as the loss of social relationships, when the instructor is unable to incorporate collaborative learning strategies to enhance a sense of community for learners (Hiltz, 1994). Therefore, the instructor's role as a facilitator to promote interactivity contributes to overall participant satisfaction and course effectiveness.

### *Online Interaction*

Unlike traditional face-to-face formats which tend to feature the instructor as a "talking head," with little input from the group, interactions of various kinds are at the center of the online learning experience. Interactions and group activity facilitate building online communities through the creation of social and cognitive presence thus promoting the acquisition of knowledge and the realization of higher-order learning



outcomes (Swan, 2002). Online interaction research falls into four areas: interaction with content (Moore, 1989), interaction with instructors (Moore, 1989), interaction with peers (Moore, 1989), and interaction with the interface or CMS (Hillman, Willis, & Gunawardena, 1994).

*Interaction with Content.* Studies of design principles, design factors, and differing kinds of content suggest certain criteria that promote effective online learning. Research that probes into quality issues stems from cognition theory and Chickering and Ehrmann's seven principles of good teaching (Bender, 2003; Chao, Saj, & Tessier, 2006). The studies suggest that learning concepts, rather than techniques, are more likely to elicit multiple perspectives and disciplined inquiry based on reflection and interaction (Benbunan-Fich & Hiltz, 1999; Garrison & Anderson, 2003; Parker & Gemino, 2001; Picciano, 2002). A comprehensive framework for identifying appropriate criteria and the guidelines to measure the hidden aspects of interaction with content are yet to be described by online learning researchers.

*Interaction with Instructors.* Survey data gathered from interactions with instructors point to strong correlations between learners' perceived interactions, perceived learning, and overall course satisfaction (Picciano, 1998; Richardson & Ting, 1999; Swan, Shea, Fredericksen, Pickett, Pelz, & Maher, 2000; Jiang & Ting, 2000; Richardson & Swan, 2003). The style of the instructor's role can be managerial, social, pedagogical, technical (Berge, 1995), organizational, social, or intellectual (Paulsen, 1995). And this style can change, according to the needs of the participants in the online course. The instructor's ability to apply the appropriate instructional style, as well as his or her ability to effectively facilitate discussions (Rossman, 1999), are both cited as

factors that contribute to successful online learning experiences. Effective use of role and teaching presence also directly impact the overall success of course outcomes (Anderson, Rourke, Garrison & Archer, 2001; Shea, Fredericksen, Pickett & Pelz, 2003; 2004).

“Restrained presence” has been found particularly important, as it influences the direction of cognitive and social processes in collaborative learning activities (Vandergrift, 2002; Wu, 2003). An instructor’s ability to realize personally meaningful and educationally worthwhile participant outcomes also depends on participant perceptions of supportive, timely, and appropriate feedback (Kasby, Albertelli, Bauer, Kashy & Thoennesen, 2003; Riccomini, 2002).

*Interaction with Peers.* Studies which focus on peer interactions find that participants in asynchronous communication project their identities into their communications and create social presence (Garrison, Anderson, & Archer, 2001; Gunawardena & Zittle, 1997; Poole, 2000; Richardson & Swan, 2001; Anderson, Rourke, Garrison, & Archer, 2001; Walther, 1994). Social presence is defined as the perceived psychological distance between communication participants (Swan & Shih, 2005). In terms of interaction and performance, perceived social presence, perceived interactions, and perceived learning are all correlated (Picciano, 2002). Researchers suggest that participants who perceive high social presence from peer participants and instructors perform significantly better in online courses (Shea, et al., 2003, 2004). Compared with more traditional forms of instruction, participants also tend to perceive online discussion to be more equitable and more democratic (Harasim, 1990; Levin, Kim & Riel, 1990), more reflective and mindful (Hiltz, 1994; Poole, 2000), and they tend to link perceived learning with the percent of the course grade based on discussion (Hawisher &

Pemberton, 1997; Jiang & Ting, 2000; Picciano, 1998; Swan, Shea, Fredericksen, Pickett, Pelz, & Maher, 2000).

*Interaction with the Interface.* Interface studies of multimedia learning provide explanations on the effectiveness of differing media combinations for supporting participant learning (Mayer, 2001). Learners interact with computer interfaces to access course content and communicate with online instructors and course colleagues. Conclusions from multiple studies replicated over twenty years suggest that people learn better from animation and narration and that better transfer occurs when the pace of the presentation is learner controlled. Numerous experimental studies examine virtual media systems and find that various interfaces may support participant problem-solving better than traditional print-based sources (Chang, Sung, & Chiou, 2002; Gutl & Pivec, 2003; Lin, 2002).

#### *Role of Community*

The concept of building online communities stems from research on face-to-face learning that suggests that all learning takes place in communities (Lave & Wenger, 1990; Wenger, 1997). Building a sense of community in online learning environments includes knowledge building (Hoadly & Pea, 2002; Hunter, 2002; Scardamalia & Bereiter, 1996), social support for learning (Hawthornthwaite, 2002), and the intersection of social organization and appropriate learning activities (Nolan & Weiss, 2002; Renninger & Shumar, 2002). For example, Rovai (2002a) developed a Sense of Classroom Community Index (SCCI) that consisted of spirit, trust, interaction, and learning subscales. He found no significant differences in overall sense of community between traditional and online classes, but much greater variability in online sense of

community. The sense of community online learners experience may be due to an instructor's ability to establish "swift trust" and maintain a high level of activity, responsiveness, and a positive expectation that group activity will be beneficial (Coppola, Hiltz, & Rotter, 2004).

An online instructor's ability to sustain a sense of group commitment and build a sense of community is a necessary first step for online collaborative learning (Wegerif, 1998). Positive online learning experiences are associated with participants feeling as insiders and not as outsiders. The online facilitator, like the campus instructor, must personalize education and enhance participant learning by encouraging active participation through online collaborative group work interaction (Bender, 2003).

#### *Online Learning Summary*

The research findings examined here have implications for online graduate management education. Many researchers suggest that online courses have promising potential for developing hard and soft skills. Other researchers argue that while online courses may be more supportive of experimentation, exploration of multiple perspectives, and complex understanding and reflection, the examination of whether specific skills can be developed online is yet to be explored.

The key factors that contribute to successful online courses include providing greater clarity and consistency in course design, organization, and objectives, as well as creating a learning environment that integrates constructivist principles for each participant. Activities that simulate projects in the workplace provide learning in context. In addition, the quantity and quality of instructor interactions and verbal immediacy behaviors are linked to participant learning and successful online course outcomes.

The research also points out the importance of pre- and post-learning assessments. It is recommended that all online courses have assessment questions, or formative evaluations throughout each instructional unit, or module. Learner feedback and reflections on understanding contribute to positive participant outcomes.

### Research Design Considerations

This section briefly discusses the distinctions made between qualitative and quantitative approaches and presents arguments for using mixed methods research designs to complement rather than compete with (or ignore) each paradigm's respective strengths (Creswell, 1994). A mixed methods research design was intentionally selected for this study to explore in depth how intercultural sensitivity was developed using an online learning environment. According to Hiltz and Goldman (2005), this approach entails a blending of qualitative and quantitative methods in order to enhance triangulation, and thus, strengthen findings. Many scholars in the three educational disciplines, intercultural communication, graduate business education, and online learning, suggest that the use of mixed methods approaches could offer researchers the ability to generate more meaning from data by enhancing the quality of data interpretation (Arbaugh & Benbunan-Fich, 2004, Hammer, Bennett, & Wiseman, 2003; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998, 2003).

The emergence of mixed methods research designs, or the third paradigm movement, began during the 1980's. It was initially considered a methodological morass since it was not presented as firmly grounded as qualitative methods in the first edition of Denzin and Lincoln's *Handbook of Qualitative Research* (1994). Because researchers tend to be exposed to an emphasis of one approach over another, researchers often

become more comfortable handling either quantitative or qualitative analysis, but not both. Therefore, the two major research approaches are seldom combined in studies and their respective strengths are often largely ignored. While recent trends suggest that more research efforts are underway to combine methods to enhance data collection, triangulation, and the integrity of a study, this method of inquiry continues to be called for by the research community (Goldman-Segall, 1998, Hiltz & Goldman, 2005).

The authors of *Learning Together Online: Research on Asynchronous Learning Networks* (Hiltz & Goldman, 2005), for example, recognize this research dilemma and offer a compelling alternative initially proposed by Goldman-Segall (1998) called *quisitive* research, which "combines the quality of inquisitiveness and inquiry and the notion of the quantitative numerical quiz to understand the learning event" (p. 111). It is further argued by Maxwell (2005) that by giving combined methods 'a term of its own' the notion of its increased recognition and value to the research community would be further supported, and provide the validation it deserves.

Furthermore, articles using mixed methods research on group dynamics, organizational change, and international management are appearing in many journals (Admas & Morgan, 2007; Hemingway, 2001). A top ranked management journal, *Academy of Management Journal*, for example, includes studies that combine statistical analysis along with interpretive methods which test inferences by drawing on multiple sources such as in-depth interviews, participant observations, and archival documents to develop case studies. Despite these efforts, the exploration of the literature shows that relatively few studies have been conducted merging both quantitative and qualitative approaches.

A review of the intercultural communication literature published from 1988-2000 reveals that most studies use either experimental, quasi-experimental, or a non-experimental design. That is, most studies use a control group to test dependent variables and comparable groups do not receive treatments (Landis, Bennett, & Bennett, 2004). A study by Bernard and colleagues (2004) in the online learning literature shows that while quantitative studies may have numerous problems associated with procedures, sampling, and controlling variables due to the “distance” of the participants, high quality research can still be attainable by improving measures and designs for future studies. Scholars suggest that a combination of approaches may be warranted to improve the validity, credibility, and reliability of results (Tashakkorri & Teddlie, 2003). I have concluded from my literature review that more studies are needed to address how participants acquire desired outcomes through in-depth interviewing procedures thereby uncovering continuities and contradictions found in empirical data (Hammer & Bennett, 1998, 2002, 2004).

The research model for this study incorporates a multi-strand, mixed methods research design to answer the research question “In what ways did an online MBA course impact intercultural sensitivity development for graduate students along the intercultural continuum?” Using case study analysis and thick description (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1995, pp. 84-93), together with prolonged engagement, peer debriefing and audit trails, a robust study was developed and is presented in the following chapters. The research question was addressed by collecting and analyzing both quantitative and qualitative data with inferences drawn on the basis of both data sources. The research model, considered to be a mixed methods design (Creswell, 2002, p. 565), is detailed in Chapter Three.

Blending two approaches, and accepting the theory of complementarity, allowed me to conduct both confirmatory and exploratory research by using both empirical-analytical (Cook & Campbell, 1979), and interpretive-constructivist (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) research methods.

An underlying research design consideration, then, is to model the use of combined method analyses. An exploration of the Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI) pretest-posttest scores left many unanswered questions about why some participants progressed while others regressed in stages of intercultural sensitivity development as a result of the online MBA course. So, for example, while the quantitative data revealed a range of gains and losses in intercultural sensitivity development, these same data were unable to explain why some participants experienced gains while others experienced losses. Qualitative data by contrast, could help tell the story behind these gains and losses. Therefore, this dissertation required the complementary use of qualitative and quantitative research methods in order to explore the impact and the effectiveness of the online MBA course. Instead of either ignoring or defending one method over another, I reasoned that it would be more instructive to model the use of both methods and encourage mixed methods research designs as part of a continuum of research techniques, all of which are appropriate to answer emerging research questions in numerous disciplines.

Complementarity, or blending qualitative data with quantitative measures in this study was specifically intended to tease out information about how graduate students experienced intercultural sensitivity development. Thus, when undertaking interpretive/thematic analysis and coding different types of data from six selected



informants, quantification of informants' pretest-posttest scores and degrees of course engagement (e.g., posts authored and read through CMS statistics) uncovered some cognitive orientations and communication patterns while examining interview transcripts and discussion board posts for meaning and intention (such as cognitive knowledge-building) revealed others. The IDI pretest-posttest scores, along with informants' interviews, online MBA course data, and instructor/researcher data were used to help explain which key factors contributed the most to the success of the educational intervention for selected informants. Finally, the in-depth interviews provided insights on how the course was perceived and valued by selected informants. All of this analysis, including case study development, is described in greater depth in the next chapter on methods.

#### Literature Review Summary

Three distinct bodies of literature; intercultural communication, graduate business education, and online learning were used to frame the problem and substantiate the research question: "In what ways did an online MBA course impact intercultural sensitivity development for graduate students along the intercultural continuum?" Each body of literature links to the research question and provides the rationale for the study.

The literature review suggests that research is needed to determine whether an online MBA course designed to impact intercultural sensitivity development by emphasizing real-world application and simulating cross-company, intercultural teamwork, could potentially produce more globally competent managers. Online MBA courses that extend the opportunities for adults, working and traveling, to take advantage

of an anywhere, anytime approach to learning are needed to meet the demands of discriminating consumers.

Participants who are widely dispersed geographically can access content by logging onto the Internet at any time. Typical online courses provide links with drills, simulations, assessment, video lectures, discussions and learning portals. Participants can access their interactive, multimedia instruction (such as a DVD or audio file) from remote locations and build online communities sharing questions and answers with instructors and colleagues via e-mail, video-conferencing, chat rooms and bulletin boards. Participants enjoy more flexibility, convenience, and cost-effectiveness; i.e., they study when they want, where they want, and for as long as they want. Also, at any given time, each participant gets the same information, the same explanations and then has access to the online MBA course as a reference library.

As adult learners and discriminating consumers, graduate students demand business courses that offer significant content, engaging delivery, and relevance to the global business environment. An online delivery format offers collaborative learning activities, opportunities to engage with experts in the field, the time to reflect on new ideas and concepts, and the internet as an instant resource. Recent changes in graduate business education drive business educators to develop more courses that consider globalization. It is argued that the future of graduate management education relies on a list of critical success factors for business schools in the 21<sup>st</sup> century such as offering courses designed to teach managerial global competence.

Researchers have paid little attention to graduate student acceptance of online MBA courses designed and delivered to develop intercultural sensitivity and how an

instructor can impact content and delivery outcomes. Researchers suggest that the use of more multi-course and multiple time period research designs could be of great benefit in helping business schools determine how to build effective online coursework that participants perceive as useful. Business educators need advances in this stream of research to learn how to successfully incorporate online delivery formats into MBA programs to produce more globally competent managers.

I articulated several points in this literature review to lend support for my study. However, several considerations must be noted before designing and delivering an online MBA course to impact intercultural sensitivity development. First, the role of the instructor as a facilitator and the importance of design principles are elements upon which successful participant learning outcomes depend. An instructor's ability to build community and facilitate online interaction determines whether participants fully engage in collaborative learning activities that promote the development of affective, behavioral, and cognitive skills.

Second, collaborative learning activities through virtual teamwork must challenge participants' perspectives of cultural difference. Such learning must foster affective transformation, encourage the development of behavioral skills, and enhance cognitive intelligence if it is to facilitate the acquisition of intercultural competence and sensitivity. To this end, the IDI provided the link between assessment, curriculum, and instruction. The IDI reflected the present state of participants' intercultural sensitivity development and guided instruction. Assisting participants through these stages of development helped to increase cultural knowledge and transform perspectives about cultural difference that impacted learning outcomes and performance in the workplace.

Third, global competence, action learning, and online management learning through virtual teamwork precipitate the need for educators to design and deliver courses sensitive to cultural difference. Global businesses benefit from coursework that include intercultural competence training and leadership development. Furthermore, the use of online learning environments to promote the acquisition of intercultural competence and sensitivity provides MBA participants with enhanced flexibility to deliver the needed skills required by global businesses in a timely and relevant fashion.

Finally, the literature review provided the rationale for designing and delivering an online MBA course to impact intercultural sensitivity development for graduate students. Research is needed to determine whether online MBA courses can be used to potentially produce more globally competent managers. The acquisition of affective motivation, behavioral skills, and cultural knowledge to impact intercultural sensitivity development rely on an online instructor's ability to communicate clear course goals, implement discussion techniques that elicit upper-level thinking and reflection, and utilize assessments that reflect discussion points and interaction. The literature review findings strongly suggest that more research is needed to explore whether online MBA courses could equip graduate students with managerial global competence and adequate levels of attitudes, behaviors, and knowledge for working with diverse groups of people in the global marketplace.

## CHAPTER THREE

### METHODS

#### Complementary Methods

In this chapter, I describe the data collection procedures and coding strategies for analyses. I also include a more detailed description of the online MBA course used as the venue for this study, the rationale and features of the mixed methods research, and the procedures employed to purposefully select informants for case study development. Finally, I discuss my author/instructor/researcher roles and the potential for bias as well as the procedures put in place to minimize them.

The literature review in Chapter Two reveals that there is little research on the efficacy of online courses designed to impact intercultural sensitivity development. Moreover it is clear, while studies that combine both quantitative and qualitative methodology to explore how participants experience online courses are scarce, numerous authors in various disciplines cite a need for this type of inquiry (Bernard, Abrami, Lou, Borokhovski, 2004; Landis, Bennett, & Bennett, 2004; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998; 2003). These researchers suggest that the goal of a mixed methodology is to present a more complete picture of empirical reality by integrating both qualitative and quantitative approaches more comprehensively. This approach allows the researcher to decide the degree of triangulation to accommodate the research question (Mertens & McLaughlin, 2004). Since the literature review highlights these concerns and underscores the need for social constructivist and andragogical methods to improve course outcomes (Forrest & Peterson, 2006; Zahorik, 1997, Zielinski, 2000) and address ethnocentrism (Adler 1997,

2002; Engler & Hunt, 2004), this study was designed to explore the ways in which an online MBA course impacted intercultural sensitivity development for participants.

Combined research methods or mixed methods research (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003) is sometimes referred to as multimethod or integrated research (Creswell, 2003). Quantitative methods have often been considered to have greater impact in the educational research community because quantifiable evidence in various forms, such as “numbers,” speaks volumes and tend to be more persuasive. Statistical analyses can provide “an empirical test to support or refute a knowledge claim” (Mertens & McLaughlin, 2004, p. 52). Unlike qualitative evidence, statistics often influence policy-makers. This can be attributed to the prevailing biases and emphases on numbers in training and society. In fact, Gray and Densten (1998) suggest that the use of qualitative and quantitative techniques could be understood as operating on a continuum rather than on a bi-polar scale much like the cultural value dimension framework (e.g., universalism vs. particularism) and DMIS (e.g., ethnocentrism vs. ethnorelativism) described in Chapter Two. The value of integrating two paradigms is that it allows researchers to conduct both confirmatory and exploratory research using both empirical-analytical (Cook & Campbell, 1979), and interpretive-constructivist (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) research methods. Two data sets can generate more holistic meaning and help the reader draw more cross-case conclusions (York, 1994; Noblit & Hare, 1988). Likewise, I argue that the combined use of data gathered from the two research paradigms results in a more complete picture, or an elaborated view of data rather than using data from any single paradigm.

Three research phases were used to best accommodate the nature of a two-trial/pretest-posttest research design and followed this sequence: *Phase 1*) quantitative and qualitative data were collected from thirty-eight participants in the online MBA course, *Phase 2*) nineteen informants were selected based on interview availability and of these, six were selected for case study development based on IDI stage shift, *Phase 3*) quantitative and qualitative data from first two phases were interpreted and compared to triangulate findings. The next section describes the online MBA course that I created for the purposes of this study, followed by the qualitative and quantitative procedures.

#### Online MBA Course: *Brainpool Online*

The online MBA course, *Brainpool Online: Collaborative Cross-Cultural Communication Competence*, was a seven-week, one-credit elective designed for graduate students. It was created to serve as a venue for collecting data and conducting the study during the summers of 2004 and 2005. *Brainpool Online* was offered to all graduate students enrolled in the MBA program through the College of Business at a private Midwestern Jesuit university.

All graduate students enrolled in this MBA program were required to select three one-credit Business Skills courses (i.e., electives) to fulfill MBA program requirements. *Brainpool Online*, therefore, was not part of the regular MBA program but was designed and delivered as a highly specialized elective business skills online course. The content emphasized effective intercultural communication strategies that facilitated interactions with diverse groups of people and explored perspectives and issues related to intercultural competence and sensitivity. Objectives were designed to develop awareness of cultural ethnocentricities that affect communication behaviors and subsequently impart

intercultural communication skills that could prevent cultural misunderstandings when doing business in countries outside of the United States.

As outlined in Chapter One, *Brainpool Online* was designed to be taught in seven weekly instructional units using social constructivist and andragogical methods (Forrest & Peterson, 2006; Knowles, 1970; Zahorik, 1997) that focused on Sino-American business practices, with each unit incorporating a variety of virtual teamwork activities that culminated in a final team presentation. This presentation included a PowerPoint presentation and a five page reflective paper on the country chosen by each team (Brazil, India, and Indonesia) detailing (1) the country's distinguishing cultural dimensions (2) an example of how these differences affect how business is conducted (3) strengths and weakness of doing business in this country, and (4) references used. Throughout the course, intact teams participated in discussions, experiential activities, teamwork, and action learning through case studies--all purposely chosen to reflect a social constructivist learning environment to help them complete the final team presentation. The characteristics of the weekly virtual teamwork exercises simulated real world work experiences to engage participants affectively, behaviorally, and cognitively (Oddou, 2005). For example, actual US-China business cases were detailed and participants analyzed them using cultural frameworks presented in the readings. After participants submitted their analyses in the course Discussion Board, they then posted responses to two different team members' analyses. I summarized the case study results and outlined suggestions that could have contributed to more successful outcomes. The syntheses from the weekly activities could then be used by participants to construct final team presentations.



This kind of team-based activity is consistent with social constructivism because it enabled participants to adapt to a new social environment through attention to the appropriate online textual cues, retention of those cues, and then behaving consistently with them (Bandura, 1977). Each weekly instructional unit promoted and required online discussion, employed negotiation processes, used multiple resources and alternate views, provided participants with a sense of ownership, incorporated case-based and real world contexts, and featured instructional coaching and mentoring processes (Jonassen, Davidson, M., Collins, Campbell, & Haag, 1994; Duffy, 2001). More specifically, the weekly instructional units were designed to accomplish the following (Oddou, 2005):

1. Present cultural behaviors that juxtapose indigenous cultural norms and expectations that require adaptation to be effective in communicative interactions.
2. Challenge participants to be mindful of cultural cues, understand and retain them, and suggest behaviors in a discussion format that would be consistent with those cues or norms.

To accomplish these objectives I modeled affective, behavioral, and cognitive online textual cues, provided information and feedback, as well as used discussion prompts and questions to challenge participants' preconceived notions and assumptions. In addition, I incorporated the use of guest experts via a DVD and audio clip to provide different cultural perspectives and also model effective Sino-American business practices. These three guest experts served as online mentors throughout the online MBA course; Joe, a US global business consultant, Jeff, an expatriate working as President of a US-based subsidiary in Shanghai, China, and Xiao, a Chinese international corporate

attorney. Each guest expert's initial presentation, rooted in a US or Chinese cultural perspective, linked participants to real world business issues. I posited that participants could learn more sophisticated appreciation of the target culture (China) by being exposed to multiple cultural representatives and various intercultural communication styles (Weiss, 2003). Hence, I expected that instructor and guest expert modeling would generate enthusiasm and active participation, while increasing an appreciation for diversity.

Since literature suggests that online mentoring helps others navigate career opportunities (Whiting & Janasz, 2004), the additional mentoring activities in *Brainpool Online* were designed to allow participants to develop mentoring relationships with experts in the field, and increase the connection between course concepts and "the real world" (Ibid, 2004). The online MBA course also linked participants with business executives located in China to expose them to the nature of the global enterprise. The guest expert/online mentors chosen to participate in this study currently worked (or had worked) in China for a domestic subsidiary of a non-domestic firm. These guest experts served as online mentors by participating in question and answer activities to expose participants to a more broad set of intercultural communication challenges in the global workplace; such exercises were expected to increase levels of affective, behavioral, and cognitive competencies. The use of mentoring activities and the creation of communities of difference have also been shown to contribute to team cohesiveness and to mediate the relationship between experiential learning and performance outcomes (Williams, Duray, & Reddy, 2006). The enhancement of experiential learning through mentoring activities was facilitated through the creation of "learning spaces that promote growth-producing

experiences for learners” (Kolb & Kolb, 2005, p. 205). I reasoned that mentoring activities, using an online learning environment would help to create more independent, adaptable individuals, and thus develop greater intercultural sensitivity.

Each of the seven weekly instructional units required discussion activities using the “Discussion Board” in the Course Management System (CMS). The Discussion Board provided participants with a “structured place” to asynchronously interact with the instructor and other team members regarding questions and issues raised by readings, learning activities, and relevant experiences shared by guest experts. Because a highly interactive learning environment is considered essential to the collaborative learning process (Read, Jones, Connolly, & Gear, 2006), participation in the discussions was mandatory. Participants were randomly grouped into teams (two teams in Trial I of ten and twelve; one team in Trial II of sixteen). Each team selected a country to showcase for the final team presentation. The teams, referred to as Brainpool Online/Brazil, Brainpool Online/India, and Brainpool Online/Indonesia, participated in designated Discussion Boards. I presented a weekly discussion prompt to initiate the discussion and each participant was required to post a 250-300 word response within the first few days of the weekly instructional unit. In the middle of the week, participants were required to read and respond to a minimum of two of their team members’ posts (4-5 sentences). During the final two days of the week, I provided a synthesis and summary of the discussion threads with the key themes highlighted.

In addition to the formal discussions, I also integrated a “Backstage Dress Rehearsal Discussion Area.” This discussion area served as an open forum for participants to hold informal conversations about various aspects of the online MBA

course. All posts from the Backstage Dress Rehearsal Discussion Area were collected and analyzed to investigate the ways in which participants attempted to collaborate with team members outside assignment parameters. Designed as informal mechanisms to facilitate online collaborative connections and build a sense of community (Richardson & Swan, 2003; Rovai, 2002), the Backstage Dress Rehearsal Discussion Area was not assessed or graded.

Weekly journal logs and the completion of three course surveys were also required. Journal logs provided participants with a “personal space” to write their emerging thoughts, personal reflections, and questions raised by the course readings; they were also asked to record potential applications of the course content to their work experience. The journals gave me the opportunity, as the instructor/researcher, to provide feedback via journal log responses and pose questions critical to moving participants along the intercultural continuum. The course surveys were completed online (anonymously) as a mid-course reality check and as final course evaluations (see Appendices B and C). These surveys provided formative assessments which could then be used to improve content and instruction to achieve online MBA course objectives and satisfy participants’ expectations.

#### *Course Management System*

The online Course Management Systems (CMSs) Blackboard (Trial I) and Desire2 Learn (D2L) (Trial II), delivered all content and featured assessment tools to monitor achievement and performance. Blackboard was used in 2004 and D2L was used in 2005. Although the features and benefits of each CMS differed somewhat, the major capabilities and functions remained the same for both trials. For example, Blackboard

and D2L both consisted of several areas to simulate the classroom experience in an online learning environment: (1) Course News; (2) Course Content; (3) Discussion Board, an interactive asynchronous environment that allowed participants to work in teams and discuss with the entire class; (4) Course Participants; an area which contained contact information, education and experience, and personal information for each course participant; (5) Course Documents, a shared knowledge base that stored articles, book chapters, abstracts and summaries, and multimedia presentations; (6) Communications, an area for composing and sending emails; (7) External Links, an area that connected participants to online learning materials not included in the Course Content; (8) Grades, an area to maintain and manage grades, and (9) Tools, an area which contained assessments for formative evaluation--either multiple choice, true or false, or short answer “reality checks.” The only noteworthy CMS difference was one feature; the D2L Pager, an area for instant messaging. Despite my efforts to minimize this CMS difference across the 2004 and 2005 trials, the CMS Administrator could not comply with my request to disable this feature as it would affect other online courses. Furthermore, I was unable to control the CMS change from Blackboard to D2L. Thus, Trial II participants had access to this feature which was later found in the data analysis to contribute to a greater degree of virtuality, or richness of the CMS medium (Cohen & Gibson, 2003; Townsend, DeMarie & Hendrickson, 1998).

### *Participants*

Trial I (Summer 2004) and Trial II (Summer 2005) participants were graduate students who enrolled in the elective one-credit online MBA course. Since enrollment was prompted by individual interest in the subject matter, and limited by a finite number

of thirty “seats,” the research participants were not randomly selected. All graduate students (N=38) agreed to participate in the study; twenty-two in Trial I and sixteen in Trial II, although not all of these participants agreed to be interviewed. As research participants, graduate students were assured of complete anonymity. They self-selected pseudonyms for identification purposes. All research participant information was held in strict confidence.

Since participants within fifty miles of campus were required to attend two scheduled face-to-face meetings during weeks one and seven, four participants beyond the fifty mile range from campus, Boston, Harvey, Juanita, and Wit, made other arrangements to meet with me within the same timeframe. These remote participants posted all assignments from remote locations and completed the required face-to-face tasks on days that were more convenient. At the initial face-to-face meeting, participants signed informed consents and completed Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI) pretests. In Trial I, participants were randomly placed into one of the two discussion teams. From that point forward, participants collaborated asynchronously within their team. In Trial II, only one team was created due to the smaller class size. During the initial face-to-face meeting, participants also received instruction for using Blackboard or D2L, from an instructor not associated with the research study. At the second face-to-face meeting in week seven, the IDI posttest and the university required Instructional Assessment System (IAS) were completed.

Demographic information was also collected from the participants through the administration of the IDI. For example, data such as prior educational experience and gender have been cited in the literature to have an effect on individual and group

outcomes (Arbaugh, 2004, 2005b; Jehn, Chadwick, & Thatcher, 1997). These studies revealed that individuals with different life experiences and viewpoints approach cultural differences and task management on teams differently. The demographic information such as age, ethnicity, gender, prior global work or study experience, IDI stage, prior online course experience, and remote participation (posted assignments beyond a 50 mile range from campus) was collected and is displayed in Table 1 to reveal a diverse participant pool. These participant demographics were later used in the data analysis to reveal possible predictors of IDI score change and IDI stage shift (see Table 1).

### Mixed Methods Research Design

Mixed methods were used for systematic collection of data and analysis of participants' experiences. The data were collected to determine the impact of content and delivery on intercultural sensitivity development. Complementary use of both qualitative and quantitative methods allowed for multiple analytical techniques using interpretive and thematic analysis as the primary analytical framework. Qualitative analyses were accomplished by using a hybrid coding method that incorporated both the data-driven inductive approach (discovering patterns in data) and the deductive a priori template of codes approach (testing theories) (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). These approaches allowed me to identify themes as they emerged from the data using inductive coding which involved recognizing (seeing) and encoding it (seeing it as something) prior to a process of interpretation, and use a template to be applied to the data as a means of organizing text for subsequent interpretation. Using interpretive and thematic analysis as the primary qualitative framework facilitated an examination of participants' worldview configurations around cultural difference during the online MBA course.

Table 1

*Online MBA Course Participant Demographics*

<b>Participant</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Ethnicity</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Prior Global Work/Study Experience</b>	<b>IDI Stage</b>	<b>Prior Online Course Experience</b>	<b>Participation Beyond 50 Miles from Campus*</b>
<b>Boston</b>	<b>31-40</b>	<b>European American</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Denial/Defense</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes*</b>
<b>Judy</b>	<b>22-30</b>	<b>European American</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Denial/Defense</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>No</b>
<b>Winnie</b>	<b>22-30</b>	<b>European American</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Denial/Defense</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>No</b>
<b>Wayne</b>	<b>22-30</b>	<b>European American</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Denial/Defense</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>No</b>
<b>William</b>	<b>22-30</b>	<b>European American</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Denial/Defense</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>No</b>
<b>Bob</b>	<b>22-30</b>	<b>European American</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Denial/Defense</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>No</b>
<b>Kreen</b>	<b>31-40</b>	<b>European American</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Denial/Defense</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>No</b>
<b>Pepe</b>	<b>31-40</b>	<b>European American</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Denial/Defense</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>No</b>
<b>Roscoe</b>	<b>41-50</b>	<b>European American</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Denial/Defense</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
<b>Allie</b>	<b>22-30</b>	<b>European American</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Minimization</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>No</b>
<b>Chase</b>	<b>22-30</b>	<b>European American</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Minimization</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>No</b>
<b>Isabel</b>	<b>22-30</b>	<b>Indonesian</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Minimization</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>No</b>
<b>Juanita</b>	<b>22-30</b>	<b>European American</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Minimization</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Yes*</b>
<b>Wit</b>	<b>22-30</b>	<b>European</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Minimization</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes*</b>



		American					
Zim	18-21	European American	F	Yes	Minimization	No	No
Cristina	31-40	European American	F	Yes	Minimization	No	No
Ellen	18-21	European American	F	No	Minimization	No	No
Imogene	22-30	European American	F	No	Minimization	No	No
Nicole	22-30	European American	F	No	Minimization	No	No
Sydney	22-30	European American	F	Yes	Minimization	No	No
Sallie	22-30	European American	F	Yes	Minimization	No	No
Jamie	22-30	European American	M	No	Minimization	No	No
Bono	31-40	European American	M	Yes	Minimization	Yes	No
Ace	51-60	European American	M	Yes	Minimization	Yes	No
Chipper	22-30	European American	M	No	Minimization	No	No
Fernando	31-40	European American	M	Yes	Minimization	No	No
Harvey	41-50	European American	M	Yes	Minimization	No	Yes*
George	22-30	European American	M	Yes	Minimization	No	No
Jack	22-30	Persian American	M	No	Minimization	Yes	No
Rich	22-30	European American	M	No	Minimization	No	No
Ram	22-30	European	M	No	Minimization	No	No

		American					
Treller	31-40	UK	M	Yes	Minimization	No	No
Larry	22-30	European American	M	Yes	Minimization	No	No
Anthony	22-30	African- American	M	No	Minimization	No	No
San	22-30	Indonesian	F	Yes	Acceptance/ Adaptation	No	No
Elaine	22-30	European American	F	No	Acceptance/ Adaptation	No	No
Suzanne	22-30	European American	F	Yes	Acceptance/ Adaptation	No	No
Tego	22-30	African American	F	No	Acceptance/ Adaptation	No	No

\* Posted assignments beyond a 50 mile range from campus - a different city, state, or country

Evidence of the manifestation of participants' positive feelings, actions, and thoughts towards communication interactions as they related to cultural differences were likely to reveal new, more inclusive cultural perspectives and greater intercultural sensitivity development.

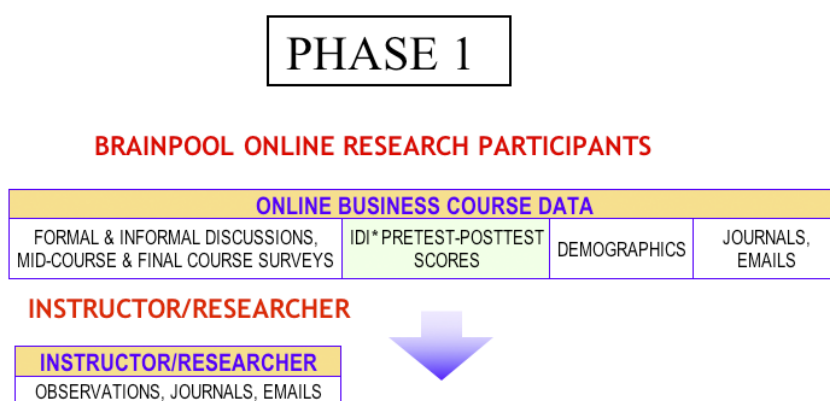
Quantitative analyses of the Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI) pretest-posttest scores measured the degree to which each participant progressed or regressed *within* or *between* DMIS stages. Two non-parametric statistical tests, Chi Square and Wilcoxon Signed-Rank (Wilcoxon, 1945), provided ways to examine IDI score change within stages and IDI stage shift between stages more closely. Statistical correlations measured the relationships between these effects and participants' demographic variables. These data were then used to measure the overall impact of the online MBA course on the participants as a group.

The quantitative data sets and the interpretation of participants' IDI score change and IDI stage shift were guided by *The IDI Software Version 2-3* (Phoenix Database Solutions, 2001) and *The IDI Manual* (Bennett & Hammer, 1998; 2002; 2004). The IDI software generated pretest-posttest profiles which were integrated with qualitatively analyzed data collected from the online MBA course, interviews, and my instructor/researcher journal. I argue that inferences drawn from multiple data sources can help expand the knowledge base about the development of intercultural sensitivity.

### *Phase 1: Online MBA Course Data Collection*

In the first phase of the study (see Figure 3) both quantitative and qualitative data were collected from the online MBA course of two seven-week summer trials. I first detail the qualitative data sources followed by a description of the data collected from the Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI). A total of thirty-eight graduate students were participants and signed the informed consents, completed the IDI pretest, and provided Discussion Board, journal log, and survey data throughout the seven-week online MBA course.

Figure 3. *Online MBA Course Data Collection*



### *Qualitative Data*

Qualitative data in the first phase of the study were collected from multiple sources; the online MBA course and myself as the instructor/researcher. An approach to qualitative fieldwork, based on Lincoln and Guba's naturalistic inquiry (1985) and the constant comparative analysis strategy (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) was used to interpret and understand how participants thought, felt, and responded to cultural differences. Depth and detail were obtained by "getting close," physically and psychologically, "to the phenomenon under study" (Patton, 1990, p. 43). I noted that since I was the instructor/researcher, I was a co-producer of the knowledge generated by this analytic process. The multiple data collection procedures ensured that I had access to a wide range of data; this assisted me in the *triangulation* of the data where my intent was to expand my understanding rather than corroborate findings (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004).

*Discussion Board, Journal Log, and Survey Data.* Discussion Board, journal log, and survey data were collected from twenty-two participants in Trial I and sixteen participants in Trial II. The course assignments required participants to submit weekly responses (250-300 words) to discussion prompts. Participants engaged in asynchronous threaded discussions as intact teams with at least two other team members each week. In addition, each participant emailed a journal log at the end of each week to reflect on their discussion board experiences, and describe how they believed the coursework contributed or detracted from their intercultural sensitivity development. Three surveys were conducted anonymously in weeks four and seven. A mid-course survey (see Appendix B) was administered in week four as a "reality check" with sixteen questions related to

online instruction with questions like: “*Does the way the instructor facilitates the course make sense to you? Why or why not?*” A final course survey (see Appendix C) was administered in week seven with forty-nine questions related to the online MBA course in which participants agreed or disagreed to statements like: “*Learning in this course was enhanced by the interaction of the instructor and students.*” Another survey, an Instructional Assessment System (IAS) was also administered in week seven with five questions related to content and delivery outcomes (see Chapter Four). The IAS survey which was required by the Graduate School of Management, asked participants to rate four areas; the instructor, the value of the concepts taught, how well the course contributed to knowledge of the subject area, and overall satisfaction with the online MBA course. Qualitative data from discussions and journal logs were used for case study development while survey data were used for preliminary group data analysis and subsequent cross-trial analysis since these were administered anonymously and could not be linked to specific participants.

*Instructor/Researcher Data.* One of my research interests included understanding my role as the facilitator to deliver andragogical methods using an online delivery format. This element of self-study within the project, often associated with qualitative research, required that I became both deeply immersed in the research setting and reflective throughout the process. The systematic collection of personal data, through journaling techniques, chronicled my role as the instructor/researcher and was an additional research component that involved an iterative process of diagnosing, action planning, action taking, evaluating, and learning (Holsapple & Lee-Post, 2006). The duality of my instructor/researcher role required that I functioned as both a “participant-observer” and

“reflective practitioner.” From this dual perspective, I expected to shape findings through direct experience and participation in the course. It has been argued that instructors who engage in reflection on practice tend to be committed to professional development and want to improve learner outcomes (Schon, 1987). My objective was to understand participants’ perceptions of cultural ethnocentricities and the online andragogical methods they thought helped them arrive at conclusions that enhanced intercultural competence and sensitivity in business practice.

I was conscious that modeling critical reflexivity was also important in this project because management education is “not just about helping managers become more effective organizational citizens” (Cunliffe, 2004). By setting examples throughout the weekly discussions, my goal was to encourage participants to think more critically about assumptions and actions. An illustration of this was when a participant in Trial II criticized the execution of a top Chinese official by stating: “*The Chinese are barbaric and don’t value human life.*” I responded to this statement by challenging the Trial II participant to research execution rates and consider how history played a significant role in government and business. I then posted visual images of US executions juxtaposed with Chinese monuments such as the Great China Wall and the Terra Cotta soldiers to convey China’s 2000 year history. My response was intended to provoke critical reflection upon cultural assumptions and get other participants to wrestle with ethnocentric attitudes exhibited as an inability to view other cultures as equally viable alternatives for organizing reality. Together we learned more about controversial issues by being resourceful and using collaborative and less ethnocentric ways of “digging

deeper” and “going there” to understand how government and business might operate differently across cultures due to history and context.

My role as a qualitative researcher, as Glesne (1999) notes, was “to understand the nature of constructed realities,” and “interact and talk with participants about their perceptions” (p. 5). Rather than thinking in terms of ‘getting it right or wrong’, my job as a qualitative researcher was to try to make appropriate andragogical choices and focus on fundamental processes that would help participants’ understand and improve their intercultural competence and sensitivity (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998; Borg & Gall, 1989). In a business and organizational context, my role as a qualitative researcher was to be aware of my choices, consider them well, and to communicate those choices clearly, transparently, and articulately to my stakeholders (Reason, 2006).

One component of the instructor/researcher data included real-time scripted observations of the behaviors and attitudes of participants during each weekly instructional unit. For example, my daily course involvement in the Discussion Board and Backstage Dress Rehearsal Discussion Area helped to determine which participants were more active and submitted discussion posts above and beyond stated requirements as well as to provide feedback when appropriate. The Discussion Board data also were used to reveal how assignments were executed, how intercultural sensitivity was exemplified, and how team dynamics emerged. I used this information to monitor participants’ course engagement and course progress. I recorded my insights in my instructor/researcher journal. For example, I noted how they presented themselves, managed relationships with their team members, assigned responsibility and blame, persuaded team members to complete tasks, made sense of team members ongoing

interaction practices, and so on. The Backstage Dress Rehearsal Discussion Area was used by team members to assign tasks and coordinate final team presentations. Participants used this area to suggest posting deadlines or to ask questions pertinent to the completion of teamwork projects. Some team members volunteered for role assignments, such as team leader or team editor, while others waited until all tasks were taken. Dineen (2005) found that introverted individuals tend to have more influence on their teams than extroverted individuals because the online learning environment allows them to participate more actively without feeling intimidated. Similarly, Hwang & Arbaugh (2005) found that feedback seeking behaviors and the presence of competitive attitudes among participants contribute to performance outcomes in online courses. These behaviors and attitudes were noted in my observations for both trials. I referred to this data to support my analysis and interpretation. The analysis of the observations also offered insights into how participants approached building an online learning community that valued cultural difference.

In addition to observations, other data included weekly journal logs and emails. These data provided a real-time account of what took place during the course by chronicling the events of the two trials. New insights emerged to structure interview questions and formulate discussion postings to participants. My reactions were entered into weekly journal logs to describe how the course was going and how the facilitation experience unfolded. Emails were generated to participants as journal log responses to answer questions, guide learning activities, and offer feedback. Together, the observations via daily course monitoring, journal logs about weekly experiences, and emails generated to participants were used for further investigation.



### *Quantitative Data*

*Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI).* The Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI) was developed by Milton Bennett and Mitchell Hammer and consists of 50 statements with a Likert-type response scale to which participants affirmed the degree to which they agreed or disagreed with a statement. IDI pretest-posttest responses were collected at the beginning and the end of the online MBA course respectively, during two face-to-face meetings, in weeks one and seven. Pretest and posttest scores, generated by IDI software, were criteria for informant and case study selection and were used to identify participants' developmental stages of intercultural sensitivity and establish IDI stage shift progressions and regressions.

*Validity and Reliability.* The IDI is a cross-culturally valid measure of intercultural sensitivity based on Bennett's DMIS (1986, 1993) and is statistically reliable (i.e., the r-scores for the five stages are all above .80). In order to develop the IDI, Bennett and Hammer 1) determined what was being measured through an extensive interview process with 40 men and women representing a culturally diverse group with varying international experiences, 2) generated an item pool, 3) determined the format for measurement, 4) had the item pool reviewed by a panel of experts, 5) included validation items 6) administered items to a development sample of 226 respondents, and 7) evaluated scale items through factor analysis. The factor analysis and reliability results of the IDI showed that correlation patterns existed. Consistent with the theoretical foundations of the DMIS, these were highly inter-correlated and measured the developmental stages from Denial to Defense to Minimization to Acceptance.

General conclusions can be drawn regarding the relationship between the IDI and the DMIS. For example, responses to the IDI pretest provide a baseline for understanding the predominant worldview of participants while responses to the IDI posttest show how experiences towards cultural differences may change at the conclusion of an educational intervention along the DMIS intercultural continuum. Interviews with selected informants also provide a context for understanding participants' philosophies about cultural difference. Pretest-posttest measures, along with contexting interviews, can help instructors understand an educational intervention's overall impact and address individual needs. In addition, Hammer and Bennett's exhaustive content analysis study of interviews conducted after administering the IDI indicated that the worldviews posited by the DMIS were identifiable and that they supported the major distinction between ethnocentrism and ethnorelativism with Stage Two-Minimization as an alternate form of ethnocentrism that acts as a transition into ethnorelativism (Hammer & Bennett, 1998, 2002, 2004). Therefore, IDI stage shift from Denial/Defense-Reversal to Minimization or Minimization to Acceptance/Adaptation constitutes a substantive change in worldview orientation to cultural difference which could lead to a greater capacity for exercising intercultural competence (Paige, 2003).

To date, numerous studies have used the instrument to measure the worldview configurations toward cultural difference (Altshuler, Sussman & Kachur, 2003; Endicott, Bock & Narvaez, 2003; Hammer, Bennett & Wiseman, 2003; Klak & Martin, 2003; Paige, Jacobs-Cassuto, Yershova & De Jaeghere, 2003; Straffon, 2003). This extensive research provides broad-based support for using the IDI and concludes that the IDI's empirical results are both valid and reliable. In these studies the constructs of validity

and reliability were vigorously tested against other intercultural tools as well as administered to culturally diverse people and analyzed by a panel of intercultural communication experts (Hammer, 1997). Hammer, Bennett, and Wiseman (2003) demonstrate that the IDI is multi-dimensionally supported by rigorous theoretical perspectives and various empirical studies.

However, while positive correlations are found between variables such as intercultural development, moral reasoning, and multicultural experience, the body of IDI research does not address some inherent problems. Validity and reliability may depend on a symbiotic relationship between quantitative and qualitative evidence. For example, Straffon's study (2003) uncovers a significant relationship between time spent in a host culture and intercultural sensitivity but finds incompatibilities between the quantitative and qualitative evidence. Furthermore, participants with trailing or developmental issues related to one's involvement in the military, Peace Corps, or missionary work could produce lower IDI scores despite vast multicultural and host culture experience (Hammer & Bennett, 1998, 2002, 2004). These contradictory findings could suggest that participants are in transition or in Reversal. The Reversal phenomenon, or "Peace Corps syndrome," is a worldview orientation that places emphasis on the host culture, rather than the home culture. Gudykunst, Lee, Nishida, and Ogawa (2005) address this argument between subjectivist and objectivist approaches and state that "both approaches are necessary to understanding intercultural communication, and that the ideal is eventually to integrate the two perspectives" (p. 4). According to R. M. Paige and M. R. Hammer (personal communication, November 9, 2007) IDI results coupled with interview data can better describe participants' course experiences towards cultural

differences while feedback sessions can influence one's cultural awareness and spur further intercultural sensitivity development over time. Therefore, IDI quantitative analysis of an individual's complex cognitive processes should be coupled with contexting interviews to better interpret the data, thus, it should not be used as a stand-alone instrument.

To address these concerns, IDI administrators and researchers must be certified to use the IDI through attendance at a Qualifying Seminar where they receive a comprehensive manual, including a detailed interpretive guide, report-generating software, and written descriptions of procedures and guidelines and sign an agreement. I attended the Qualifying Seminar in May 2004 in order to use the IDI for this study. At this Qualifying Seminar both Drs. Bennett and Hammer strongly urged me to conduct feedback sessions, or contexting interviews, to uncover potential incongruities before reporting results or releasing IDI scores. Furthermore, R. M. Paige and M. R. Hammer (personal communication, November 9, 2007) suggest that discussing the Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (Bennett, 1986) along with the IDI results can influence one's cultural awareness and spur further intercultural sensitivity development over time. My study was designed with this in mind and I used interviews as a qualitative strategy to complement the IDI findings by selecting informants for the second phase of the study. While all participants were informed that feedback sessions were available upon request, these were not requested, and therefore, appropriate IDI feedback procedures and guidelines were not followed.

*Measures and Stages.* The IDI was used to measure the following constructs: overall perceived intercultural sensitivity development (PS) and overall developmental

intercultural sensitivity development (DS). IDI pretest-posttest responses were coded and analyzed by IDI software. PS scores reflected individual perceptions of overall *perceived* intercultural sensitivity while DS scores reflected *actual* intercultural sensitivity stage development. Both DS and PS scores ranged from 55 to 145, with higher scores indicating greater intercultural sensitivity development. Stage One- Denial/Defense (55-85), Stage Two-Minimization (85-115), and Stage Three- Acceptance/Adaptation (115-145), were the three levels of developmental stage progression. Despite stage overlap, each stage explained how participants construed cultural difference and developed worldview structure according to Bennett's (1986) DMIS. The DMIS assumes that participants possess a certain worldview structure with typical affective, behavioral, and cognitive components associated with three stages, or worldview configurations. The IDI measured where participants were located in this development as well as collected a series of demographic variables.

#### *Phase I Summary*

A summary table of *Phase I* is presented below including a list of data sources, the sequence of data collection, and the number of research participants from which data were collected (see Table 2). The reader should note that data were collected over a period of seven weeks from thirty-eight participants and the instructor/researcher. A noteworthy aspect of the *Phase I* data collection was that all graduate students (N=38) contributed online MBA course data as participants in the study but not all participants completed the surveys or became informants and agreed to be interviewed for *Phase 2*.

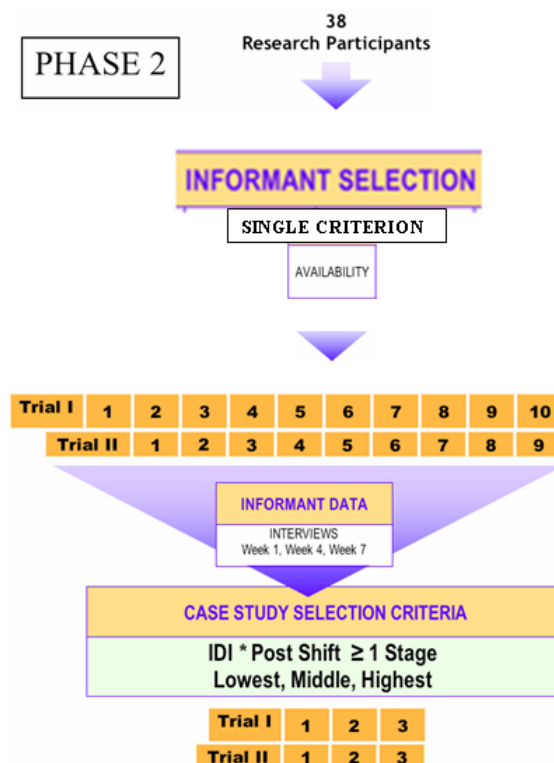
*Phase 2: Informant and Case Study Selection*

The second phase of the study was twofold; first to select informants from thirty-eight participants based upon interview availability, and second, to further select those who represented the lowest, middle, and highest degrees of IDI stage shift (see Figure 4).

Table 2

*Phase 1: Online MBA Course Data Collection Sequence*

<i>Trial I &amp; II</i>	<i>DATA COLLECTION</i>	<i>Trial I Participants</i>	<i>Trial II Participants</i>	<i>TOTAL</i>
<b>Week 1</b> <b>Face-to-face Meeting</b>	<b>Graduate Students Sign Informed Consent/IDI Pretest</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>38</b>
	<b>Discussion Board Data/Journal Logs</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>38</b>
	<b>Instructor/Researcher Observations, Journals, and Emails</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Week 2</b>	<b>Discussion Board Data/Journal Logs</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>38</b>
	<b>Instructor/Researcher Observations, Journals, and Emails</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Week 3</b>	<b>Discussion Board Data/Journal Logs</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>38</b>
	<b>Instructor/Researcher Observations, Journals, and Emails</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Week 4</b>	<b>Discussion Board Data</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>38</b>
	<b>Mid-Course Survey</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>36</b>
	<b>Instructor/Researcher Observations, and Emails</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Week 5</b>	<b>Discussion Board Data</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>38</b>
	<b>Instructor/Researcher Observations, and Emails</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Week 6</b>	<b>Discussion Board Data</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>38</b>
	<b>Instructor/Researcher Observations, and Emails</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Week 7</b> <b>Face-to-face Meeting</b>	<b>IDI Posttest</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>38</b>
	<b>Final Course Survey</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>36</b>
	<b>Discussion Board Data/Journal Logs</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>38</b>
	<b>IAS Survey</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>35</b>
	<b>Instructor/Researcher Observations, Journals, and Emails</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>

Figure 4. *Phase 2: Informant and Case Study Selection*

### *Informant Selection*

*Informant Demographics.* Of the thirty-eight participants, nineteen participants agreed to be interviewed; ten in Trial I and nine in Trial II. These informants represented varying stages of intercultural sensitivity development and a range of demographic backgrounds (see Table 3). Six informants (two females and four males) began in Denial/Defense, twelve informants (six females and six males) began in Minimization, and one informant (female) began in Acceptance/Adaptation.

Table 3

*Informant Demographics*

<b>Trial Participant</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Ethnicity</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Prior Global Work/Study Experience</b>	<b>IDI Stage</b>	<b>Prior Online Course Experience</b>	<b>Participation Beyond 50 Miles from Campus*</b>
<b>Boston-I</b>	<b>31-40</b>	<b>European American</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Denial/Defense</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes*</b>
<b>Winnie-I</b>	<b>22-30</b>	<b>European American</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Denial/Defense</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>No</b>
<b>William-I</b>	<b>22-30</b>	<b>European American</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Denial/Defense</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>No</b>
<b>Pepe-II</b>	<b>31-40</b>	<b>European American</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Denial/Defense</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>No</b>
<b>Wayne-II</b>	<b>22-30</b>	<b>European American</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Denial/Defense</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>No</b>
<b>Roscoe-II</b>	<b>41-50</b>	<b>European American</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Denial/Defense</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
<b>Isabel-I</b>	<b>22-30</b>	<b>Indonesian</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Minimization</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>No</b>
<b>Wit-I</b>	<b>22-30</b>	<b>European American</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Minimization</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes*</b>
<b>Zim-I</b>	<b>18-21</b>	<b>European American</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Minimization</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>No</b>
<b>Cristina-II</b>	<b>31-40</b>	<b>European American</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Minimization</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>No</b>
<b>Ellen-II</b>	<b>18-21</b>	<b>European American</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Minimization</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>No</b>
<b>Sydney-II</b>	<b>22-30</b>	<b>European American</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Minimization</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>No</b>
<b>Ace-I</b>	<b>51-60</b>	<b>European American</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Minimization</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
<b>Anthony-I</b>	<b>22-30</b>	<b>African-American</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Minimization</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>No</b>



Fernando-I	31-40	European American	M	Yes	Minimization	No	No
Harvey-II	41-50	European American	M	Yes	Minimization	No	Yes*
Jack-II	22-30	Persian American	M	No	Minimization	Yes	No
Treller-II	31-40	UK	M	Yes	Minimization	No	No
Tego-I	22-30	African- American	F	No	Acceptance/ Adaptation	No	No

\* Posted assignments beyond a 50 mile range from campus - a different city, state, or country

*Interview Process.* Based on availability, nineteen participants became informants and were interviewed three times during the first, fourth, and seventh weeks of the online MBA course (ten from Trial I and nine from Trial II). This afforded me the opportunity to collect a wide range of data. Face-to-face or telephone interviews were offered as options to provide flexibility. Interviews lasted approximately 45 minutes and were carried out in a quiet room on the university campus over three separate occasions. Interview methods prescribed by Spradley (1979) were followed and involved open-ended general questions, followed when necessary by specific probes. Open-ended questions were designed to understand IDI pretest scores and bring to the surface participants' perceptions of the online learning environment and how it did or did not contribute to the development of intercultural sensitivity. In particular, the questions were designed to explore in depth intercultural sensitivity development and participants' business practice, as well as to uncover how the skills acquired in the course might apply to workplace challenges (see Appendix D). I began with "how" as an entry point into developing "thick descriptions" (Glesne, 1999) and used interview questions to provide a context for IDI pretest scores. Questions included:

- How would you describe your philosophy or viewpoint regarding cultural difference?
- How would you describe your work challenges related to cultural difference?

Interviews were transcribed immediately by a professional transcriptionist and the transcripts were entered into a computer data base and emailed to the informant to check for accuracy and to clarify statements if necessary. I made notes in my journal immediately following each interview to critique myself and provide an overall impression of the data. The transcripts and my journal notes served to guide subsequent interviews and to conduct member checks with the interview informants. The first interviews were constructed to establish a baseline of understanding for each participant's pretest level of intercultural sensitivity development.

The second and third interviews were constructed to delve deeper into the informant's course experiences and uncover how the course impacted developmental progression or regression. Questions were posed, such as:

- What approaches do you use in the workplace when you confront cultural difference?
- How has the online MBA course contributed to your abilities to critically reflect upon your cultural assumptions?

Subsequent interviews also explored themes that emerged from prior interviews. During the interviews I asked informants to elaborate on what they said in prior interviews or expand on how they learned a concept and applied it to their work life in more detail. During the early part of each interview I encouraged informants to speak off the top of their head, that is, use a stream of consciousness approach to answer questions

and say anything that came to mind to convey mental images, thoughts, and feelings. This technique, often associated with qualitative research methods (Kvale, 1996), was useful for getting the story behind informants' cultural experiences and helped to establish a context for IDI pretest scores.

During interviews, these nineteen informants conveyed varying degrees of frustration, stress, or ambivalence toward the online MBA course and the objectives of the virtual teamwork which was to complete a final team presentation. I encouraged participants to better understand and evaluate their behavior in the virtual teamwork environment and provided opportunities for disorienting dilemmas (Mezirow, 1991). I reasoned that with appropriate questions, activities, assignments, and feedback, I could promote perspective transformation, or IDI stage shift, and lead participants toward greater intercultural sensitivity development.

All informants were given an opportunity to review written transcripts of the interviews. E-mails were sent to ask if they had comments, reactions, or wanted to further clarify statements and comments. Such interview member checks worked to increase the accuracy and trustworthiness of both the analyses and interpretations.

#### *Case Study Selection*

Cases were selected from the nineteen informants and based on one criterion; IDI stage shift equal to or greater than one stage of development along the DMIS intercultural continuum. IDI stage shift was determined by recording IDI pretest-posttest scores and identifying the stages of intercultural sensitivity development at the beginning and end of the online MBA course. Progressions and regressions were recorded as positive or

negative IDI score change across one or more stages and informants were ranked by trial from lowest to highest if this criterion was satisfied.

*IDI Stage Shift.* Pretest-posttest IDI score change revealed DMIS stage progressions or regressions, or IDI stage shift, across one or more stages of intercultural sensitivity development for ten out of nineteen informants. Boston, Tego, Winnie, Wit, and Zim (Trial I), and Ellen, Jack, Pepe, Roscoe, and Wayne (Trial II) were then ranked by the degree of shifts (i.e., percent change) from least to most according to each trial (see Table 4).

*Case Study Demographics.* The six informants selected for case study development represented the lowest, middle, and highest IDI stage shifts for each trial based on the analysis of IDI pretest-posttest scores and provided a range of experiences; Trial I were Wit (lowest), Boston (middle), and Zim (highest), and Trial II were Jack (lowest), Roscoe (middle), and Pepe (highest). Chapter Four provides a rich description of how these six cases experienced intercultural competence and sensitivity during the seven-week online MBA course. The case study demographics are displayed in Table 5.

### *Phase 3: Data Analysis*

In *Phase 3*, the qualitative and quantitative data from the previous two phases were used together to begin the data analysis. IDI pretest-posttest responses were coded and analyzed by the IDI software to produce IDI profiles. IDI score changes, or differences between IDI pretest-posttest scores, were calculated using EXCEL software. Participants were ranked if they experienced IDI stage shift across one or more stages. Statistical tests were conducted using SPSS software to determine whether relationships existed between IDI score change and IDI stage shift and demographic variables.

Table 4

*IDI Stage Shift Ranking*

Trial I Participant	Pr-DS	Post-DS	IDI score change	IDI percent change	IDI stage shift ranking
<b>Wit*</b>	85.19	71.92	-13.27	-15.57	LOWEST
Larry	89.98	77.29	-12.69	-14.10	
George	108.25	95.35	-12.90	-11.91	
<b>Tego*</b>	122.27	109.98	-12.29	-10.05	
Rich	101.57	91.43	-10.14	-9.98	
Elaine	116.09	106.04	-10.05	-8.65	
<b>Isabel</b>	93.9	89.93	-3.97	-4.22	
<b>Ace</b>	110.81	104.55	-6.26	-5.64	
Allie	89.09	86.36	-2.73	-3.06	
Suzanne	120.24	119.59	-0.65	-0.54	
Chase	109.04	111.08	2.04	1.87	
Chipper	85.95	89.94	3.99	4.64	
Judy	74.31	77.79	3.48	4.68	
Bono	103.5	109.07	5.57	5.38	
<b>William*</b>	78.39	83.19	4.8	6.12	
<b>Boston*</b>	82.69	88.1	5.41	6.54	MIDDLE
<b>Winnie*</b>	80.45	89.37	8.92	11.08	
<b>Anthony</b>	88.5	99.68	11.18	12.63	
<b>Fernando</b>	90.23	105.14	14.91	16.52	
Juanita	104.79	122.24	17.45	16.65	
Jamie	94.26	114.52	20.26	21.49	
<b>Zim*</b>	95.9	130.54	34.64	36.12	HIGHEST
Trial II Participant	Pr-DS	Post-DS	IDI score change	IDI percent change	IDI stage shift ranking
Imogene	105.34	78.86	-26.48	-25.13	
<b>Jack*</b>	86.72	78.81	-7.91	-9.12	LOWEST
<b>Cristina</b>	101.33	101.75	0.42	0.41	
IKreen	72.36	73.56	1.2	1.65	
<b>Sydney</b>	103.62	107.24	3.62	3.49	
<b>Treller</b>	94.3	99.99	5.69	6.03	
Nicole	112.64	121.11	8.47	7.51	
<b>Harvey</b>	100.45	110.24	9.79	9.74	
San	117.78	130.74	12.96	11.00	
Ram	97	108.87	11.87	12.23	
Sallie	96.51	113.46	16.95	17.56	
Bob	70.1	88.59	18.49	26.37	
<b>Ellen*</b>	93.78	121.7	27.92	29.77	
<b>Roscoe*</b>	69.75	93.65	23.9	34.26	MIDDLE
<b>Wayne*</b>	61.06	86.98	25.92	42.45	
<b>Pepe*</b>	80.12	120.5	40.38	50.39	HIGHEST

\* Informants with IDI stage shift

Table 5

*Case Study Demographics*

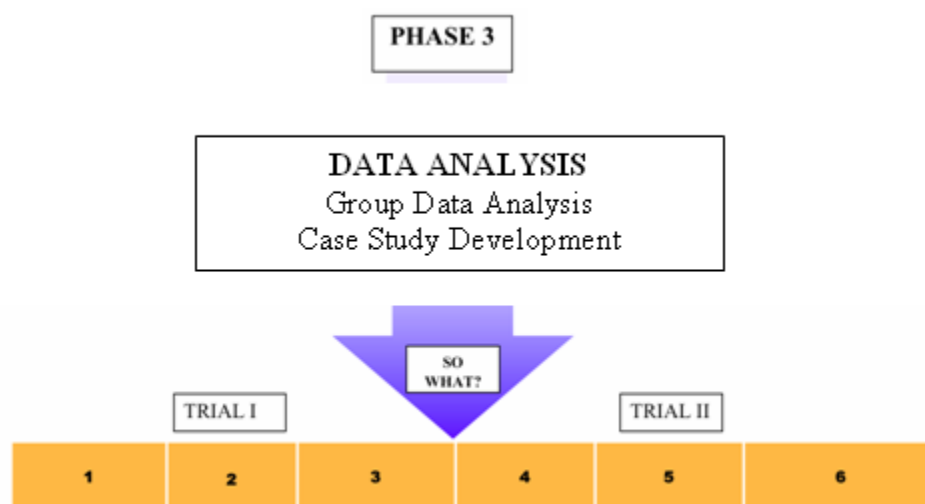
<b>IDI Stage Shift Ranking</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Ethnicity</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Prior Global Work/Study</b>	<b>% IDI Stage Shift</b>	<b>Prior Online Course</b>	<b>Remote Participant</b>
<b>Wit Lowest</b>	27	European American	F	Yes	15% Regression Minimization to Denial/Defense-Reversal	Yes	Yes*
<b>Boston Middle</b>	37	European American	F	No	6% Progression Denial/Defense-Reversal to Minimization	Yes	Yes*
<b>Zim Highest</b>	21	European American	F	Yes	36% Progression Minimization to Acceptance/Adaptation	No	No
<b>Jack Lowest</b>	30	Persian American	M	No	9% Regression Minimization to Denial/Defense-Reversal	Yes	No
<b>Roscoe Middle</b>	43	European American	M	No	34% Progression Denial/Defense-Reversal to Minimization	Yes	No
<b>Pepe Highest</b>	35	European American	M	No	50% Progression Denial/Defense-Reversal to Acceptance/Adaptation	No	No

\* Posted assignments beyond a 50 mile range from campus - a different city, state, or country

Two types of data analysis were conducted: group data analysis and case study development (see Figure 5). During group data analysis, demographics of thirty-eight participants were described and correlations were interpreted. Survey data were analyzed for *intercultural effectiveness* categories and *online learning environment* themes. During case study development, six selected informants' data were also analyzed for *intercultural effectiveness* categories and *online learning environment* themes. These

data were used to construct explanatory schema for IDI stage shift. The interpretations for the reasons behind IDI stage shifts were qualitatively guided and conclusions were drawn from both types of data analysis.

Figure 5. *Phase 3: Data Analysis*



### *Group Data Analysis*

Quantitative group data analysis was completed prior to case study development. During the initial data preparation, group data pertinent to both trials such as demographic information, course statistics (survey results, number of posts authored by each participant in Discussion Boards), and IDI scores were collected, copied, and stored electronically in appropriate files and folders. Then using IDI, SPSS, and EXCEL software: 1) individual and group statistics were generated, 2) course statistics from thirty-eight participants (i.e., the number of authored posts in the Discussion Board and IDI pretest-posttest scores) were compiled to create boxplots and tables, and 3) IDI stage shift rankings and survey response rates were organized and tabulated.

Using data from both trials, two nonparametric statistical tests (Chi-Square and Wilcoxon Signed-Rank) and regression analysis (ANOVA) were used to identify the

number of participants with IDI stage shift and measure the relationships between IDI score change and demographic variables. The Chi-Square analysis examined whether the online MBA course moved participants' IDI scores *sufficiently* to cause IDI stage shifts from one stage to another. The Wilcoxon Signed-Rank analysis showed the average change (or median change) in IDI pretest-posttest scores within or across stages. Both statistical tests measured the overall impact of the online MBA course on participants' intercultural sensitivity as a group. ANOVA procedures measured relationships between IDI stage shifts and variables concerning course statistics (i.e., number of posts authored), age, ethnicity, gender, prior work/study experience, and prior online course experience.

The rationale for using both analyses procedures on the same data scrutinized IDI pretest-posttest scores and the variables that may have contributed to intercultural sensitivity development. Conducting nonparametric tests offered an alternative to parametric statistical analyses like the *t*-test which requires assumptions about the form of the distribution of the measurements. The results of nonparametric tests are statistically significant when the *p* value is less than .05. This indicates the likelihood of obtaining the same result with multiple trials. While nonparametric tests have less power than parametric tests, they are more robust when the assumptions underlying the parametric test are not satisfied. The Wilcoxon Signed-Rank and Chi-Square tests were chosen to analyze the IDI pretest-posttest relationship since these nonparametric tests were *distribution free* and the number and nature of the parameters were flexible and not fixed in advance. The first test, the Wilcoxon Signed-Rank, involved comparisons of differences between the IDI pretest-posttest scores and required that the data be measured at an interval level of measurement (i.e., IDI stages represented score categories 55-85,



85-115, and 115-145). The second test, the Chi-Square, evaluated statistically significant differences between proportions for the two data sets.

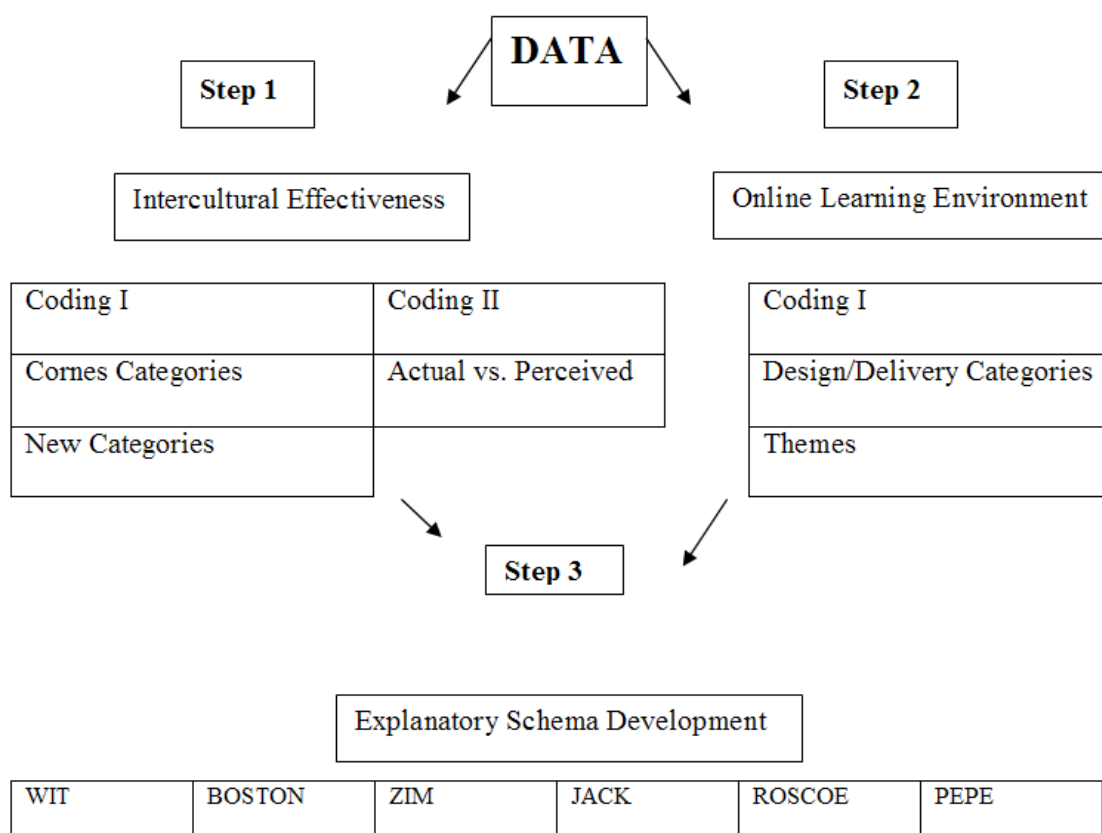
Mid-course and final course survey data for thirty-six anonymous participants (Trial I=20 and Trial II=16) were also analyzed using the inductive-deductive coding framework. Finally, IAS survey data for thirty-five participants (Trial I=19 and Trial II=16) are presented for interpretation in the cross-trial analysis.

### *Case Study Development*

The data from six informants who provided interviews and experienced substantive change, or IDI stage shift, were used for case study development. I used both inductive and deductive coding procedures to describe their educational experiences and how the online MBA course impacted individual IDI stage shift using multiple data sources; i.e., the online MBA course, interviews, and instructor/researcher journal. Since there were two methods (inductive and deductive) to analyze data, the transparency of this hybrid coding procedure was revealed to demonstrate that my theoretical sensitivities were open to new interpretations (Suddaby, 2006). Strauss and Corbin (1990) suggest that a researcher must have an openness and flexibility to see patterns and possess an ability to recognize what is important, give its meaning, and conceptualize the observations. Therefore, I did not confine my interpretations to intercultural effectiveness categories predefined by Cornes (2004) but I inductively constructed new categories from particular observations through a discovery process. Such an inductive/deductive trade-off has been described by Turner and Shuter (2004) and allows the researcher to use a predefined, internally derived set of categories (deductive) and an external set of categories that is constructed by isolating themes, or indicators (inductive).

Deductive templates begin the coding process and as new categories and themes emerge they are identified through an inductive process. The categories and themes that were generated using the inductive/deductive coding framework are provided in Appendix E. These knowledge claims were based on the ongoing interpretation of meaning produced by the six informants and myself as the instructor/researcher by using three steps. Figure 6 represents the three step inductive/deductive coding framework used to analyze the data.

Figure 6. *Inductive/Deductive Coding Framework*



*Step 1: Intercultural Effectiveness.* I have pointed out in Chapter Two numerous studies that suggest *intercultural effectiveness* requires the existence of various affective, behavioral and cognitive competencies. Cornes (2004) takes these competencies from

the original studies and further arranges them into ten categories which were used as a starting point to code raw data:

- (1) *A genuine desire to connect with the host population*--a sincere, unambiguous curiosity coupled with a positive intent.
- (2) *Self-knowledge*--a knowledge of one's strengths and blind spots especially with regard to interpersonal communication.
- (3) *Self-assurance and control*--confidence and self-esteem.
- (4) *Sensory acuity*--the ability to notice fine distinctions in the sensory information one receives.
- (5) *The ability to empathize with another's viewpoint*--the desire to understand another's view of the world.
- (6) *Emotional perceptiveness*--an awareness of one's own and others' emotional states.
- (7) *Behavioral flexibility*--the ability to vary behavior to meet different situations.
- (8) *A nonjudgmental outlook*--the ability to observe different values and behaviors impartially.
- (9) *Humility*--a realistic appreciation of one's weaknesses and shortcomings.
- (10) *Introspective reflection*--the ability to review and learn from experience.

Using the ten intercultural effectiveness categories (Cornes, 2004), raw data from three different sources (online MBA course, interviews, and instructor/researcher) were coded when they represented an aspect of intercultural effectiveness. For example, Boston's journal log statement, "*I might sign up for a China work assignment now*" was coded as *a genuine desire to connect with the host population*. In this instance, Boston indicated a change in the way she thought, felt, or would act interculturally in the future.

Prior to the course, she did not consider volunteering for a work assignment to China. However, after the course, she reflected in her journal log and shared in her final interview that she was intrigued by the Chinese culture and suggested that she would like to experience an expatriate assignment. Some original statements were also coded multiple ways because they represented more than one conceptual category. Roscoe's journal log statement, "*I use email everyday*" and "*I've made lots of friends with people from all over the world*" were coded as *behavioral flexibility* and *a genuine desire to connect with the host population*. In Roscoe's interviews, he emphasized that he connected with global customers through daily email transactions and often used humor as an approach to "*establishing relationships*." While humor can be culture-bound, Roscoe used it to successfully build relationships in the context of the online MBA course. During this initial coding procedure, new categories, in addition to Cornes' categories, emerged such as *coping strategies* and *cooperative/collaborative efforts* from various themes that were identified such as *demonstrates entrepreneurial spirit, takes risks, establishes credibility through relevant knowledge, and uses humor to build relationships*.

Hammer and Bennett (1998, 2002, 2004) also suggest that intercultural sensitivity development can be construed as either *actual* (developmental) or *perceived* as responses to cultural difference become more sophisticated. Since the Intercultural Development Inventory provides a developmental (DS) and perceived score (PS), I coded the raw data a second time as *actual* or *perceived* to later explain IDI pretest-posttest DS/PS discrepancies and/or consistencies. Using this approach, for example, Boston's journal log statement was coded as *perceived* because Boston did not actually sign up for an

expatriate assignment but she shared that she would consider it a viable option. On the other hand, Roscoe's journal log statement was coded as *actual* because it was a statement of fact that I could confirm from my own experience. Other examples were drawn from observations that were recorded in my instructor/researcher journal.

*Step 2: Online Learning Environment.* Since my research question asks "In what ways did an online MBA course impact intercultural sensitivity development for graduate students along the intercultural continuum?" I decided to code data related to references to both the *design* and *delivery* of the online learning environment. The literature suggests that good design and delivery can promote critical reflection processes through social constructivist principles, an essential prerequisite for intercultural sensitivity development. Therefore, during my initial coding for the online learning environment, raw data were coded *design* if they related to aspects of course design, such as required participation or teamwork, or *delivery* if they related to aspects of course instruction, such as the value of the instructor's use of anecdotal stories and guest expert interaction.

Using the online learning environment framework as a guide, Jack's journal log statement "*Working with 16 people and arriving at group consensus when no one thinks alike is counterproductive, especially when we can't force the issue face-to-face*" was coded *design* since it reflected frustration with virtual teamwork. Similarly, Boston's journal log statement "*[Virtual teamwork] is like going to a cocktail party...I get to pick and choose who I'm going to interact with next*" was also coded *design* since it reflected satisfaction with virtual teamwork. In subsequent interviews, however, both Boston and Jack elaborated on perceived benefits and deficits of virtual teamwork. Boston indicated that she was intrigued by the diversity of her team members (team heterogeneity) and

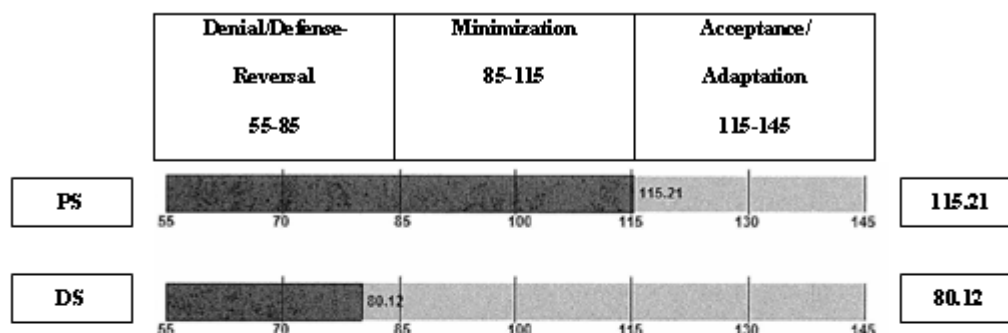
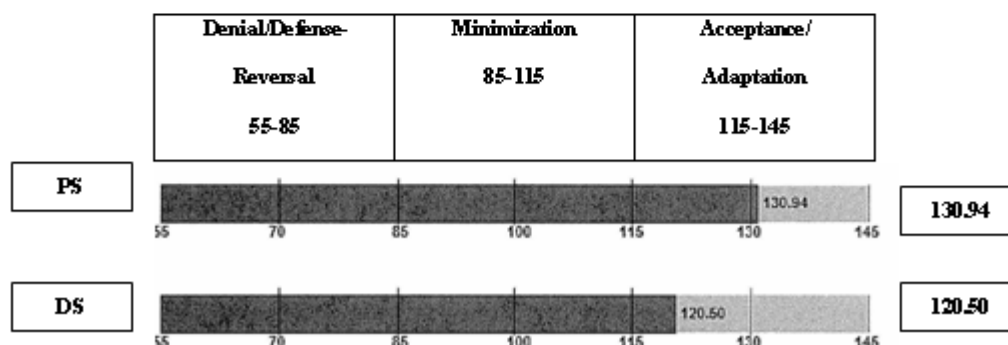
admitted that due to the nature of the online learning environment she tended to migrate towards team members who shared similar perspectives. Jack, on the other hand, stated “*I prefer face-to-face courses because you can force the issue and get things done*” and that “*distance and sense of anonymity*” were design features that he believed made virtual teamwork more onerous and difficult. This coded data generated themes which were organized into new categories through a discovery process. For example, categories such as *team composition* and *virtual teamwork* were derived from these themes and developed into explanatory schema to describe online MBA course outcomes.

*Step 3: Explanatory Schema Development.* After all coding was completed for both *intercultural effectiveness* and *online learning environment* using the inductive/deductive framework, explanatory schemas began to emerge. I sorted categories and themes pertinent to Wit, Boston, Zim, Jack, Roscoe, and Pepe. A constant-comparative method was then used to further explore the coded statements. Each coded statement was reviewed several times to describe each informant’s constructed experiences in the course to illustrate individual IDI stage shift.

To review the qualitative procedures, grounded theory was used to answer the research question through an inductive/deductive process of theory generation. That is, rather than entirely focus on predefined conceptual categories for *intercultural effectiveness* provided by Cornes (2004) to test and interpret the data, an explanatory schema was derived through the discovery of new categories. I did not count the frequency of categories present or absent in the data but instead I analyzed the data to generate a theory that did not contain known aspects of intercultural sensitivity development. The new categories that emerged were generated through this

inductive/deductive process and later became the explanatory schema for addressing the research question. The goal was to formulate a logical explanation that was more usable and understandable to the reader. The emphasis on the discovery process was also enhanced by an in-depth analysis of six selected informants which further fleshed out individual constructed experiences.

*Additional Procedures.* In Chapter Four, the DS (*actual*) and PS (*perceived*) pretest-posttest scores are shown as numeric bar charts under one of three stages: DD/R (Denial/Defense-Reversal), M (Minimization), and AA (Acceptance/Adaptation) and are used to visually complement the qualitative interpretation. For example, the IDI pretest-posttest DS scores in Figure 7 show DMIS stage progression (i.e., IDI stage shift) from Denial/Defense-Reversal at pretest (DS=80.12) to Acceptance/Adaptation at posttest (DS=120.50). Figure 7 also illustrates a gap between IDI pretest-posttest PS and DS scores (top and bottom). At pretest (top), IDI responses were contradictory (or unresolved) resulting in a DS score of 80.12 in Denial/Defense-Reversal and a PS score of 115.21 in Acceptance/Adaptation. At posttest (bottom), IDI responses were more consistent (or nearly resolved) with numeric indicators in Acceptance/Adaptation at 120.50 and 130.54. This simple numeric analysis suggests that this participant possessed a greater self-understanding of his or her “interculturality” in Acceptance/Adaptation and that their worldview conflict was nearly resolved by the conclusion of the course. This evidence complements the qualitative data pool and provides a comprehensive and balanced view of constructed experiences in the online MBA course. These IDI profiles are presented in case study development with each case study analysis.

Figure 7. *Pretest-Posttest DS (Actual) and PS (Perceived) Scores***PRETEST****POSTTEST***Methodological Considerations*

As an interculturalist, business entrepreneur, and adult educator, I have specialized in helping people develop skills that enable them to operationalize intercultural competence in unfamiliar environments and successfully interact with people from other cultures. I must reveal that my professional work experience suggests that this online MBA course could be an accessible and effective method for developing intercultural competence and sensitivity due to its flexibility and convenience of an anywhere, anytime delivery format. Thus, I created *Brainpool Online* as a means of fostering enhanced cultural awareness and impacting intercultural sensitivity development through virtual teamwork. The course content and process focused on



online team-based exercises using a collaborative model of learning (Dineen, 2005) to tap global intellect (Welch, 2001). Since this was the first and second time such an online MBA course was offered at this Midwestern Jesuit university, participants beyond a 50 mile range from campus (i.e., remote participants), who could not have otherwise maintained continuous enrollment status in the MBA program, could enroll and participate from different cities, states, or countries. These participants included Boston, who lived in Massachusetts, Harvey, who lived beyond the 50 mile range, Juanita, who began the course from Ecuador, and Wit, who finished the course from Belgium. Because several participants, then, were considered to be ‘remote participants’ and completed coursework from a greater geographic distance than 50 miles from campus, I believed that *Brainpool Online* could be an online educational alternative and a potential workforce solution for those who travel for work and, at the same time, address the need to produce more globally competent managers.

I argue in the following chapters that MBA instructors can develop intercultural competence and sensitivity for participants using an online delivery format when they are willing to learn and are motivated to challenge, push, and explore their intercultural boundaries. The reader should be aware that even though I designed and delivered the online MBA course and tested its effectiveness, I also had a personal interest in uncovering to what degree an online educational alternative could be a viable option for developing greater intercultural sensitivity for participants while at home or abroad. While transformational learning is never linear or predictable, Chapter Four presents evidence to suggest that the majority of participants developed greater intercultural sensitivity through team-based experiential learning activities and self-understanding

through online text-based asynchronous discussions regardless of the perceived “distance” of the participants.

To safeguard against the potential arising problematics from my own assumptions, I sought feedback from a well-known online management learning researcher and asked him to evaluate and audit the delivery of both trials. This neutral third party served as an editor/mentor and reviewed my work, offered suggestions, and also validated my interpretation of the data analysis. This increased the accuracy and trustworthiness of my reporting of the findings and helped to remove any potential bias that could be perceived by the reader as inflating the significance of the findings to promote a personal agenda.

#### Summary

This chapter presented a description of the online MBA course that served as the venue for the study. A discussion of the mixed methods research model was detailed along with the sequence of data collection procedures and coding strategies employed to purposefully select interview informants and develop cases for the final analysis.

The next chapter reveals that some participants exemplified intercultural sensitivity development more than others, confronted cultural difference, and challenged cultural assumptions as a result of the online MBA course. In particular, detail is provided on the ways that six purposefully selected informants experienced this online MBA course called *Brainpool Online*.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### FINDINGS

#### Interpreting Multiple Data Sources

In previous chapters I have noted that few studies have explored the impact of online MBA courses designed to develop intercultural competence and sensitivity. While the conceptualization of intercultural competence and sensitivity differs among scholars, there is consensus that motivation, skills, and knowledge must exist in order for individuals to interact effectively and appropriately across cultures. Scholars also agree that intercultural sensitivity, an essential component of intercultural competence, exhibits in individuals as an increased desire to engage in intercultural communication interactions, with a heightened sense of cultural awareness. Furthermore, the development of intercultural sensitivity, based on a progressive intercultural continuum model, occurs through guided practice when one's understanding of cultural difference becomes more complex.

In this chapter, Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI) pretest-posttest profiles generated from IDI software are presented along with both quantitative and qualitative analyses to suggest factors that impacted intercultural sensitivity development for six informants selected from two trials; Wit, Boston, Zim, Jack, Roscoe, and Pepe. Data from these six informants were analyzed for *intercultural effectiveness* using categories defined by Cornes (2004): (1) *A genuine desire to connect with the host population*, (2) *Self-knowledge*, (3) *Self-assurance and control*, (4) *Sensory acuity*, (5) *The ability to empathize with another's viewpoint*, (6) *Emotional perceptiveness*, (7) *Behavioral flexibility*, (8) *A nonjudgmental outlook*, (9) *Humility*, and (10) *Introspective reflection*.

Finally, these same data were also analyzed a second time, without predefined categories, for *online learning environment* themes related to aspects of course *design* and *delivery*.

The Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS) and the coding procedures detailed in Chapter Three provided the framework for this chapter. The analysis and interpretation of the data collected were approached using two types of analyses: (1) group data, and (2) case study development. These two types of data analyses show that some informants (Boston, Pepe, Roscoe, and Zim) developed greater intercultural sensitivity during the online MBA course, while others (Wit and Jack) struggled to make connections to prior intercultural experiences, expand cultural repertoires, free themselves from tendencies to stereotype, and make judgments about distinct cultural groups.

Analysis of group data reveals that age, gender, and degrees of course engagement (posts) were significant predictors of IDI score change at the  $p$ -level of .05. In addition, cross-trial analysis following case study development presents qualitative evidence to suggest that the quality of virtual teamwork may have been a predictor of IDI stage shift. A visual boxplot of IDI pretest-posttest scores and data sets from IAS surveys support the interpretation that the quality of virtual teamwork (or degree of virtuality, defined as the richness of the CMS) may have been a factor that impacted IDI stage shift.

#### Analysis of Group Data

Data from thirty-eight research participants were gathered and analyzed following two online MBA course trials in the summers of 2004 (N=22) and 2005 (N=16).

Demographics collected from Part Two of the Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI) included each participant's pseudonym, interview availability, age category defined by

the IDI (1=18-22, 2= 22-30, 3=31-40, 4=41-50, 5=51-60), ethnicity, gender, and status regarding prior online course experience (PO), prior global work/study experience (PG), and remote participation (RP). The IDI software analysis provided IDI pretest-posttest scores which were used to calculate each participant's IDI score change which was then classified as an IDI stage shift progression, regression, or no shift (see Table 6). In addition, the number of authored posts collected from *Course Management System (CMS) Statistics* for thirty-eight participants, qualitative and quantitative data collected from anonymous *Mid-course Survey* and *Final Course Survey* for thirty-six participants, and *IAS Survey* for thirty-five participants, were gathered and analyzed.

#### *Demographics*

The group data presented in Table 6 shows that among thirty-eight participants from two online MBA course trials there were 19 females and 19 males. Participants represented all five IDI age categories; and five self-identified ethnicities; EA=European American, AA=African American, IND=Indonesian, PA=Persian American, and UK=British. The age range was 21 to 53, with an average age of 37. Two participants self-identified as African American, two as Indonesian, one as British, one as Persian American, and thirty-two as European American.

Unfortunately, this provided a sample of thirty-eight participants with little ethnic diversity; approximately 16% of participants representing a national or ethnic background other than European American. Eighteen participants had prior global work/study experience, four had prior online course experience, four were remote participants, and nineteen participants agreed to become interview informants.

Table 6

*Group Data*

<b>Interview Availability (Informants)</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Ethnicity</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Prior Status</b>	<b>IDI Score Change</b>	<b>IDI Percent Change</b>	<b>IDI Stage Shift Status</b>	<b>Posts</b>
WIT-I	2	EA	F	PO/PG/RP	-13.27	-15.5	Regression	22
TEGO-I	2	AA	F	None	-12.29	-10.0	Regression	29
JACK-II	2	PA	M	PO	-7.91	-9.12	Regression	41
ACE-I	5	EA	M	PO/PG	-6.26	-5.6	No Shift	46
ISABEL-I	2	IND	F	PG	-3.97	-4.2	No Shift	26
CRISTINA-II	3	EA	F	PG	0.42	.414	No Shift	34
SYDNEY-II	2	EA	F	PG	3.62	3.49	No Shift	36
TRELLER-II	3	UK	M	PG	5.69	6.03	No Shift	53
WILLIAM-I	2	EA	M	None	4.8	6.12	No Shift	37
HARVEY-II	4	EA	M	PG/RP	9.79	9.74	No Shift	32
ANTHONY-I	2	AA	M	None	11.18	12.6	No Shift	25
FERNANDO-I	3	EA	M	PG	14.91	16.5	No Shift	30
BOSTON-I	3	EA	F	PO/RP	5.41	6.5	Progression	32
WINNIE-I	2	EA	F	PG	8.92	11.08	Progression	28
ELLEN-II	1	EA	F	None	27.92	29.77	Progression	27
ROSCOE-II	4	EA	M	PO	23.9	34.26	Progression	80
ZIM-I	1	EA	F	PG	34.64	36.12	Progression	40
WAYNE-II	2	EA	M	PG	25.92	42.45	Progression	26
PEPE-II	3	EA	M	None	40.38	50.39	Progression	32
<b>Interview Non-Availability (Non-informants)</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Ethnicity</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Status</b>	<b>IDI Score Change</b>	<b>IDI Percent Change</b>	<b>IDI Stage Shift Status</b>	<b>Posts</b>
IMOGENE-II	2	EA	F	None	-26.48	-25.1	Regression	30
LARRY-I	2	EA	M	PG	-12.69	-14.1	Regression	22
GEORGE-I	2	EA	M	PG	-12.9	-11.9	No Shift	28
RICH-I	2	EA	M	None	-10.14	-9.9	No Shift	23
ELAINE-I	2	EA	F	None	-10.05	-8.6	No Shift	28
ALLIE-I	2	EA	F	None	-2.73	-3.06	No Shift	27

<b>SUZANNE-I</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>EA</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>PG</b>	<b>-0.65</b>	<b>-.054</b>	<b>No Shift</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>KREEN-II</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>EA</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>None</b>	<b>1.2</b>	<b>1.65</b>	<b>No Shift</b>	<b>35</b>
<b>CHASE-I</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>EA</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>None</b>	<b>2.04</b>	<b>1.8</b>	<b>No Shift</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>CHIPPER-I</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>EA</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>None</b>	<b>3.99</b>	<b>4.64</b>	<b>No Shift</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>JUDY-I</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>EA</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>None</b>	<b>3.48</b>	<b>4.68</b>	<b>No Shift</b>	<b>36</b>
<b>BONO-I</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>EA</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>PO/PG</b>	<b>5.57</b>	<b>5.3</b>	<b>No Shift</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>SAN-II</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>IND</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>PG</b>	<b>12.96</b>	<b>11.0</b>	<b>No Shift</b>	<b>38</b>
<b>RAM-II</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>EA</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>None</b>	<b>11.87</b>	<b>12.23</b>	<b>No Shift</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>SALLIE-II</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>EA</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>PG</b>	<b>16.95</b>	<b>17.56</b>	<b>No Shift</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>JAMIE-I</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>EA</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>None</b>	<b>20.26</b>	<b>21.49</b>	<b>No Shift</b>	<b>32</b>
<b>NICOLE-II</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>EA</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>None</b>	<b>8.47</b>	<b>7.51</b>	<b>Progression</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>JUANITA-I</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>EA</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>PG/RP</b>	<b>17.45</b>	<b>16.6</b>	<b>Progression</b>	<b>39</b>
<b>BOB-II</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>EA</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>None</b>	<b>18.49</b>	<b>26.37</b>	<b>Progression</b>	<b>22</b>

Of the nineteen interview informants, ten experienced IDI stage shift equal to or greater than one stage of development along the intercultural continuum. Table 7 shows the distribution of participants (the informants who volunteered for interviews are in **bold**), with self-selected pseudonyms by gender, ethnicity, and trial.

Table 7

*Gender, Ethnicity, Pseudonyms, and Trial*

<i>Ethnicity</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Total</i>
<i>Indonesian</i>	2 <b>Isabel-I</b> <i>San-II</i>		<b>2</b>
<i>African American</i>	1 <b>Tego-I</b>	1 <b>Anthony-I</b>	<b>2</b>
<i>Persian American</i>		1 <b>Jack-II</b>	<b>1</b>
<i>European American</i>	16 <b>Allie-I</b> <b>Boston-I</b> <i>Chase-I</i> <i>Elaine-I</i> <i>Juanita-I</i> <i>Judy-I</i> <i>Suzanne-I</i> <b>Winnie-I</b> <b>Wit-I</b> <b>Zim-I</b> <b>Cristina-II</b> <b>Ellen-II</b> <i>Imogene-II</i> <i>Nicole-II</i> <i>Sallie-II</i> <b>Sydney-II</b>	16 <b>Ace-I</b> <i>Bono-I,</i> <i>Chipper-I</i> <b>Fernando-I</b> <i>George-I</i> <i>Jamie-I</i> <i>Larry-I</i> <i>Rich-I</i> <b>William-I</b> <i>Bob-II</i> <b>Harvey-II</b> <i>Kreen-II</i> <b>Pepe-II</b> <i>Ram-II</i> <b>Roscoe-II</b> <b>Wayne-II</b>	<b>32</b>
<i>British (UK)</i>		1 <b>Treller-II</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>38</b>

*Gender and Age Effects*

The gender IDI pretest-posttest differences and a graph showing the relationship between age and IDI score change are provided (see Table 8). Since these gender and age effects were significant (.033 and .001 respectively) with  $p$ -values below .05, this test suggests that gender, or being male, and age, or being younger, were IDI score change predictors (see Table 9). In other words, in nineteen out of twenty online MBA course trials, younger males would likely experience greater IDI score change than females and older participants.



Table 8

*Gender and Age Effects for IDI Score Change*

Gender		pretest	posttest
Female	Mean	96.3789	100.8500
	N	19	19
	Std. Deviation	15.39232	18.33991
Male	Mean	92.4768	99.6316
	N	19	19
	Std. Deviation	14.74245	14.52000
Total	Mean	94.4279	100.2408
	N	38	38
	Std. Deviation	14.99675	16.32722

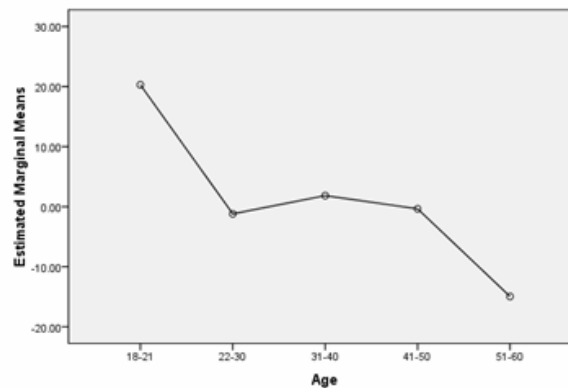


Table 9

*ANOVA Output for Demographic Variables***Tests of Between-Subjects Effects**

Dependent Variable: % Change

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	6422.898 <sup>a</sup>	10	642.290	4.559	.001
Intercept	974.537	1	974.537	6.917	.014
Age	3471.599	4	867.900	6.160	.001
Gender	708.009	1	708.009	5.025	.033
Post	2440.282	1	2440.282	17.321	.000
Ethnicity	764.560	4	191.140	1.357	.275
Error	3803.909	27	140.886		
Total	12270.240	38			
Corrected Total	10226.807	37			

a. R Squared = .628 (Adjusted R Squared = .490)

### *IDI Impact Indicators*

IDI pretest-posttest score differences (*IDI score change*) and developmental stage movement (*IDI stage shift*) were indicators of online MBA course impact on intercultural sensitivity development. Participants' responses to the IDI's fifty questions were analyzed using IDI computer software and scores were interpreted using the DMIS framework. This analysis divided responses into three IDI clusters (Denial/Defense-Reversal: 55-85; Minimization: 85-115; and Acceptance/Adaptation 115-145): the analysis produced individual IDI pretest-posttest profiles illustrating developmental stages with overall IDI scores, or levels of intercultural sensitivity development. Two nonparametric analysis methods, Wilcoxon Signed-Rank and Chi-Square, were used to determine the significance of IDI score change *within* stages and IDI stage shift *between* stages.

*IDI Score Change Within Stages.* The Wilcoxon Signed-Rank test was used to examine the significance of IDI score change within stages. It is a simple difference of means test between participants' IDI pretest-posttest scores and was conducted to evaluate whether the online MBA course caused positive IDI score change defined as progression along the intercultural continuum for participants as a group. While Table 8 shows that participants' average IDI scores moved from 94.4 at the beginning of the online MBA course to 100.2 at the end of the seven-week course, Table 10 shows that the IDI pretest-posttest mean difference of approximately 6.0 using the Wilcoxon Signed-Rank test was statistically significant at .026 which is well under the *p*-level of .050. Since the *p*-level is so low, this indicates that there was a significant relationship between taking this online MBA course and experiencing positive IDI score change. This is an

encouraging finding because it suggests that if this online MBA course were replicated, it would likely impact positive IDI score change for participants within IDI stages in 19 out of 20 times. Thus, I would argue that this online MBA course was a suitable educational alternative for moving graduate students *within* IDI stages along the intercultural continuum producing positive IDI score changes.

Table 10

*Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test for IDI Score Change*

		Ranks		
		N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks
posttest - pretest	Negative Ranks	12 <sup>a</sup>	18.08	217.00
	Positive Ranks	26 <sup>b</sup>	20.15	524.00
	Ties	0 <sup>c</sup>		
	Total	38		

a. posttest &lt; pretest

b. posttest &gt; pretest

c. posttest = pretest

Test Statistics <sup>b</sup>	
	posttest - pretest
Z	-2.226 <sup>a</sup>
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.026

a. Based on negative ranks.

b. Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test

However, while a positive IDI score change rate of 68% might be considered an encouraging statistic, this number included participants who experienced positive IDI score change ranging from .4% (Cristina) to 50% (Pepe) and four of these participants (Elaine, San, Suzanne, and Tego) began the online MBA course in Acceptance/Adaptation and had little opportunity for IDI score change. Therefore, this

statistic did not accurately reflect positive developmental shift from one IDI stage to the next and it was necessary to conduct a Chi-Square analysis to determine the significance of the number of participants who experienced positive or negative IDI stage shift *between stages*.

*IDI Stage Shift Between Stages.* A simple Chi-Square analysis between the IDI pretest-posttest scores for thirty-eight participants was used to test whether the online MBA course caused a large enough shift (positive or negative) in scores to produce a statistically significant change in IDI stage development. IDI pretest-posttest scores were then used to create a transition matrix and categorize the number of participants who experienced positive or negative IDI stage shift and those who resided within the same pre- and post- stages and experienced positive or negative IDI score change (see Table 11).

Table 11

*Transition Matrix for IDI Stage Shift*

		Post-stage	Post-stage	Post-stage	Pre-stage Totals
		Denial/Defense-Reversal	Minimization	Acceptance/Adaptation	
Pre-stage	Denial/Defense-Reversal	3	5	1	9
Pre-stage	Minimization	4	17	4	25
Pre-stage	Acceptance/Adaptation	0	2	2	4
	Post-stage Totals	7	24	7	38

The transition matrix shows that twenty-two participants resided on the diagonal (highlighted)—i.e., these participants began and ended in the same stage of development; 3 in Denial/Defense, 17 in Minimization, and 2 in Acceptance/Adaptation. Positive IDI stage shifts are above the diagonal and include 5 who began in Denial/Defense and ended in Minimization; 4 who began in Minimization and ended in Acceptance/Adaptation, and 1 who began in Denial Defense and ended in Acceptance/Adaptation. Negative IDI stage

shifts are below the diagonal and include 4 who began in Minimization and ended in Denial/Defense and 2 who began in Acceptance/Adaptation and ended in Minimization. The first row of the transition matrix shows Denial/Defense pre-stage totals; 9 participants began the online MBA course in Denial/Defense (i.e., 3 participants began in Denial/Defense and ended in Denial/Defense, 5 participants began in Denial/Defense and ended in Minimization, and 1 participant began in Denial Defense and ended in Acceptance/Adaptation). The second row shows Minimization pre-stage totals; 25 participants began the online MBA course in Minimization (i.e., 4 participants began in Minimization and ended in Denial/Defense, 17 participants began in Minimization and ended in Minimization, and 4 participants began in Minimization and ended in Acceptance/Adaptation). The third row shows Acceptance/Adaptation pre-stage totals; 4 participants began the online MBA course in Acceptance/Adaptation (i.e., 0 participants began in Acceptance/Adaptation and ended in Denial/Defense, 2 participants began in Acceptance/Adaptation and ended in Minimization, and 2 participants began in Acceptance/Adaptation and ended in Acceptance/Adaptation). The final row shows the total IDI post-stage results, 7 participants ended the online MBA course in Denial/Defense, 24 participants ended in Minimization, and 7 participants ended in Acceptance/Adaptation.

Of the thirty-eight participants, sixteen, or 42.1% of participants, resided above or below the transition matrix diagonal and experienced positive or negative IDI stage shift greater than or equal to one stage of intercultural sensitivity development. Ten, or 26.3% of participants, experienced positive IDI stage shift (progression) and six, or 15.7% of participants, experienced negative IDI stage shift (regression). Of the sixteen participants

with positive or negative IDI stage shift, ten were interview informants; five in Trial I, and five in Trial II. Of these ten interview informants, six were selected for case study development to represent the lowest, middle, and highest IDI stage shift for each trial.

The Chi-Square analysis confirmed that IDI stage shift was not significant for the majority of participants with only 26% experiencing positive IDI stage shift. In addition, the test produced Chi-Square statistics of .279 for age and .408 for gender which were not significant at the  $p$ -level of .05 (see Tables 12 and 13).

*Online MBA Course Impact.* The results of two nonparametric tests, Wilcoxon Signed-Rank and Chi-Square, show that positive *IDI score change* was significant *within stages*, but *IDI stage shift* was not significant *between stages*. That is, the online MBA course did not move participants' IDI scores *sufficiently* to produce significant IDI stage shift between stages. So, while 68% (26/38) experienced positive IDI score change, the Chi-Square test shows that this was not statistically significant between IDI stages as only 26% (10/38) experienced IDI stage shift.

#### *Course Management System (CMS) Statistics*

CMS statistics collected from thirty-eight participants provided the number of authored posts during the seven-week online MBA course (see Table 6). These statistics were used to explore the relationship between course engagement and IDI score change. Literature discussing intercultural communication suggests that successful intercultural competence and sensitivity courses are rooted in supportive learning environments and

Table 12

*IDI Stage Shift and Age***Shift \* Age Crosstabulation**

			Age					Total
			18-21	22-30	31-40	41-50	51-60	
Shift	N	Count	0	15	5	1	1	22
		% within Age	.0%	57.7%	71.4%	50.0%	100.0%	57.9%
P	Count	2	5	2	1	0	10	
		% within Age	100.0%	19.2%	28.6%	50.0%	.0%	26.3%
R	Count	0	6	0	0	0	6	
		% within Age	.0%	23.1%	.0%	.0%	.0%	15.8%
Total	Count	2	26	7	2	1	38	
		% within Age	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

**Chi-Square Tests**

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	9.802 <sup>a</sup>	8	.279
Likelihood Ratio	11.165	8	.192
N of Valid Cases	38		

a. 13 cells (86.7%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .16.

Table 13

*IDI Stage Shift and Gender*

## Shift \* Gender Crosstabulation

			Gender		
			Female	Male	Total
Shift	N	Count	9	13	22
		% within Gender	47.4%	68.4%	57.9%
P	N	Count	6	4	10
		% within Gender	31.6%	21.1%	26.3%
R	N	Count	4	2	6
		% within Gender	21.1%	10.5%	15.8%
Total	N	Count	19	19	38
		% within Gender	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

## Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	1.794 <sup>a</sup>	2	.408
Likelihood Ratio	1.814	2	.404
N of Valid Cases	38		

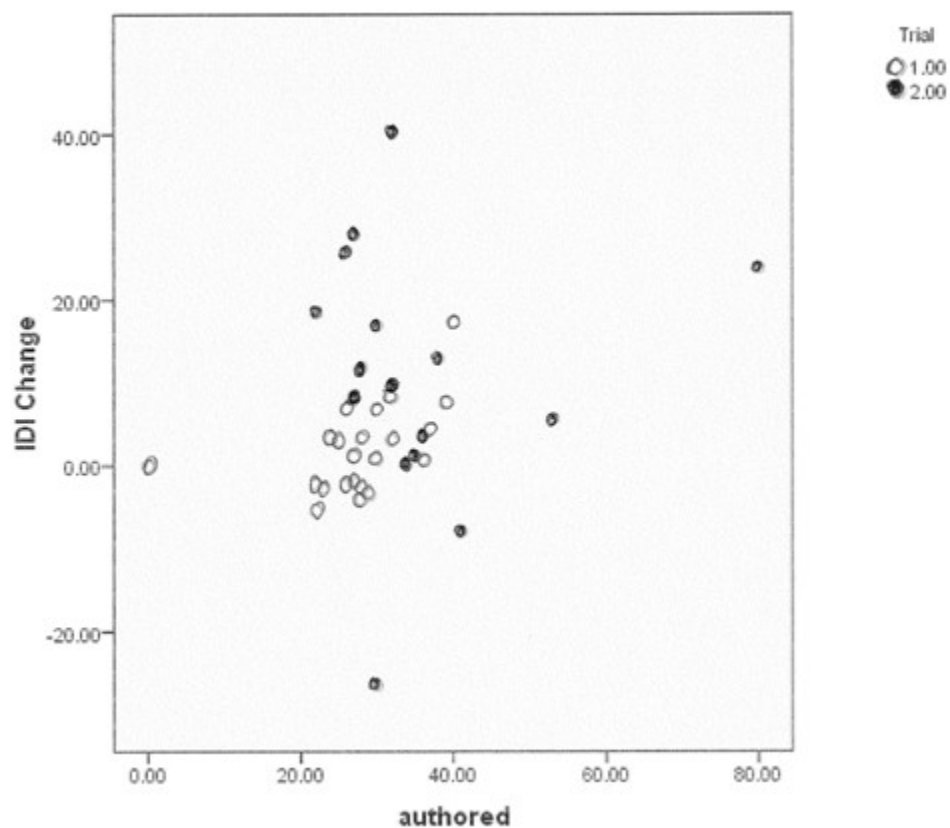
a. 2 cells (33.3%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 3.00.

participants “must be committed people who are willing and able to undergo the kinds of changes in thought, attitude, and action necessary to ensure the success” (York, 1994, p. 144). Since the online MBA course was designed to develop intercultural competence and sensitivity through active participation, ANOVA procedures were used to analyze the number of authored posts and degree of IDI score change. The ANOVA output shows that the *p*-value was significant at less than .001 (see Table 8, ANOVA Output) with an



effect that was more pronounced for Trial II (see Figure 8). That is, participants who authored more posts, experienced greater IDI score change.

Figure 8. *Authored Posts and IDI Score Change*



Conducting a simple means analysis between trials revealed that while the minimum number of required posts for the seven-week online MBA course was 21, the average number of posts was 29.86 and 35.69 with average IDI score change of 2.17 and 10.82 for Trial I and Trial II respectively. The t-test statistic of .66 indicated a substantive difference in IDI score change but this was not significant at the .05  $p$ -level. These cross-trial differences are discussed in more detail following case study development near the conclusion of this chapter.

### *Mid-course Survey*

In Week 4, a mid-course survey composed of sixteen questions, provided formative feedback and some insight into whether participants were experiencing intercultural sensitivity development after only four weeks (see Appendix B). The mid-course survey was analyzed for evidence of *intercultural effectiveness* categories as defined by Cornes (2004) and *online learning environment* themes. Particular examples from the mid-course survey showed how participants experienced intercultural sensitivity development through interaction with team members, the instructor, the content, and the Course Management System. The predefined categories were used to uncover whether intercultural sensitivity development was occurring while additional observations led to the construction of new categories to make further generalizations about the impact of the online MBA course.

*Intercultural effectiveness.* Using Cornes' ten categories, the data from thirty-six anonymous responses were analyzed to reveal participants' perceptions about the impact of the online MBA course on *intercultural effectiveness*. All ten categories were found in the data in one form or another. In addition, thirty-three responses throughout the mid-course survey surfaced favorable responses to suggest that participants were experiencing intercultural sensitivity development.

To begin, thirty-three of thirty-six responses illustrated intercultural effectiveness categories as defined by Cornes (2004) and provided insight into the question "*Has this course made any difference in the way you think about intercultural sensitivity development as it relates to your job or life experience?*" Rather than present all thirty-three favorable responses, representative examples are provided as evidence:

Participant: *Yes it has. It brings a new perspective in interpersonal communication with others who are different than me or of different cultures than me. As far as my job, this course is teaching me to not always just react without thinking to the people I work with, but to step back and try to see the situation through their eyes first before responding.*

These favorable responses surfaced categories such as increased cultural knowledge especially with regard to interpersonal communication (*self-knowledge*, Cornes' 2<sup>nd</sup> category defined as a knowledge of one's strengths and blind spots especially with regard to interpersonal communication) and a heightened level of cultural awareness (*sensory acuity*, Cornes' 4<sup>th</sup> category defined as the ability to notice fine distinctions in the sensory information one receives):

Participant: *Yes, the course has provided both specific examples of different cultures which I was unaware of, and general thought processes for handling cross-cultural "dilemmas" in a creative and effective way.*

The critical reflection processes (*introspective reflection*, Cornes' 10<sup>th</sup> category defined as the ability to review and learn from experience) or "*thought processes*" inherent in learning activities suggest that the majority of participants were realizing intercultural sensitivity changes after only three to four weeks:

Participant: *It has made me think more directly about the cross cultural issues that affect me. It has also given me a broader base of knowledge about other cultures and views of other culture interactions and viewpoints.*

These participants reported that the learning activities forced them to critically reflect upon experiences (*introspective reflection*, Cornes' 10<sup>th</sup> category defined as the ability to review and learn from experience), which led to a change in behavior in the workplace (*behavioral flexibility*, Cornes' 7<sup>th</sup> category defined as the ability to vary behavior to meet different situations). As the following representative examples suggest, participants

learned that rather than jumping to conclusions and relying on previous assumptions to solve problems, they approached problems with a different cultural mindset and behaved differently:

Participant: *Yes; it has made me reflect upon how I or others in my company deal with communication issues and how I / we could improve these communications.*

Participant: *Yes, it makes me think twice before I act when around others. Even if they are from my same culture. I have become more aware of my actions.*

Responses to this mid-course survey question also revealed that participants' cultural awareness, or *sensory acuity* (Cornes' 4<sup>th</sup> category defined as the ability to notice fine distinctions in the sensory information one receives and *emotional perceptiveness* (Cornes' 6<sup>th</sup> category defined as an awareness of one's own and others' emotional states) were evolving. Examples from participants showed that they exhibited increased awareness when engaging in intercultural encounters, an improvement which logically operationalized as improved intercultural competence and sensitivity in the workplace as *a nonjudgmental outlook* (Cornes' 8<sup>th</sup> category defined as the ability to observe different values and behaviors impartially) They suggested that "*in the future*" this new heightened sense of cultural awareness could lead to greater intercultural sensitivity development:

Participant: *Yes, I am more aware of how cultural differences can impact personal and business relationships and that awareness has helped me to be more cultural sensitive.*

Participant: *Yes, I am more tolerant of other people's cultural understanding. I am also learning the technical words for specific cultural behavior I have encountered.*

However, three participants consistently shared negative comments throughout the mid-course survey. When asked, “*Has the course made a difference in the way you think about cultural difference?*” these three participants responded:

Participant: *Not really. I’ve been to China and Italy for business and I don’t think my next trip will go any smoother or differently after having been through this class.*

Participant: *Not really....but it may make a difference in the future.*

Participant: *Not really. The course served to reinforce or reaffirm the thinking I brought into this class.*

While one could interpret that these responses were neutral since it is possible that “*in the future*” the concepts learned in the course could be operationalized in business practice, it is also possible that these three participants did not perceive the course to be effective, beneficial, or suitable for developing intercultural sensitivity.

*Online learning environment.* Since the focus of the mid-course survey was to gather interpretive impressions of participants’ perceived impact of the course on intercultural sensitivity development after only three to four weeks, the data were also analyzed for *online learning environment* themes that could lead to course improvements. Several themes, such as course engagement, value of asynchronous discussions, real-life applicability of course concepts, and peer/instructor feedback surfaced in the data. These themes were not derived from previous studies to explain intercultural sensitivity development, but rather derived from the inductive/deductive trade-off described in Chapter Three. While I began with a predefined set of categories for *intercultural effectiveness*, I later constructed an external set of categories by isolating themes or indicators for *online learning environment* themes. For example, I constructed a new

category ‘*task role management*’ since six participants expressed concern over virtual teamwork dynamics and the assignment of tasks related to the final team presentation.

These six participants suggested a “quick fix” to make the course better:

Participant: *Increase the time available for online collaboration to complete final group projects.*

Participant: *Reduce the number of journal logs.*

Participant: *Enforce posting requirements.*

Participant: *Make groups smaller.*

Participant: *Tell us more about your personal experiences.*

Participant: *Require peer evaluations.*

In an effort to improve online MBA course outcomes, I implemented a “quick fix” suggestion for both trials. For example, I reduced the number of journal logs from seven to four to acknowledge participants’ feedback. Since the mid-course survey provided valuable feedback, a final course survey was administered to collect additional data to be used for this level of group analysis.

#### *Final Course Survey*

In *Week 7*, at the end of each trial, participants completed a final course survey composed of forty-nine questions which offered some insights into whether participants found the online MBA course to be suitable for developing intercultural sensitivity (see Appendix C). The final course survey provided rich data to explore overall course effectiveness. Analysis suggests that thirty-three out of thirty-six participants perceived the online MBA course to be a complementary addition to traditional coursework, and found the andragogical teaching methods and subject matter to facilitate intercultural

competence and sensitivity. The survey findings also included participants' favorable responses to asynchronous discussions, peer/instructor feedback, and real-life applicability of course concepts. For example, all but two participants (94%) responded favorably that discussion questions were stimulating while all but one participant (97%) either agreed or strongly agreed that the instructor gave useful feedback, made useful comments in this course, and helped connect the concepts in this course to real world situations. The participants' perceptions suggest that the online MBA course accommodated a wide variety of participants at various stages of intercultural sensitivity development, and that the authentic learning activities in a largely asynchronous discussion format cultivated intercultural learning.

*Intercultural effectiveness.* More than 75% of participants reported that the course material was applicable to their lives, and expressed a heightened sense of cultural awareness (*sensory acuity*), another indicator of *intercultural effectiveness*. While thirty-three responses were favorable to all final course survey questions, three participants consistently shared negative comments. Due to the survey response format, little data was found to exemplify the *intercultural effectiveness* categories as defined by Cornes (2004).

*Online learning environment.* The final course survey data also showed that twenty-six participants (72%) perceived their learning style to be appropriate for online coursework, and twenty-nine participants (80%) gave the online MBA course an average to superior overall rating. Only four participants offered ideas for improvement:

Participant: *Make this a required 3 credit course so we can learn more over more time.*

Participant: *Have students from other countries taking the course at the same time.*

Participant: *Make the students use chat in order to get to know other students informally.*

Participant: *Offer peer feedback*

One participant emphasized that the *online learning environment* did not allow participants to “*force the issue*” thus facilitating task role management for the final team presentation:

Participant: *I know this was supposed to be a group effort and we should organize ourselves but it was difficult without meeting face-to-face and individual students had little power to force the issue- it is easier to blow someone off when you don't meet face-to-face.*

While this participant did not elaborate on what was meant by “*force the issue*” one could interpret that this comment referred to the lack of non-verbal communication and voice modulation to convey a heightened sense of urgency. This example shows that *online learning environment* themes included participants' concerns about interaction management and team accountability. While these themes did not have a theoretical basis for impacting intercultural sensitivity development, they surfaced through the inductive/deductive trade-off described in Chapter Three. For example, as data were analyzed new categories emerged to explain intercultural sensitivity development such as *demonstrates resourcefulness, seeks peer/instructor feedback, and shows concern for team interaction and accountability*. These categories emerged as participants expressed that there was little team accountability in the online learning environment and that team interaction within the Discussion Board could be improved with additional instructor monitoring and mandatory peer assessment procedures. The point here is that future



online MBA courses could implement a variety of design and delivery methods to facilitate course engagement and online resilience to foster greater intercultural sensitivity development and improve overall perceived course effectiveness.

#### *Instructional Assessment System (IAS)*

In *Week 7*, at the end of each trial, participants also completed a university-required IAS survey composed of five questions which rated the online MBA course curriculum (design) and instruction (delivery) outcomes. These data sets, collected by the Graduate School of Management, included thirty-five participants' responses (Trial I=19 and Trial II=16). While it is noteworthy that three participants completed this survey outside the parameters of the online MBA course, these data sets were not accessible for inclusion in cross-trial analysis. In addition, IAS survey findings are explained in more detail along with additional individual case data to provide a more balanced view of quantitative and qualitative data. Hence, cross-trial conclusions are drawn at the end of the chapter.

In the next section, case study development shows how six participants interacted with team members and constructed their individual experiences around cultural difference. While age, gender, and posts were significantly linked to IDI score change, qualitative findings flesh out the anomalies and provide a more complete picture of what constituted IDI stage shift.

#### Case Study Development

Due to participants' limited interview availability, only nineteen research participants volunteered for interviews and became interview informants (Trial I=10 and Trial II=9). These nineteen interview informants provided three interviews, each lasting

approximately 45 minutes. Subsequently, six of the nineteen interview informants were selected for case study development based on IDI stage shift rankings to represent the highest, middle, and lowest degrees of IDI stage shifts for each trial. Interviews for both trials were conducted face-to-face or over the telephone. Boston, a participant living out of state, opted to meet me once in my university office, and face-to-face at a coffee shop. Wit, who traveled for business, conducted all interviews over the telephone. Zim conducted all interviews face-to-face in my university office. Pepe and Roscoe opted for telephone and face-to-face interviews, and Jack conducted all interviews over the telephone. The three females (Wit, Boston, and Zim) and three males (Jack, Roscoe, and Pepe) represented a variety of demographics with little ethnic diversity (see Table 14, Case Study Demographics). These case studies are important because they provide the reader a sense of each individual's cognitive orientation towards cultural difference, and explores in depth in what ways the online MBA course impacted their respective intercultural sensitivity development along the intercultural continuum.

Table 14

*Case Study Demographics*

<b>Trial I</b> N=22 <b>2004</b>	<b>WIT</b> <b>15% Regression</b> European American 27 year old female sales representative remote participant prior global study prior online course 22 posts	<b>BOSTON</b> <b>6% Progression</b> European American 37 year old female marketing consultant remote participant prior online course 32 posts	<b>ZIM</b> <b>36% Progression</b> European American 21 year old female accounting intern prior global study 40 posts
<b>Trial II</b> N= 16 <b>2005</b>	<b>JACK</b> <b>9% Regression</b> Persian American 30 year old male ROTC instructor prior online course 41 posts	<b>ROSCOE</b> <b>34% Progression</b> European American 43 year old male customer service engineer prior online course 80 posts	<b>PEPE</b> <b>50% Progression</b> European American 35 year old male sales manager 32 posts

The six interview informants each contributed approximately 20 pages of Discussion Board postings, 40 pages of interview data, 10 pages of journal logs, and 3 pages of emails for analysis and interpretation. In addition, 60 pages of instructor/researcher notes complemented the data pool: these offered additional insights including my beliefs and assumptions about participants' critical reflection skills, and whether interview informants' statements reflected stages of perspective transformation leading to greater intercultural sensitivity development.

The data from these six interview informants (cases) were coded using the grounded-theory method (Spradley, 1979) and followed several steps: 1) data were coded using Cornes (2004) *intercultural effectiveness* categories, and *online learning environment* themes; 2) codes were subsequently sorted and new categories and themes were also identified; 3) categories and themes were compared and sorted in an inductive process until no further categories or themes were generated, and sufficient evidence emerged to describe the relationships among them; 4) conclusions were derived from the organization of the data to explain each informant's constructed experience in the course; and 5) an explanatory schema for how the online MBA course impacted intercultural sensitivity development for six individual cases is presented.

Step 1 involved three coding procedures as described in Chapter Three. First, I coded data using the ten intercultural effectiveness categories proposed by Cornes (2004) and then coded this same data a second time as *actual* (DS) or *perceived* (PS) intercultural sensitivity development. For example, an informant's statement such as "*I am very flexible and tend to alter my behavior to address the group's needs*" would be coded as *behavioral flexibility*, and then coded as *perceived* because it represents self-

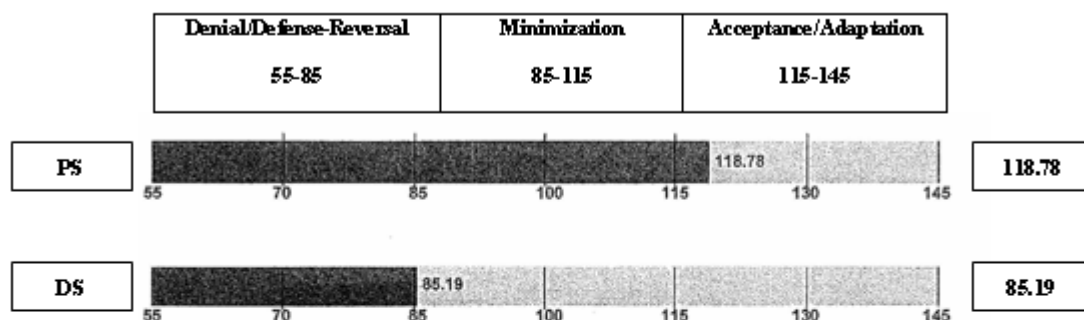
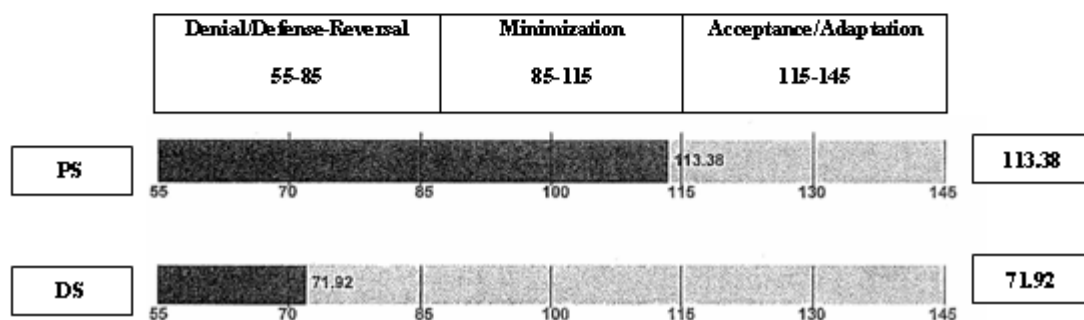
described tendencies rather than demonstrated actions that are observed by others. By doing this analysis I was able to uncover evidence that could explain any discrepancies between the DS and PS pretest-posttest scores from the informant's IDI profiles. Second, I analyzed data related to the online learning environment as *design* or *delivery* categories and then identified themes. For example, I identified themes such as the value of virtual teamwork, use of anecdotal stories, and consistent use of text-based assignments, as indicators of informants' perceived intercultural sensitivity development. And, third, I organized data into explanatory schemas for each informant to support or refute the IDI findings and to represent group experiences for six individual cases. Data from interviews, emails, journal logs, and course posts were selected to illustrate intercultural sensitivity development during the seven-week online MBA course. I used these data along with my instructor/researcher notes to better understand how the course design, guided activities and discussions, and my facilitation, impacted intercultural sensitivity development.

The case studies are presented in order by trial, using a week by week format, so the reader can get a sense of the team interaction between and among the six informants. This chronological approach by trial gives the reader a sense of how each informant's experiences unfolded during seven weeks and how each weekly learning activity contributed to or detracted from their intercultural sensitivity development. The online MBA course's weaknesses and strengths are also revealed to show in what ways the design and delivery impacted intercultural sensitivity development.

*Trial I Cases**Wit- Lowest IDI Stage Shift*

Wit is a 27 year old European American female who worked as a Client Service Representative for a software company. She traveled frequently for work during the seven-week online MBA course and infrequently checked in with her team members while she was “*on the road.*” She authored and read the fewest number of posts as indicated by course management statistics and she only completed the minimum post requirements of three per week. Since her interviews revealed that she had prior work/study experience in Australia and Europe, and prior online course experience, I reasoned that Wit’s IDI pretest-posttest scores and course management statistics might reveal a higher level of intercultural sensitivity and a higher degree of course engagement.

Figure 9 shows Wit’s IDI pretest-posttest profiles with Developmental Intercultural Sensitivity (DS) pretest-posttest scores of 85.19 and 71.92. The DS pretest-posttest difference of 13.27 ranked Wit as the informant with the lowest IDI stage shift. Wit’s DS pretest score (85.19) was indicative of low Minimization which represents an individual who does not have a sophisticated appreciation for cultural differences. Furthermore, there was a significant discrepancy between her DS and Perceived Intercultural Sensitivity (PS) pretest scores, and DS and PS posttest scores. These numeric differences suggest that Wit perceived herself to possess a high level of intercultural sensitivity. In addition, course management statistics confirmed that Wit authored and read the fewest number of posts; 22 (the average being 34 posts), and 49 (the average being 220 posts), respectively.

Figure 9. *Wit's IDI Pretest-Posttest Profiles***PRE TEST****POSTTEST**

*Week 1: Course Overview and Introduction.* During *Week 1*, participants were required to edit their Personal Homepage, post course goals, complete the IDI, select Brainpool Online teams, and post responses to two team members' original postings. The purpose of the first week was to get participants thinking about commonalities and universal values regarding course goals and life experiences. Participants were then required to build on these collaborative connections with team members and begin to focus on each other's cultural differences. At the beginning of the course, participants were randomly selected to work in teams and these established teams chose a country to showcase for their final team presentation.

Wit completed the IDI pretest and posted her course goals in the Discussion Board. She also submitted a personal profile along with her photograph taken the first day of class. The IDI pretest revealed that Wit was barely in Minimization at 85.19 (the score range being 85-115). According to Bennett and Hammer (2001), Wit's placement on the intercultural continuum suggested that she possessed a worldview that over-generalizes similarities between self and others, allowing cultural differences to be trivialized. Minimization is a transition between the polarization of difference around either the inferiority of other cultures or the superiority of one's own culture and the nonevaluative recognition of difference in Acceptance. Theoretically then, Wit's worldview was clearly ethnocentric suggesting that she treated her own standard as central to the reality of all people.

In her first interview, however, Wit revealed a willingness to be open-minded (*a nonjudgmental outlook*, Cornes' 8<sup>th</sup> category defined as the ability to observe different values and behaviors impartially) and articulated a philosophy more indicative of an individual in Acceptance:

**Wit:** *Well I think that it's a great thing that we all have our differences. Obviously there are some differences that cause clashes but I think you can get that even within your own culture. Everybody, especially in America, is entitled to their own opinion about things. But at the same time I try personally to keep an open mind, at least listen to people and different aspects about their culture, I find that interesting. And even if I don't necessarily agree with something, I don't always feel it's my place to say so. It may just mean that whatever the situation would be maybe I don't participate. But I don't think it's right to put people down for the things that they believe in.*

Individuals in Acceptance allow cultural differences to be consciously construed. This means that, Wit recognized the existence of cultural differences, albeit superficial, and

suggested that “*especially in America*” it was important “*to keep an open mind*” in order to reconcile these cultural differences. It is this direct experience of cultural difference that confirms an individual’s equal-but-different realities and generates the respect for difference that is characteristic of Acceptance. Unfortunately, in this example, Wit *perceived* herself to be open-minded and she did not demonstrate this self-described characteristic as *actual*.

Wit also expressed the importance of teamwork in an online learning environment (*design*) during an interview and the idea that multiple perspectives were a desirable learning outcome:

**Wit:** *I think its [teamwork] essential to this environment because part of the point of the course is to work with other people because even in America we have different cultures so you want to find how other people, even of your own culture view other things.*

Furthermore, Wit indicated that she had taken online courses before:

**Wit:** *I’ve taken 3 of these already. My first class was unusual because he’d never taught a one credit before and we really didn’t do anything except for a quiz at the end so that I think was an extreme. But then the next one I had was a team building class and we had a one page paper due...we basically for the class all we had to do was write 3 one page papers.*

She also revealed in her first journal log that she often communicated with Latin American clients and had experienced misunderstandings due to the language barrier. In particular, she described how she was challenged and frustrated by email communication with these clients:

**Wit:** *I often get e-mails at work from my Latin clients that are complicated to understand. In these messages the clients is (sic) trying to express questions that they need to*



*have me answer in regards to the software packages I support. However, the sentence structure, diction and vocabulary are often confusing as these messages can be classified as bad grammar and can be very confusing...However, I think given the experiences I have had in the online chat room I may try to utilize the same environment with these clients.*

These weekly journal logs were designed as personal, private, and prompt feedback tools to gauge participants' intercultural sensitivity development. For example, after weekly discussion activities, participants emailed journal logs as attached Word Documents with emerging thoughts, questions on course readings, or reflections on course content. I downloaded these to my computer and provided feedback in **bold**. These Word Documents were then saved as 'Journal Log Responses' and emailed back to participants within 24 hours to stimulate further reflection on content and move them along the intercultural continuum. Since Wit exhibited signs of *behavioral flexibility* (Cornes' 7<sup>th</sup> category defined as the ability to vary behavior to meet different situations), I noted this in my instructor/researcher journal. Wit had suggested that she might try an alternate form of communication such as a chat room which would allow her clients to hold "real-time" text-based conversations. In my journal log response I encouraged her to critically reflect on her assumptions and continue to pursue multiple forms of communication with her Latin American clients. I challenged her to consider how the online collaborative work has made her think differently about behavior in various cultural contexts:

**SSW:** *Do you find that you have to strike a balance in the approach you will take with your Latin American counterparts? ...Are you getting to the point where you can honestly say "no matter what culture, people are pretty much motivated by the same things" or do you identify more with "the more cultures you know about, the better comparisons you can make"?*

Since Wit did not respond to these questions in *Week 1*, her level of commitment, or degree of course engagement, remained uncertain. I was suspicious about her intentions to “*whip through the course*” as indicated by her first interview. She told me that the online MBA course was the only course option offered over the summer that would allow her to complete the MBA program requirements due to her work and travel schedule. Although she was not required to respond to my questions as indicated by the online MBA course syllabus, her lack of responses seemed to be consistent with a low degree of course engagement.

*Week 2: Communication in Multinational Organizations.* During *Week 2*, participants began to work towards the completion of the final team presentation which was introduced in *Week 1* as a culminating assignment to be submitted in *Week 7*. Each weekly learning activity was designed as a building block for the final team presentation. Since learning activities focused on the proper Discussion Board posting protocol, all participants were required to take a Netiquette Quiz and submit results in the Backstage Dress Rehearsal Discussion Area, the informal discussion area that was not assessed or graded. The Netiquette Quiz (<http://www.albion.com/netiquette/netquiz.html>) was found online and participants responded to an interactive quiz designed to test their knowledge of “Netiquette” which covered common courtesy rules of cyberspace. Participants were required to share their score and comments with their team members in the Backstage Dress Rehearsal Discussion Area. In addition to this assignment, the primary learning activity in *Week 2* required each participant to post something intercultural that was specific to their team’s chosen country and could be incorporated into their final team presentation. Participants were supposed to respond to a series of questions such as:

- 1: Topic Selection
  - Why did you choose this current event or cross-cultural communication business principle?
  - How is this current event or cross-cultural communication business principle relevant to the course content?
  - What does the current event or cross-cultural communication business principles tell us about doing business in this culture?
- 2: Cultural Dimensions
  - Describe the cultural dimensions reflected in the current event or cross-cultural communication business principle.
  - How is the problem or solution related to cross-cultural communication?
- 3: Lessons Learned
  - What did you learn from doing this activity that you didn't know before?
  - What recommendations do you have for doing business in this culture?

Wit's team, which included Boston, had chosen Brazil, so these participants were required to submit artifacts and/or resources that exemplified Brazil's cultural value dimensions. This activity helped participants to uncover cultural differences and use the Internet as a source of intercultural information. Participants were asked to creatively post submissions and copy/cut/paste documents into the Discussion Board to enhance their findings. Creative posts were strongly encouraged to help team members compile PowerPoint slides or images that could be uploaded to their final team presentation.

Wit began to show some effort in *Week 2* by creating connections with team members. Wit submitted: *"I scored 100%. It was a piece of cake"* and she acknowledged to her team members *"I have taken online courses before."* Wit again demonstrated *self-assurance and control* (Cornes' 3<sup>rd</sup> category defined as confidence and self-esteem) and an ability to navigate the online learning environment with the appropriate posting protocol. She adhered to posting guidelines and received the maximum number of points for each assignment. Wit suggested that she was quite regimented and applied structure to get her assignments completed on time:

**Wit:** *I think I'm a pretty regimented person believe it or not. Even though I've had ...if you look at my schedule and what not, I do tend to try to apply a lot of structure. I try to set deadlines. I know what to do, ok I'm going to be able to get it ...I think you have to if you're going to do this program and work full time.*

While Wit completed the assignment on time, she missed its purpose and did not present the information creatively in a PowerPoint format. She extracted the information directly from the Internet and her post did not engage her team members in a discussion on her findings or why these findings could be useful for the final team presentation. In addition, she titled her post: “*Sorry I posted this on Sunday but in the wrong Area*” and exceeded word limits by over 250 words:

**Wit:** *Here is a site I found with interesting pointers on what are norms in the Brazilian culture when it comes to communication:*  
<http://www.cyborlink.com/besite/brazil.htm>

While posting guidelines were very specific in the syllabus (250-300 words/or 1 Word Document page), Wit chose to completely ignore them. As a result, some participants reported that they skipped posts due to personal time constraints. Winnie, for example, commented in her journal log:

**Winnie:** *These are the same annoying students in face-to-face classes who drive you crazy because they don't know when to shut up!*

Another participant, Jack (Trial II), complained:

**Jack:** *There is a large volume of messages to read through, and pretty soon it tends to all blend together.*

The point here is that enforcing stricter penalties for excessive word limits could have improved team interactivity and the distributive learning process. Wit then went on to paraphrase the entire webpage and submitted this post to complete the assignment:

**Wit:** *Appearance Three-piece suits carry an "executive" connotation...Conservative attire for women in business is very important... The O. K. hand signal a rude gesture in Brazil To express appreciation...Never try to make impromptu calls at business or government offices...Be prepared to commit long term resources (both in time and money) toward establishing strong relationships in Brazil. ...Saude or Viva (Sah-OO-Day, VEE-va...If you here [sic] the term jeito - it refers to the idea that nothing is set in stone, that a good attempt can break a rule...*

By the end of the week, Wit also tried to excuse herself from any additional teamwork in the Backstage Dress Rehearsal Discussion Area which her team members had requested, and again demonstrated a lack of course engagement and that she possessed *self-assurance and control* (Cornes' 3<sup>rd</sup> category defined as confidence and self-esteem):

**Wit:** *As it looks like most people have signed up for a specific section is there still a need to have a Friday meeting? [William] has done such a good job of laying everything out I think we could potentially go forward without the online discussion on Friday. What do you all think?*

While Wit tried to solicit agreement from her team members, the self-appointed team leader, William, announced, *"I'm thinking not. Doing homework on a Friday is cruel and unusual punishment anyway!"* and reminded Wit of her team responsibility:

**William:** *Please follow up with individuals that have not gotten you the required information yet. (Bono) and [Larry] have just begun putting together the final powerpoint presentation and the paper is getting done. Please follow up with those that are responsible for the information you do not have to coordinate a timely handover if required. Also, once you are completed with the editing, please email me a copy and I will send to Suzanne and post. Regards, [William]*

During *Week 2 Brainpool Online/Brazil* struggled with online technical issues. Even Wit had inadvertently submitted a post in *Brainpool Online/India's Discussion*

Board. Despite this fact, Wit stayed on the sidelines and remained disconnected from her team members while others offered suggestions for navigating the online learning environment, Blackboard. She mused and chuckled during her second interview: “*It creates a little bit of confusion, chaos, and mayhem in the beginning...as they get [their] bearings.*” However, Wit offered no assistance in the resolution process and did not appear to demonstrate an interest in helping her team members navigate the online learning environment:

**Wit:** *Luckily for us, we had a few weeks yet to straighten it out. If it would have been on a deadline, I think there would have been some upset people....But we weren't on a tight deadline, we had a whole month to kind of facilitate everything.*

Up to this point, Wit demonstrated little *introspective reflection* (Cornes' 10<sup>th</sup> category defined as the ability to review and learn from experience) in her work and was not a visible participant in the Discussion Boards. My journal log response to Wit encouraged her to engage in the course material more thoughtfully, and submit journal logs that were more critically reflective:

**SSW:** *As you move into [Week] 3 think about critical incidents that occur in your work life that may be related to a misunderstanding due to cultural differences. Describe the situation, i.e., what happened, who was involved, what you think was the underlying source of conflict was and what was the solution. What could have been the best solution based on what you know now? Has your social construction of reality or the way you organize your world changed since you began this course?*

I posed these questions to Wit to simply stir further reflection on the course content and try to move her along the intercultural continuum. She was not required to answer them directly, yet I continually challenged her to think about how the online MBA course

content could be applied to her work life and how this knowledge could contribute to the development of her overall intercultural sensitivity development.

*Week 3: Cross-Cultural Value Dimensions – Part I.* Week 3's learning activities incorporated the use of business case studies to challenge participants to develop new "cultural software" as they learned more about cultural value dimensions, such as Universalism and Particularism. For example, participants learned that Universalist cultures tend to follow a system of rules while Particularist cultures seek exceptions to the rule. The business case studies provided participants with a useful toolkit to help them deal with the complexities of intercultural communication and resolve a cultural dilemma.

Despite efforts to move Wit along in stage development, her *Week 3* post was extremely short (165 words) and lacked substance:

**Wit:** *The case presented several approaches to understanding cultural differences and finding resolutions to those differences. These approaches to understanding through examples like universalism verses particularism give managers tools on how to approach cultural differenes [sic] in the workplace. These tools are relavent [sic] and necessary to operating in an international business environment. The many cultural dimensions in this case showed how to approach the problem and find solutions. The solutions many times came in the approach to the problem. In the case of the Italian and Dutch contract dispute, one would need to use cross cultural understanding in order to find the best solution to the problem for both parties. I found the content of religion extremely interesting in terms of working in group situations [sic]. In addition, I learned how important it is for corporate leaders to refrain from making judgements [sic] based on emotion even though they might not culturally understand their international employees. Patience seems to be key to reaching cultural understanding.*

In this example, Wit did not use spell-check, respond to inquiries, or offer further elaboration in subsequent responses. It seemed that her contributions were rushed and not well-thought out or articulated which showed little *behavioral flexibility*. She also announced to her team, Brainpool Online/Brazil: “*I am on the road through the end of this class.*” She informed her team members that she would have Internet connectivity issues, which would preclude her from completing future team tasks on a timely basis. Here again was example of Wit participating and engaging in the course at minimum capacity. I reminded Wit that course expectations required Internet access throughout the seven weeks and as the instructor, I advised her to drop the course if she could not comply with this simple requirement. I also noted in my instructor/researcher journal that I was disappointed that I did not include a rubric that incorporated penalties for perceived course engagement by the instructor.

By *Week 3* it became more apparent that Wit did not find value in sharing multiple perspectives nor did she challenge her own cultural assumptions. She contributed very little substantive content during the online learning activities and put the minimum amount of time and effort into course assignments. Her interview data suggested that she spent 3 hours a week on the course which was the standard amount of time required for a 1 credit course:

**Wit:** *I usually spend about an hour, well, read the assignment, whether it's a case study or watch the video and then I spend about an hour, sometimes two hours, doing research on the internet. Looking at other things related to that particular topic and then I also go in and see if anybody's posted anything yet, in regards to that, the topic, and look at what they've written and then I formulate mine and I post it. And then it's probably Tuesday, sometimes Wednesday, given my work schedule that I get back in and I spend time reading what the others have*



*written, what the responses have been to what they've written and then I formulate my responses.*

*Week 4: Brainpool Online/China.* During *Week 4* participants' intercultural competence and sensitivity were challenged by learning about Sino-American business practices. Three guest experts (Joe, Jeff, and Xiao) presented "inside and outside" cultural perspectives related to doing business in China. The guest expert presentations revealed the complexity of cultural dimensions as they related to work in China. Participants were then asked to examine a marketing campaign launched in China by an American pharmaceutical manufacturer and post a response in the Discussion Board. Participants were given the following information:

A pharmaceutical manufacturer decided to market its new product, 4-Star Plus. The marketing VP had the text on the label and packaging translated into Chinese by a native speaker. He told his art department to retain the products 4-Star logo design.

While Wit was very resourceful and used the Internet wisely to complete her assignment indicative of *sensory acuity* (Cornes' 4<sup>th</sup> category defined as the ability to notice fine distinctions in the sensory information one receives) she jumped to conclusions and made assumptions that the marketing campaign was a failure without presenting alternative perspectives on how it would have succeeded:

**Wit:** *I do not think the company will be successful because of a cultural conflict with what a star means in the Chinese culture. The Star is a symbol of power and politics in China. A large five-point star can be associated to the communist rule of the nation while four equal size small stars can be equated to the other political parties that are tolerated as they represent the people parties of China. However, one of the keys to successful business in China is understanding the role of Communism in the Chinese culture (this is further explained in the article I found and attached). By eliminating the symbol for the ruling party in China, I think the Chinese people will be offended by the logo and sales will be meek. In doing research I looked for*

*articles that expressed what to do and what not to do to have successful negotiations in China. Most of what was found tied into the two lectures on the DVD. The business culture in China is very people oriented. Impressions and first appearances are critical to having another meeting. Negotiations in China do not happen expeditiously and that is the only option, if you try to rush you will seem pushy and they will walk away from the negotiation. It is important to do plenty[sic] of research before exploring the possibility to entering this market. It is suggested that you find a facilitator in China that has business contacts established and it would be best if that person's ethnicity is also Chinese.*

Wit did not support her statements with research or facts to validate her claims, nor did she provide an analytical framework for her assessment:

**Wit:** *Wow considering how superstitious the Chinese people are this product has no chance...People will think they will die if they take these pills. I think this marketing person needs to meet Mr. Internet.*

Wit's post illustrated a disconcerting tendency to jump to conclusions, yet, it also presented an opportunity for a teachable moment. She suggested that the person (in charge of the marketing campaign) needed to use the Internet as a resource tool yet her post reflected that she did little research on the Internet herself. I posted the following comment in the Course News:

**SSW:** *Some of you suggest that the pharmaceutical manufacturer could have put a skull and crossbones on the bottle and sent the same message by not doing the proper language research! You are also uncovering the differences in the Chinese characters across regions sometimes referred to as the formal or traditional Mandarin. It is important to know that these differences exist particularly when having your business cards printed for business travel to China. One must use the appropriate Chinese characters on the front of the business card and always have the English translation on the back. Good work!*

While the number 4, or “chi” symbolizes death, Wit did not fully research "4-Star" in a Chinese context as other participants found that incorporating the number 4 along with a symbol of a star could also be interpreted as positive. My journal log response stimulated further *introspective reflection* and tried to move her towards an Acceptance/Adaptation mindset:

**SSW:** *Hi [Wit],  
Wasn't it interesting to see how some students assumed that ONLY one answer was correct? [Isabel, Bono, and Ace] presented alternative viewpoints that suggested that the 4Star campaign could potentially work in the Chinese marketplace. Did their postings surprise you?  
You appear to believe that "The more you know about cultures, the better job you'll do." Do you also feel like a "difference seeker?" Continue to challenge yourself to develop the skills for frame of reference shifting as you analyze cultural differences.*

In my journal log response I also challenged Wit about her claims to be open-minded, and reminded her that open-mindedness requires that one recognizes that there are differences in values and beliefs, and that such differences need to be interpreted in their cultural context. I encouraged her to expand her cultural repertoires and reconsider the concept of “guanxi” (pronounced gwan-chee) which appeared in the readings, but which she glossed over in her assignment. “Guanxi” literally means "relationships" but it is also understood as the network of relationships among various parties that cooperate together and support one another in a business context. This approach to doing business in China often requires a great deal of time and money and boils down to the exchange of favors which could be viewed by Americans as an unfair business practice. Many participants considered “guanxi” in their posts and suggested ways that the marketing campaign could

work. I posted a comment in the Discussion Board to make it visible to her team members that she failed to include an important factor in her analysis:

**SSW:** *Hi [Wit],  
What about the importance of connections, relationships, and guanxi? Do you think if the pharmaceutical firm could establish a connection with a Chinese native and adopt a Chinese spokesperson into their advertising/marketing campaign the VP would have been more successful?*

Wit's response to my Journal Log Response was "Agreed" and she did not post further in the Discussion Board. However, her interview data revealed that she grasped these concepts. Again, this example demonstrates that Wit's *perceived* intercultural sensitivity (PS) was greater than her *actual* intercultural sensitivity development (DS) as indicated by her IDI profile:

**Wit:** *Having spent time overseas and some of the work I did as an undergrad, I worked a lot with international professors, the world trade organization of the community that I went to school in. I've kind of always tried to immerse myself in that kind of cultural environment. I think nowadays a lot of people hopefully understand that there are differences when going into business. I think businesses are getting better. If I'm going to start operations in China, well by golly I better know not only the governmental regulations of how I have to operate over there but what are my people going to expect of me? What do the American people expect of my operations over there? Because that's also critical now. America is starting to be more socially aware again and child labor, horrible working conditions, once that information gets out, people...the shareholders in those companies, they react. There's been, in the past, good case studies on that...big companies who... they knew what they were doing going in and they thought it was going to be ok because it was a norm for over there. But it's not a norm here and so there's a fine balance to finding that balance.*

At this course juncture in *Week 4*, I noted in my instructor/researcher journal that Wit was simply not interested in doing more “work” than was absolutely necessary to get the grade and there was no indication of further *introspective reflection* or action:

**SSW:** *[Wit] adheres to course requirements and completes her weekly required postings and journal logs but she does not respond to additional inquiries since there are no grading incentives or penalties.*

*Week 5: Cross-Cultural Value Dimensions – Part II.* In *Week 5* participants were asked to describe a personal situation that required them to reconcile cultural differences using the framework provided by Trompenaars and Woolliams (2003) to evaluate her behavior and how she responded to the situation. In addition, participants were reminded to complete team tasks in the Backstage Dress Rehearsal Discussion Area and prepare for the final team presentation.

Wit’s post for the week was again unimpressive and lacked depth. Not only was it disconnected to course concepts but she did not advance her thinking or make suggestions on how to best respond to the behavior in her intercultural example. Since Wit had extensive intercultural experience as a student living in Australia, I reasoned that she would submit an interesting example in the Discussion Board. Her example dealt with an MBA colleague’s lack of respect for time (the person, Kimberley, not associated with the online MBA course, participated in group work for another MBA course that she had taken):

**Wit:** *We have a saying when we try to organize meeting start times...would that be normal time or Kimberly time...Groups for School are never easy and there is a strong tendency to keep harmony at any cost but 30 minutes is excessive.*

This example was weak at best, and while it was loosely connected to course concepts, it was not thoroughly analyzed according to the assignment framework. Furthermore, she referenced several marketing campaign blunders in her post that would have been more appropriate for the previous week's posting.

In an effort to engage Wit in the course and challenge her current mindset and worldview between Denial/Defense and Minimization, I needed to stimulate a response from her and/or promote *introspective reflection* (Cornes' 10<sup>th</sup> category defined as the ability to review and learn from experience). Since it was evident that she was not exhibiting behaviors consistent with intercultural sensitivity development, I submitted a post to gently inform her that her weekly post was not quite on topic. I also detailed several marketing campaigns and contained a mini-analysis to model the expectations of the assignment. Finally, questions were posed to segue into the next learning activity: *"Have you heard the term "glocalize"? How do you think the Internet plays a role in establishing global corporate culture?"* Wit's only response was: *"Thank you, Suzanne."* This response, unfortunately, seemed to be a clear indication that Wit was not motivated to do more coursework than was absolutely required by the online MBA course syllabus. I noted in my journal that the following course grading system (see Figure 11) would need to be revised for future trials beyond the scope of this study. For example, I wrote *"I should have incorporated penalties for bad grammar, punctuation, excessive wording, as well as points for peer evaluations and perceived course engagement by the instructor."* I realized after both trials that points for each assignment shown in Figure 10 could have reflected component parts that described acceptable and unacceptable levels of performance. Journal Logs and Discussion

Postings, valued at 40 points each, as examples, could have been broken down into 4 sets of 10, each associated with a specific evaluation standard related to learning objectives. I was convinced that the course grading system, particularly in Wit’s case, set her up to perform marginally and at minimum capacity since my “*expectation management*” in the syllabus did not include explicit rewards and penalties for not following guidelines. Raising course expectations and making grading evaluations more explicit could have increased Wit’s level of course engagement.

Figure 10. *Course Grading*

All major written assignments must be word processed and carefully edited. Unless specified, assignments should be completed using current APA specifications for citations and bibliography. Unless special arrangements have been made, all assignments must be submitted by midnight on the due date.

Assignments

Head	#	Points	Subtotal
Journal Log	7	50	350
Discussion Postings	6	40	240
Discussion Responses	12	5	60
Case Study Group Presentation	1	200	200
Guest Expert Questions	2	25	50
Assessments			
Intercultural Development Inventory	2	25	50
Reality Check	1	25	25
Course Evaluation	1	25	25
Total			1000

Grading Scale

Points	Grade
930 – 1000	A
929 – 890	AB
889 – 850	B
849 – 790	BC
789 – 740	C

*Week 6: Global Manifest Destiny.* During *Week 6*, participants considered another cultural perspective advanced by Caslione and Thomas (2002), as “global corporate culture.” This week’s learning activity was intended to help participants challenge the concept of global manifest destiny. Participants were subsequently asked a series of questions: How does your understanding of global corporate culture and the

examples provided by the authors contribute to cross-cultural communication competence? Can you articulate what you think drives global manifest destiny? How can organizations with a global corporate culture continue to be sensitive to cross-cultural value dimensions?

To my dismay, Wit borrowed the course segue from the previous week with a statement representative of universal thinking, a characteristic of Minimization:

**Wit:** *I think the Internet is playing a big part in forming an [sic] universal society in the world.*

As many posts show, Wit did not critically reflect on content, and problematize issues. She used the Internet as a source of intercultural information but many of her viewpoints were narrow and reflected more of a Denial/Defense posture:

**Wit:** *I would have to say in efficiency in the true economic sense the Americans have the best system.*

This statement was made without evidence or comparisons to support it. It represented Denial/Defense because her viewpoint did not acknowledge that other economic systems could be equally as good given their cultural context. Other posts suggested a level of frustration as she seemed to represent both Denial/Defense and Minimization characteristics:

**Wit:** *Right off the bat I want to warn readers I am in a mood, which can be a good or bad thing depending on your outlook...Have any of you ever wondered why these materials imply that it is the American companies whom are required to be the culturally conscious party? ...I believe that a strong sense of nationality is a very valuable trait. Shouldn't every American citizen be proud to say they are American, especially in today's world, and if they aren't then they shouldn't they go establish themselves in a country were (sic) the culture suits them better. I often wonder to (sic) Chinese students have to take classes on*



*how to conduct business in America. Do they learn our culture and business methods?*

Not only was Wit in Denial/Defense about the value of learning about other cultural business practices, she apparently failed to learn from the DVD presentations or read the posts from the Chinese national guest expert in *Week 3*. Xiao, an accomplished Chinese corporate attorney specializing in trade agreements, revealed that Chinese people have been studying American cultural business practices for years. Xiao suggested that American's arrogance and lack of knowledge regarding Chinese business practices affected Sino-American trade agreements, which have cost the US economy billions of dollars in trade agreements. It appeared that Wit did not retain or learn this important course content. She still had not learned to problematize what was presented in the course or critically reflect on assumptions. To her credit, however, she acknowledged in her journal log the importance of getting help from others to acquire cultural intelligence:

**Wit:** *Over time, I have found that there are a few elements to cross-cultural communication that can be applied to all cultures. The key is to get help, whether from local contacts or through research firms who specialize in such tasks.*

Wit suggested that there were “*a few elements*” that she could apply to other cultures; but, her reflective writings did not illustrate an increased desire to establish commonality, a characteristic of Minimization. Somehow she fell short of the mark and reverted back to Denial/Defense despite many efforts to pull her forward into Minimization.

*Week 7: Debriefing Session and Course Wrap-Up.* During *Week 7* participants were required to meet face-to-face to complete the IDI posttest and university-required IAS final course evaluations. Participants were invited to bring refreshments and informally share their final team presentations. Wit was unable to participate in the final

celebration because she was participating in a study abroad program in Brussels, Belgium. *Week 7* excerpts revealed much about Wit's lack of intercultural learning and intercultural sensitivity development. Wit linked her study abroad experience to course concepts in her final journal log but she did not demonstrate a high degree of *introspective reflection* or possess a *nonjudgmental outlook*:

**Wit:** *In my recent travel to Europe I participated in a course that's main purpose was to educate the American students on how to do Business in the EU... While this class [Brainpool Online] on cross-cultural communication further the understanding that it is important be aware of other cultures when doing business in other cultures Iwonder [sic] why it seems this responsibility is so one-sided. Is it because we are a higher-educated society? I stimulated a discussion on this past week and had numerous responses. I was actually surprised that one of my fellow students agreed with this viewpoint. The others pointed out that even if the other parties do not reciprocate the cultural awareness it is their duty as global citizen to make the effort.*

In addition, this excerpt revealed an ethnocentric mindset and a lack of *behavioral flexibility*. Wit did not learn to acknowledge, recognize, and reconcile cultural differences by accepting and adapting to local business practices. Obviously, Wit did not benefit from the online MBA course or progress along the intercultural continuum.

*Summary.* Wit solicited agreement from others, claimed that she was open-minded, and suggested that she valued multiple perspectives. While Wit used the Internet and demonstrated resourcefulness, she did not problematize cultural concepts or consider alternative view points. In the end, Wit found comfort in a more ethnocentric mindset as the IDI posttest score (71.92) shows that she regressed from Minimization to Denial/Defense.

The IDI pretest-posttest differences revealed that some of Wit's intercultural perspectives acquired at the end of the course differed from entering perspectives, while other perspectives remained nearly the same. The predominant themes that emerged from this analysis suggested a mixture of both positive and negative impacts on intercultural sensitivity development. For example, on one hand, Wit acknowledged the importance of resourcefulness and articulated a willingness to be open-minded. On the other hand, Wit jumped to conclusions, tended to stereotype, lacked course engagement, struggled with inclusive perspectives, and solicited agreement. Raising course expectations with a more structured point system could have been a solution for raising Wit's performance levels.

Consistent with the IDI profiles, I found little *actual* evidence of intercultural effectiveness in her data to suggest that she had *a genuine desire to connect* (Cornes' 1<sup>st</sup> category defined as a sincere, unambiguous curiosity coupled with a positive intent) or possessed *a nonjudgmental outlook* (Cornes' 8<sup>th</sup> category defined as the ability to observe different values and behaviors impartially). Rather, data suggested that Wit did not use *introspective reflection* (Cornes' 10<sup>th</sup> category defined as the ability to review and learn from experience), *behavioral flexibility* (Cornes' 7<sup>th</sup> category defined as the ability to vary behavior to meet different situations), or *humility* (Cornes' 9<sup>th</sup> category defined as a realistic appreciation of one's weaknesses and shortcomings). While Wit demonstrated *self-assurance and control* (Cornes' 3<sup>rd</sup> category defined as confidence and self-esteem), she provided very little evidence of intercultural effectiveness in her online text-based assignments. Despite a history of extensive intercultural experience and my attempts to probe and question her perspectives, Wit did not demonstrate an *ability to empathize with*

*another's viewpoint* (Cornes' 5<sup>th</sup> category defined as the desire to understand another's view of the world) or *sensory acuity* (Cornes' 4<sup>th</sup> category defined as the ability to notice fine distinctions in the sensory information that she received). At the conclusion of the online MBA course, Wit's IDI shift revealed a regression from low Minimization (85.19) to Denial/Defense (71.92) as well as a greater discrepancy between actual (DS) and perceived (PS) intercultural sensitivity which was consistent with the qualitative findings.

Wit began the course with an ethnocentric mindset and was an excellent candidate for greater intercultural sensitivity development. Unfortunately, the IDI posttest and qualitative evidence suggest that Wit did not benefit from the course content or develop greater intercultural sensitivity. It is possible, given a different time frame and fewer distractions and work responsibilities, Wit could have benefited more from the course if she was motivated to learn and desired to connect with others and was open to new ideas. Granted, this case study still points out the importance of a well-designed rubric to promote greater course engagement. Rubrics should incorporate points for punctuation and grammar, peer evaluations, introspective reflection in text-based assignments, and perceived course engagement by the instructor.

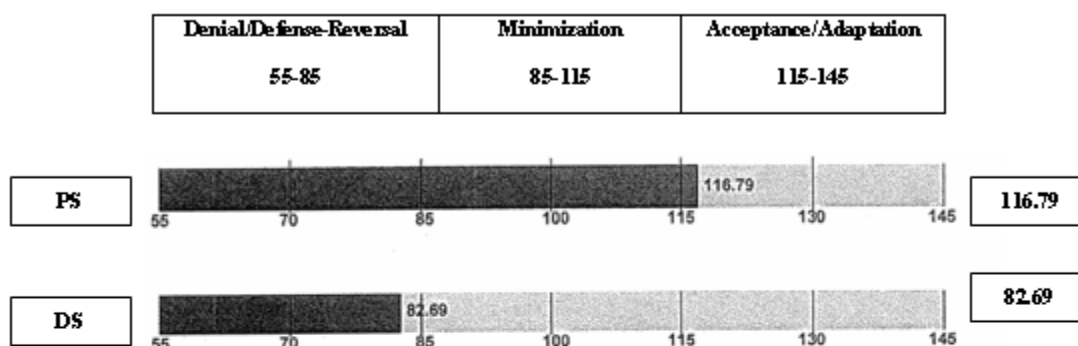
#### *Boston - Middle IDI Stage Shift*

Boston is a 37 year old European American female who worked for a beer company as a Marketing Manager in Boston, Massachusetts. As the only truly remote participant living out of state, Boston was not only challenged by geographical distance, but also by the breadth and depth of shared intercultural experience and cultural intelligence of her course colleagues. She demonstrated *a genuine desire to connect* (Cornes' 1<sup>st</sup> category defined as a sincere, unambiguous curiosity coupled with a positive

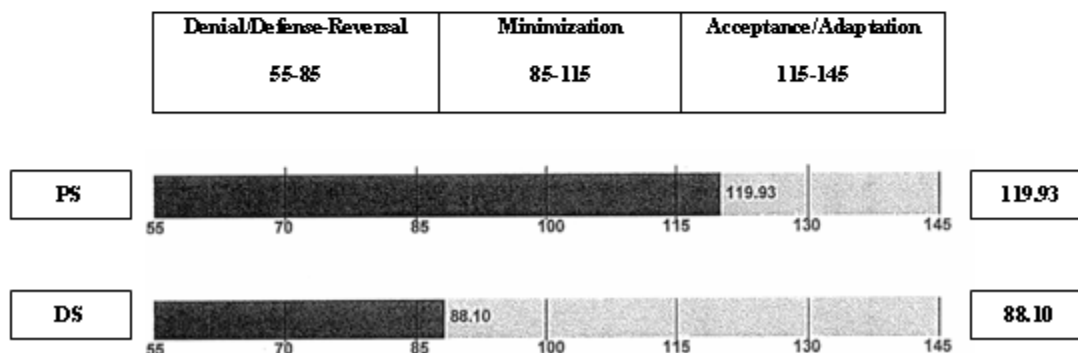
intent) and *an ability to empathize with another's viewpoint* (Cornes' 5<sup>th</sup> category defined as the desire to understand another's view of the world) with the majority of her statements consistently indicative of a Minimization mindset. She did not have prior global work experience and commented that although she "*worked fairly extensively with co-workers in Mexico, Germany and India*" she felt that other course participants had more authentic global work experience since they had lived in another country. Her previous five years employment with a Fortune 500 company was in the area of financial planning. She was a senior analyst and participated in the acquisition and integration of both Mexican and Indian businesses, but the major part of her professional work experience entailed a 2 -year post as a key team member for a German acquisition. She was recently hired by a Boston firm to assess where and how to expand the business on an international scale. Since she had recently relocated to Boston, she chose the name of her new adopted city as her pseudonym. Boston's interviews were conducted face-to-face in a coffee shop during weekend visits while she managed the sale of her home; she had one credit left to complete the MBA program and participated remotely from out of state. While she had taken an online course before, she was apprehensive about completing virtual teamwork from a distance. Her IDI pretest-posttest scores of 82.69 and 88.1 show that she progressed across one stage of development and narrowed the gap between PS and DS scores (see Figure 11). That is, IDI pretest-posttest gap differences were 44.10 at pretest and 31.83 at posttest. In addition, course management statistics confirmed that she authored 32 posts (the average being 34 posts) and read 245 posts (the average being 220).

Figure 11. *Boston's IDI Pretest-Posttest Profiles*

## PRETEST



## POSTTEST



*Week 1: Course Overview and Introduction.* Boston's first interview revealed her personal philosophy around cultural difference and demonstrated *humility* (Cornes' 9<sup>th</sup> category defined as a realistic appreciation of one's weaknesses and shortcomings) when she stated:

**Boston:** *In my personal and my professional life, I'm pretty open. I think one of the things that have been an ongoing challenge for me throughout my graduate studies...working in groups and teams, and I've found this [course] to be very similar. Just improving my skills about building trust,*

*letting go of control, those types of things have been an ongoing challenge for me and I think that this experience will add to that in a little different way.*

Boston was nervous about completing online coursework and shared her skepticism about teamwork and her abilities to complete the final team presentation due to her self-described “*control freak*” nature.

**Boston:** Even in doing team/group work in other courses the “control freak” in me wants to micro-manage the entire project. Well, this [is] not even an option from 1,100 miles away.

Boston’s recent relocation and new job responsibilities were overwhelming, but she maintained an optimistic attitude. She indicated in her course goals that she hoped to obtain skills that would contribute to effectively leading her new firm into the global market. Furthermore, she was doing an independent study in International Accounting Issues concurrently with the online MBA course and this long-term project would focus on doing a merger/acquisition in China from both a financial and cultural due diligence perspective.

She reported that the nature of the online course *design* and *delivery* format already had contributed to her intercultural learning:

**Boston:** *The feedback and interaction, as well as the ability to see other points of view are where a great deal of the [intercultural] learning is happening.*

She reported that she was developing a greater *ability to empathize with another’s viewpoint* (Cornes’ 5<sup>th</sup> category defined as the desire to understand another’s view of the world) through the text-based assignments. The weekly discussion posts, for example, allowed Boston to reflect on what others wrote and demonstrated that she was thinking

critically and analytically. These interactive activities required substantial synthesis, analysis, integration, and/or evaluation of other team members' perspectives. Even though Boston encountered some online technical difficulty in *Week 1* related to Internet connectivity at work, she completed her assignments on time. I was concerned about Internet access issues so I sent her a number of emails to ask if I could offer a solution; I wondered if she could post assignments from home or the library.

*Week 2: Communication in Multinational Organizations.* By *Week 2*, Boston became a more visible participant in the Discussion Board since she had resolved her Internet connectivity issues at work. She began to feel more comfortable with posting guidelines and compared herself with the spectrum of intercultural experiences to that of her peers: *"I have found more comfortable footing in recognizing that I am "somewhere in the middle."* In spite of herself, Boston had perceived that her cognitive orientation towards cultural difference was further along the intercultural continuum. Consistent with IDI profiles, her PS score, or perceived intercultural sensitivity, was beyond *"somewhere in the middle"* in low Acceptance at 116.79 at pretest and 119.25 at posttest. While 25 out of 38 participants began the online MBA course in Minimization, or *"somewhere in the middle,"* Boston was actually one out of nine participants who began the online MBA course at the low end of the spectrum with a pretest DS score, or actual developmental intercultural sensitivity, residing in Denial/Defense at 82.69.

My job as the instructor was to help Boston develop a greater appreciation for cultural difference and move her towards Minimization. For instance, Boston's Denial/Defense mindset would suggest that she would not even question whether a training program developed in the US for Americans might also work in China. I was



optimistic when Boston seemed to find comfort in universal traits, a characteristic of Minimization, which was found in her journal log:

**Boston:** *There was one portion of this week's reading requirement that struck a chord for me on several fronts. Specifically, the portion of the reading that interested me discussed universal leadership traits...flexibility, humor, patience, resourcefulness, respect...I certainly wish to put my best foot forward from day #1...As such, these qualities have considerable relevance to the relationships I am forging with members of my team.*

Consequently, at the Minimization stage, people believe that armed with a set of “universal” principles and good intentions, treating other people the same way that they would want to be treated is all that is required. What Boston did not realize up to this point was that others may not want to be treated necessarily the same way. For example, an American manager with a Minimization mindset might assume that because people are basically similar, employees who speak Mandarin and are physically similar are sufficient criteria for dealing successfully with prospective host country employees in China. While this worldview acknowledges culture and some cultural differences, it does not account for cultural specificity. That is, sending a Mandarin-speaking employee from Indonesia to work in China could actually result in more cultural misunderstanding. Similarly, an American manager with a Denial/Defense mindset, might assume that sending an employee without Mandarin-speaking skills to China was sufficient as long as the job was clear.

As Boston's instructor, then, it was important to guide her developmentally to Minimization before moving her on to Acceptance/Adaptation. Her sensitive and perceptive nature that were revealed in *Week 2's* text-based assignments (cross-cultural

application and journal log) suggested a degree of *emotional perceptiveness* (Cornes' 6<sup>th</sup> category defined as an awareness of one's own and others' emotional states).

For example, she wrote down her emerging thoughts and personal reflections as well as presented applications of course content:

**Boston:** *One thing that has crossed my mind is a curiosity about how different behavioral rules that might apply to verbal communications might be adapted for electronic types of communication. This is of interest to me as virtually 100% of my participation in this course will be electronic and remote. Electronic communication might take the form of either a live discussion (chat room) or email and bulletin board forms. Some of the aspects of verbal communication that might require adaptation for electronic protocols might include:*

- *Opening or closing portions of "conversations"*
- *How to take turns in sharing ideas*
- *Interrupting during "live" communication*
- *Using time or pauses as a substitute for silence as a communicative device*
- *Knowing appropriate topics of conversation and when humor is appropriate or inappropriate*
- *Understanding how to sequence or structure electronic communications*
- *How the use of stories and/or examples might add to or detract from the effectiveness of communication.*

*An unfamiliarity with communication style differences can lead to misinterpretation, misunderstanding and even unintentional insult. For example, one who shows little reserve in stating his or her feelings may be misperceived as hostile whereas they may see themselves as honest and willing to resolve differences.*

*I would suspect that the primary thing to recognize is that individuals have their own expectations about communicative behavior. By recognizing incongruencies that may exist between expectations and reality an individual can adjust to accommodate the differences in the communication norms of various individuals and cultural groups.*

This journal log shows that Boston balanced her attention to both rational and emotional factors. Her ability to “read” people and recognize how differences could impact expectations suggests that she also possessed an understanding of the Acceptance/Adaptation mindset. In Acceptance/Adaptation, individuals are known for their ability to shift easily into and out of the dominant worldview, thus demonstrating a high degree of *behavioral flexibility* (Cornes’ 7<sup>th</sup> category defined as an ability to vary behavior to meet situations), which Boston alluded to in this excerpt.

*Week 3: Cross-Cultural Value Dimensions.* In *Week 3’s Backstage Dress Rehearsal Discussion Area* Boston praised her team members for tasks that were well executed. For example, Boston complimented William who stepped up to post “*THE FINAL PROJECT COORDINATION*”:

**Boston:** *Awesome job (or wicked” awesome job, as they would say here in Boston!) on the Project Management...*

After William took control of the team project and began to delegate tasks, her self-described tendency to be a “*control freak*” began to disappear as she reported in her journal log:

**Boston:** *My trust level has really risen the last 7 days. Building a sense of trust and community is so vital to this effort.*

Boston continued to find comfort in universal leadership traits and seemed to be moving solidly into Minimization. She often complimented team members for particularly substantial posts and “*tend[ed] to gravitate*” towards certain team members who resonated common experience and provoked similar sentiments:

**Boston:** *I was a little more reserved in the beginning and as I’ve gotten to know the writing styles and the subject matters of some of my team members have taken up, I know*

*the ones [the posts] that I want to read. And I know the ones that haven't really provoked my thoughts and I've enjoyed some of the people that have responded to mine. I kind of feel like ok, it's kind of like being at a cocktail party where this person was kind of interesting and this one didn't have too much to say...*

In another interview excerpt, Boston provided an example of how team members contributed to transforming her perspectives about intercultural work assignments:

**Boston:** *I think maybe some of my team members have had some really excellent cross-cultural experiences that I have not had so I found that really interesting. It kind of sparked my desire that if I do have an opportunity at some point in my career to maybe venture down that way, if I have an opportunity to distribute our product in China for example, I might sign up for something like that. And I'm not sure if I would have been so anxious to raise my hand for something like that.*

*Design and delivery* themes emerged in *Week 3* when she referred to the online learning environment as a “cocktail party” and as a “foreign country.” Boston believed that the intentionally “interactive” design of the online MBA course was a bonus:

**Boston:** *The lack of on-going, face-to-face interactions and relationships requires a more conscious effort to participate fully than would otherwise be required.*

She suggested that new and different communication behaviors not otherwise utilized in everyday face-to-face interactions were needed for this “foreign” electronic medium which could help to foster greater intercultural sensitivity, or *behavioral flexibility* (Cornes’ 7<sup>th</sup> category defined as the ability to vary behavior to meet situations).

Boston continued to demonstrate *behavioral flexibility* (Cornes’ 7<sup>th</sup> category defined as the ability to vary behavior to meet situations) as participants in *Week 3* were required to respond to a Universalism vs. Particularism case study:

A client wants to create a universal Order of Remittance system that would be the same in all of its far-flung divisions around the world. It purchases the best software package from a world leader and hires a consulting group to design the roll out and implementation of the program. It is obvious to the US managers in the US home office that there is great value in a universal system. Divisions around world will take orders and enter the data in the same way with the same system. As the product is built and shipped, it will not matter where in the world it is made or where in the world it is to be shipped, an instant record of its status will be available. The goal of the project is to ship the product and have an instant record of the invoice that is sent to the customer. The remittance status will be tracked instantaneously. How do you think this project will fare?

The activity required that participants explain their answer by integrating the ideas garnered from one of the readings and address the following questions: How is this case study relevant to the course content? What are the cultural dimensions reflected in the case study and how is the problem or solution related to cross-cultural communication? What did you learn from doing this activity that you didn't know before? Do you have any recommendations on how to improve the case study activity? Her *Week 3* post addressed the questions and exceeded word limits:

**Boston:** *The case study selected for module three (3) discusses a parent company's desire (presumably U.S.) to roll out a universal order processing system to its foreign branches and subsidiaries. The implied objective is to reconcile any cultural differences and obstacles that might be encountered in order to maximize business wealth. The case is relevant to the course content as it asks the student/business person to consider the impact of the decision-making process, the communication of the decided course of action, and the actual system implementation. As such it contains all three (3) aspects of cultural meaning: things (the system), actions (decision-making process and communication of decision), and behaviors (actual roll-out). As technology has made the business world a much "smaller" place, it is likely that each of us will, in our careers if we have not already, encounter situations in which we must function in a multi-cultural environment. And, in fact, on [sic] of the most likely scenarios will be in the area of system implementations. The case takes into account several of the seven linear dimensions of cultural*

*modeling. The most obvious is that of universalism versus particularism. That is, the extent to which the parent company can exploit economies of scale using a standardized, universal system will be equally dependent upon system usage. Enough user flexibility must be allowed in order to encourage users to work on the system so that benefits of efficiency, consistency and accuracy can be realize[sic]. On a more subtle level, the case situation can be used to illustrate that the project's success or failure may depend upon the foreign divisions' value for individualism versus communitarism. For example, a culture in which communitarism has a high value may accept the new system "for the good of the company" more readily than a culture who values individualism. An individualistic culture may view the new system as a threat or insult to their already established way of doing things. Finally, the extent to which the new system facilitates sequential order processing versus synchronic order processing and the level to which this coincides with the values of the foreign branch office will also impact the likelihood of a successful systems roll-out. For example, should the new system constrain the user to a sequential task structure when the user is more accustomed to and prefers multi-tasking, the implementations success could be compromised. The new learning that came out of this week's reading for me and was further clarified by the case was that a theoretical model existed that could have such practical application. I would suspect that those more active in the M&A field would have more knowledge of such models. With regards to the case study activity, I think that it is a good learning tool for students to connect theory to a practical application. My only suggestion for improvement might be to choose a case with more substance and request a practical solution using the theoretical models studied.*

Boston provided evidence of *introspective reflection* (Cornes' 10<sup>th</sup> category defined as the ability to review and learn from experience) and fully addressed the questions for this case study application exercise. She also demonstrated a deeper understanding of the Universalism vs. Particularism framework which suggests the utility of application exercises to promote coherent intercultural learning experiences.

*Week 4: Brainpool Online/China.* Another indication of Boston's intercultural sensitivity development was in *Week 4*, when she thought "outside the box" and offered an alternative explanation for the case study business application:

**Boston:** *Like several classmates did, I utilized the Internet to research the symbolic meaning of the star in Chinese cultures. Unlike my classmates, however, I found some very different interpretations of the meaning of the star. Whereas their research led them to conclude that the project launch would fail, my research led me to a different conclusion.*

I was pleased with Boston's analysis and found her response to be indicative of a mindset characteristic of Acceptance/Adaptation. Such an individual would go out of their way to form multicultural teams and would recognize the value of hiring a native speaker to conduct the translation. Boston recognized that there was a multitude of possible translations by a non-native speaker:

**Boston:** *The case scenario did not specify whether the logo in question was a 5-point, a 7-point, or a 9-point star, but either way the conclusion is the same. I will start with the most commonly represented star, the 5-point star, or pentagram. The 5 different points are thought to symbolize the elements of earth, air, fire, water, and the spirit that gives life. As such, it is interpreted to mean divine life or good health. This would be a very positive message for a pharmaceutical company. Also, the Chinese flag has 5 stars on it, one large and 4 smaller ones. They are all pentacles. The one large star is said to represent the People's Communist Party, and the 4 smaller stars are interpreted to represent the 4 other allowed political parties, or the "Chinese people". As such, the choice of a 4-star logo by the pharmaceutical company might send a marketing message a medication for the people. As I previously mentioned, 7-point stars are another Chinese symbol, also with a positive interpretation. It can be loosely translated as the unity of the people. The points might represent the 7 elements, or the 7 directions (N, S, E, W, above, below, within (self)). The number 7 is symbolically lucky as it is the number of chakras, the number of planets, and the*

*days in a week. The 9-point star can be translated to be the unity of the 9-worlds. Again, the message of unity, when a foreign company is doing business in China, is not a bad message. I guess the importance of symbolism is relative to the strength and prevalence of its message. Clearly, there are many interpretations of the 4-star logo.*

Again, an individual in Denial/Defense would assume that a good product would be recognized by everyone, regardless of culture and may not even question a literal translation. On the other hand, an individual in Minimization would place undue emphasis on the language skills of a prospective host country employee and therefore assume that because people are basically similar, the only difference would be the language. In other words, this individual would assume that sending a Mandarin-speaking Chinese from the US or Singapore to Beijing where the product was being launched would be a sufficient criteria for success. An individual in Acceptance/Adaptation would recognize that a local native speaker from Beijing would be the most effective. My reply to Boston following her *Week 4* analysis was this:

**SSW:** *Wow [Boston] ... You have uncovered that symbology and numerology are concepts to be considered cross-culturally. Your research "points" out that the Star can be very useful in conveying "good health." However, it is the number selection, and whether the star is designed as a pentacle, that clearly will predict whether the pharmaceutical manufacturer will have a winner or a loser. Nice analysis.*

Several participants, like Boston, concluded that the 4-Star Plus marketing campaign could work if a local native speaker was hired to conduct the translation. For example, in Mandarin Chinese, as Boston indicated, the star connotes a positive meaning as being bright, shining, and healthy. Unfortunately, the Mandarin Chinese symbol for “4” also means death and the plus sign itself looks like the number ten, which is pronounced as



"Shi", which also sounds very similar to the word "death". While these facts could lead a marketing VP to conclude that "4 star plus" literally means "death star plus" the campaign could still be successful. For example, another word or phrase that would have the same general meaning (perhaps without the word "Si") could have been chosen by a local native speaker to represent the logo. An Indonesian participant shared this alternative perspective which was consistent with Boston's analysis:

**Isabel:** *When the English words are literally translated to Mandarin, it won't have the same meaning as the original name, and vice versa... If the company would like to maintain its original name, they could put the words 4-star plus in a smaller font next to its company logo, so some of its American customers who live in China may still recognize its products.*

There were several examples of Boston's ability to critically reflect upon her assumptions and her data were rich with thick descriptions. It appeared that she took great care in crafting her discussion posts. Yet, in Boston's second interview she indicated that she spent about three and a half hours a week completing her assignments:

**Boston:** *I've been pleasantly surprised that I've been able to keep up with this class. I fell a little bit behind the week I was moving and starting my new job but it's been very manageable. I basically have said ok tonight I'm going to do my two postings and tonight I'm going to do this. So it's been half an hour here and hour there, it's been very manageable for me.*

For a one-credit elective class, Boston's time commitment was not extraordinary. Her text-based assignments revealed substantial relevant content that was both highly introspective and indicative of a higher degree of course engagement.

By *Week 4*, Boston recognized that the American way of doing things would not necessarily work the same across cultural borders:

**Boston:** *This case demonstrates an “unconscious arrogance” that American business people sometimes fall into. We seem to have a sense that our ways of doing things are so superior to those in other cultures that of course they will translate.*

She realized that the American way of doing business, was not the only way to do business and that universal business principles could not be assumed. For example, she learned that sending an American manager to China with a clear understanding of the job and language skills were not sufficient criteria for success. If a manager thinks people are basically the same, it is likely that a manager will overestimate adapting to the local culture and the Chinese employees will actually be the ones who are doing all the adapting. Therefore, managers with Acceptance/Adaptation mindsets go out of their way to recruit and retain employees who are culturally diverse, thus forming multicultural teams. Boston began to realize that managers in Acceptance/Adaptation would treat employees from different cultures differently without being patronizing. In terms of cultural difference, a Denial/Defense mindset considers cultural difference to be threatening while in Acceptance/Adaptation a renewed recognition of difference moves away from Minimization and associates cultural differences with curiosity and more specificity.

*Week 5: Cross-Cultural Value Dimensions – Part II.* For the *Week 5* learning activity participants were asked to describe a personal situation that required them to reconcile cultural differences. For this assignment participants evaluated their behavior and explained how their understanding of their own cultural orientations helped them to communicate more effectively. Boston referenced her previous job experience which required that she reconciled cultural differences on a continuous basis. Boston shared:

**Boston:** *The specific versus diffuse relationship values became very apparent when working closely for long periods of time with our German team members. Regardless of how long and closely we worked, air of formality was maintained. First names were not used (for almost a year!) and despite the long hours, including nights and weekends that we collaborated, the cloak of privacy about personal matters remained raised. This was very much in contrast with the familiarity and informality that developed among the American members of the team. Over time it also became abundantly clear that the German company we had acquired accorded status on the basis of age, seniority, and education rather than achievements and ability. This was very different from the parent company, the company I belonged to. This company took achievement-oriented status to a whole new level. Prior achievement was not even enough; it was “what have you done for me today and what will you do tomorrow”, forget about the past, it’s gone. I think that there were both positive and negative ways things about the way I approached this situation. At first, I found myself mimicking the German formality, thinking that they might feel more comfortable with me if I did. But as time passed, I began to realize that I had become more and more uncomfortable and, in turn, was bringing some tenseness to our team. I later adjusted my style to something that respected the German style, but stayed true to my own. With regard to ascribed status versus achieved status, it became a matter of patience. In the beginning, I have to admit I harbored some resentment for senior team members who just could not contribute or deliver. But I finally stepped back and realized that eventually the parent company’s culture was going to catch up with them and the seeming “double standards” would eventually become one.*

By *Week 5*, Boston had demonstrated that she was capable of *behavioral flexibility*

(Cornes’ 7<sup>th</sup> category defined as the ability to vary behavior to meet different situations)

and also emphasized the importance of the *ability to empathize with another’s viewpoint*

(Cornes’ 5<sup>th</sup> category defined as the desire to understand another’s view of the world).

She went on to say in the Discussion Board:

**Boston:** *The more you understand about a culture's value dimensions, the more open you are to integrating it with your own. Equally clear to me, however is how a classroom experience is no comparison or substitute for a real world experience.*

She later shared with a team member, *"I completely empathized with your experience"* and reflected upon characteristics representative of Acceptance/Adaptation:

**Boston:** *In my opinion it is very difficult for a global corporate culture to "make" their employees more sensitive to cross-cultural [sic] dimensions. However, what they can do is to hire individuals with positive attitudes and aptitudes. These individuals will not only be skilled employees but persons committed to self-awareness and self-management. They will become role models for adaptability, self-controls, conscientiousness and reliability. Without a doubt this is a slow and evolutionary process.*

*Week 6: Global Manifest Destiny.* Boston exhibited an increased desire to pursue intercultural encounters based on what she learned from her team members' experiences which she operationalized as *"I might sign up for something like that."* Boston was easy-going, open-minded, and empathetic towards her team members and exhibited traits of Acceptance/Adaptation. She reached out to others when help was needed and demonstrated *a genuine desire to connect* (Cornes' 1<sup>st</sup> category defined as a sincere, unambiguous curiosity coupled with a positive intent):

**Boston:** *[Jamie]: I am responsible for Part 3 of the presentation, which I have in a Word document, but PowerPoint is not working on my home laptop. Would you be able to do a little cutting and pasting into the PowerPoint file for me? If not, I will get it in first thing Monday morning. [Boston]*

In addition, she linked her work experience to the *Week 6* assignment and discussed cultural difference as it related to corporate culture and raised the issue of *behavioral flexibility* (Cornes'7<sup>th</sup> category defined as the ability to vary behavior to meet situations):

**Boston:** *I have recently found myself in a situation in which the corporate culture of the company I work for suits the industry but not necessarily the geography. I work for the Boston Beer Company and our offices are in downtown Boston. Downtown Boston is very professional in dress, punctuality, hours worked. The beer industry is just the opposite. We wear shorts and flip flops, start work any time between 8 and 10, it doesn't really matter, and meetings are spontaneous, start late, or both. It has been interesting to watch co-workers merge these different cultures when they need to do business with outside auditors, investment bankers, outside analysts, etc*

In her final journal log, the feedback tool I designed as a “personal space” where participants privately shared their emerging thoughts with me via email, she gleaned universal lessons from the online MBA course experience which placed her solidly in Minimization:

**Boston:** *I guess the lesson is one that can be applied on a larger scale: people are generally good and generally desire a good outcome. We would all like to be successful in this course and we will all work at our best to achieve success. I think this is a notion that can be applied to global business relationships. No matter how far apart we might seem at times, we really want the same thing: a mutually beneficial deal and relationship.*

*Week 7: Debriefing Session and Course Wrap-Up.* Boston was also unable to attend the *Week 7* debriefing session (like Wit) but she did meet with me after the conclusion of the course to conduct her final interview. She revealed *design* and *delivery* themes related to the freedom and flexibility of participating in the online MBA course:

**Boston:** *One thing I've really enjoyed about this class is that the dates and times that postings were required, were*

*fairly open. When I took that hybrid class, it was do this by this hour on this day and the next day do it...I mean, I felt like I couldn't manage that. I couldn't sit down and do everything on one day if that was what my schedule was like. So I liked the freedom.*

Her remote participant status also made her feel isolated from her team members:

**Boston:** *I was kind of feeling like the odd person out, that even though there were pictures online, I didn't feel like I knew these people. And like the picture wasn't enough to connect me with them. And I didn't know what they sounded like and what they...I don't know, I just really felt like the odd person out. I didn't want to feel foolish because of that.*

Despite the geographic distance and perceived isolation as a remote participant, Boston used various coping strategies to reach out to team members and overcome anxiety related to virtual teamwork. The themes that were discovered in Boston's data included her abilities to maintain an optimistic attitude and open mind towards online learning, as well as demonstrate empathy, exhibit an increased desire to pursue cross-cultural encounters, and find comfort in universal traits.

*Summary.* Boston was open-minded and sought multiple perspectives yet tended to gravitate to team members with similar Minimization-like perspectives. While she exhibited some traits in Acceptance/Adaptation, her IDI pretest-posttest profiles indicated that she had progressed from Denial/Defense to Minimization. She demonstrated resourcefulness and problematized cultural concepts as well as considered alternative view points. However, Boston found comfort “*somewhere in the middle*” and was not able to stretch herself developmentally towards Acceptance/Adaptation. Her DS posttest score (88.1) placed her in low Minimization (the score range being 85-115) while her PS posttest score (119.93) placed her in low Acceptance/Adaptation (the score range being

115-145). This DS and PS discrepancy suggests that more work was needed in the area of acknowledging, recognizing, and reconciling cultural differences since Boston's perceptions towards cultural differences differed from actual cognitive development. However, given more time and further instruction, it is possible that Boston could have resolved her Minimization issues as she possessed a more flexible cognitive orientation and was inclined toward greater development.

Several intercultural effectiveness categories and online learning environment design and delivery themes were found to impact Boston's intercultural sensitivity development. For example, Boston acknowledged that working in the online learning environment required more of a conscious effort to forge relationships and make connections. She suggested that her learning was the result of active involvement and the activities encouraged her to uncover and apply many of the intercultural concepts through self-management. She was open-minded and more seriously engaged in the course and possessed a *nonjudgmental outlook* (Cornes' 8<sup>th</sup> category defined as the ability to observe different values and behaviors impartially). Her data revealed that she possessed *humility* (Cornes' 9<sup>th</sup> category defined as a realistic appreciation of one's weaknesses and shortcomings), *introspective reflection* (Cornes' 10<sup>th</sup> category defined as the ability to review and learn from experience), and *behavioral flexibility* (Cornes' 7<sup>th</sup> category defined as the ability to vary behavior to meet different situations). While Boston possessed less *self-assurance and control* (Cornes' 3<sup>rd</sup> category defined as confidence and self-esteem) than Wit at the beginning of the course, Boston's data was richer with more evidence of intercultural effectiveness categories in online text-based assignments. Not only did Boston demonstrate an *ability to empathize with another's viewpoint*

(Cornes' 5<sup>th</sup> category defined as the desire to understand another's view of the world), but she also demonstrated *sensory acuity* (Cornes' 4<sup>th</sup> category defined as the ability to notice fine distinctions in the sensory information one receives), and balanced both rational and emotional factors in her text-based assignments through *emotional perceptiveness* (Cornes' 6<sup>th</sup> category defined as an awareness of one's own and other's emotional states). At the conclusion of the online MBA course, Boston's IDI stage shift revealed a progression from Denial/Defense (82.69) to Minimization (88.1) despite a discrepancy between actual (DS) and perceived (PS) intercultural sensitivity development.

Boston began the course with an ethnocentric mindset in Denial/Defense, and like Wit, was an excellent candidate for developing greater intercultural sensitivity. The IDI posttest and qualitative evidence suggest that Boston benefited from the online MBA course. This case study points out the importance of using text-based assignments in a highly interactive online learning environment to promote intercultural effectiveness categories, such as *behavioral flexibility* (Cornes 7<sup>th</sup> category defined as the ability to vary behavior to meet different situations and *introspective reflection* (Cornes 10<sup>th</sup> category defined as the ability to review and learn from experience). The journal logs, weekly discussion posts, current cross-cultural connection, case study analysis, and cross-cultural business application exercises were designed to help Boston develop an empathetic understanding of diversity through virtual teamwork. The active learning, peer cooperation, diverse learning opportunities, and my promptness of feedback through the weekly journal logs and discussion posts contributed to her intercultural learning.



*Zim - Highest IDI Stage Shift*

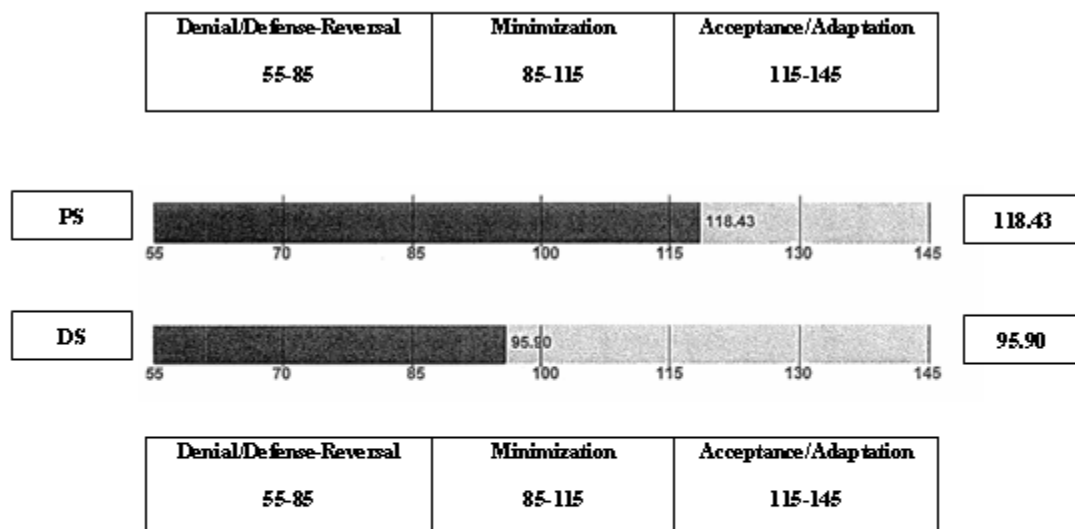
Zim is a 21 year old European American female who worked as an intern at a public accounting firm. She was the youngest participant enrolled in the online MBA course and was highly conscientious, helpful, and always went beyond the stated requirements in the course. She had prior global study experience but no prior online course experience. However, while she studied abroad in the Czech Republic in 2003, she was required to complete a project with a group of American and Czech students using both Internet and face-to-face communication. Since she found it to be the most frustrating team project that she was ever assigned, due to communication difficulties and cultural differences, she enrolled in this online MBA course to develop better skills for working in situations where cultural differences existed. From the onset, Zim expressed a desire to learn more effective ways of communicating cross-culturally as well as develop a better understanding of other cultures. Her *self knowledge* and *humility* (Cornes' 2<sup>nd</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> categories defined as knowledge of one's strengths and blind spots especially with regard to interpersonal communication and a realistic appreciation of one's weaknesses and shortcomings) served her well throughout the seven weeks, and she also exhibited a high degree of *introspective reflection* (Cornes' 10<sup>th</sup> category defined as the ability to review and learn from experience). She utilized her self described strengths, "*strong research and writing skills*" and volunteered to become team editor for the final team presentation.

The IDI pretest-posttest analysis shows that Zim progressed in intercultural sensitivity development from 95.90 in Minimization to 130.54 in Acceptance/Adaptation

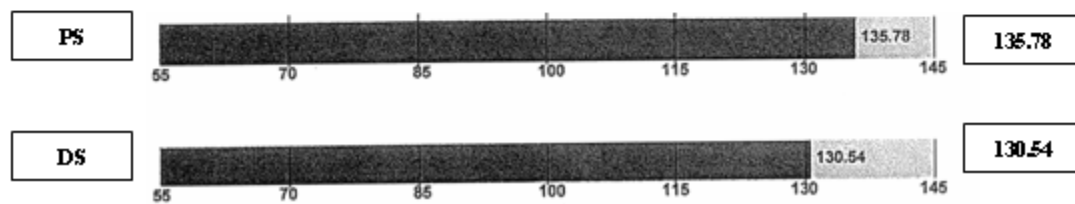
(see Figure 12). In addition, she authored 40 posts (the average being 34 posts) and read 260 posts (the average being 220).

Figure 12. *Zim's IDI Pretest-Posttest Profiles*

### PRETEST



### POSTTEST



*Week 1: Course Overview and Introduction.* Participants in *Week 1's* face-to-face meeting reviewed the syllabus and learned the details for completing the major course project. Participants were randomly assigned to Brainpool Online teams. These teams were required to create and submit a final team presentation in *Week 6* choosing a country of their choice. Team 1 chose India and Team 2 chose Brazil. More detail is provided on this final team presentation because Zim emerged as a leader and volunteered to become the team editor.

The project had two parts; a PowerPoint presentation and a reflective group paper. Teams were to include the following information: (1) distinguishing cultural dimensions (2) an example of how these differences affect how business is conducted (3) strengths and weakness of doing business in this culture and (4) references used. They were required to answer the following questions:

- How are the cultural dimensions similar or different from the United States? What needs to be known in order to conduct business in the culture?
- List the characteristics of the culture—What do we know? What do we need to know?
- Do a brief culture analysis—What is important to know? What are the unique characteristics of the culture?
- How can we learn more about this culture? List resources, references, and other pertinent information that you collected for your final case study.

In addition, participants were required to submit a 5 page group paper (double-spaced/12 pt.) that (1) identified the cross-cultural communication business principles relevant to the culture (2) described the implications for doing business in that specific country, and (3) revealed how the cross-cultural communication findings impacted their current thinking and transformed the way they would do business in that culture. As team editor, Zim was responsible for editing the final team presentation and ensuring that the paper met appropriate guidelines prior to submission.

Zim's team chose India for the final team presentation and she quickly responded with resources and Internet links to use for the Brainpool Online/ India team outline. During the team collaboration process, Zim also volunteered to assist in research efforts

and proved to be a valuable resource in the Discussion Board. She frequently sought feedback and asked for clarification of concepts “*That is very interesting information in your post-I’m already learning so much more about India. However, what is the G8?*” Her *genuine desire to connect* (Cornes’ 1<sup>st</sup> category defined as a sincere, unambiguous curiosity coupled with a positive intent) was evident in *Week 1*.

Zim expressed in her first interview that she brought to the online MBA course strong written communication and research skills. She felt that being the youngest participant in most of her prior MBA face-to-face classes often made her feel self-conscious about sharing her points of view. She also elaborated on online learning environment themes (*design*) in her first journal log and wrote that the online MBA course “*could be very beneficial for learning and give more people the opportunity to share their views.*” The online learning environment clearly provided Zim with more *self-assurance and control* (Cornes’ 3<sup>rd</sup> category defined as confidence and self-esteem) than she claimed she otherwise would have experienced in traditional face-to-face MBA courses. She stated in the first interview that her young age (21), lack of public speaking experience, and shyness (in general) had precluded her from participating in face-to-face MBA class discussions. Yet, her journal log demonstrated high degrees of *introspective reflection* (Cornes’ 10<sup>th</sup> category defined as the ability to review and learn from experience) and course engagement. Zim suggested in her interview that the discussion areas gave her “voice” and the journal log provided her with a more coherent learning experience by linking reflection to course content and back to her life experience.

As described in Chapter One, participants emailed weekly journal logs in the form of attached Word Documents to which I provided prompt, personal, and private feedback

through emails called Journal Log Responses. I downloaded these Word Documents to my computer, inserted my comments in **bold** in the body of the text, resaved them, and emailed them back to participants within 24 hours. The journal logs, and my responses to them, were used to gauge participants' intercultural sensitivity development and deliver personal communications.

For the first time in case study development, I use examples of this feedback tool to show how I used them to stimulate further reflection and move participants along the intercultural continuum. Essentially, I integrated my feedback into participants' journal log text. These are used here to illustrate this instructional delivery method and provide examples of Zim's high degree of *introspective reflection* (Cornes' 10<sup>th</sup> category defined as the ability to review and learn from experience). I surmised that consistent and individual feedback through these journal log responses led to greater intercultural sensitivity development particularly when participants, like Zim, implemented my feedback and demonstrated that they were seriously engaged in the course. Zim's voice is in *italics* and my feedback is in **bold** and in [brackets]:

[Hi [Zim],  
**You've done a great job "getting" in there and collaborating with your colleagues.]** *This class sounds very interesting and like it will be a good experience. I am excited that it is online because it would be difficult for me to take a class with work during the summer. I am also interested in how class participation is changed because I think it is much easier to participate when you have time to think out and type what you're going to say. I think this could be very beneficial for learning and give more people the opportunity to share their views. [This is an excellent point as you will find that critical reflection is the key to understanding the "transformative" process that will occur as your mental models and cognitive frameworks are challenged by different sets of cultural assumptions.]* *The topic of the course also will be very*

*interesting and beneficial to our learning experience as MBA students. In other classes, (in undergrad), I felt teachers frequently skipped over sections in the book about international topics. This seems foolish with the number of us that are bound to do some work overseas. At the public accounting firm I am currently interning at employees can apply for international rotations for anywhere from 6 months to 2 years. I hope to do this someday and feel that this class will be beneficial and applicable to this situation.*

**[This is an excellent opportunity to acquire a worldview that is more multidimensional. I hope that you can get a work rotation and apply what you learn in this course. Over the next several weeks, try to focus more on cultural differences rather than highlighting cultural commonalities and universal values. This will allow you to develop a worldview that can comprehend and accommodate to complex cultural differences.]**

Online learning environment themes were prevalent in Zim's journal log data. She hoped to apply for an international rotation in the future and she felt that the online MBA course "*will be beneficial and applicable to the situation.*" She was intrigued by the potential for the online MBA course to create a greater opportunity to express different viewpoints without one feeling inhibited. She also expressed that "*it is much easier to participate when you have time to think out and type what you're going to say.*" I noted these design themes in my instructor/researcher journal: 1) online text-based assignments help Zim articulate her points more thoughtfully, 2) Zim is more seriously engaged in the course because she can express her points of view more freely, and 3) Zim prefers to write down her thoughts rather than say them aloud in a face-to-face classroom.

*Week 2: Communication in Multinational Organizations.* By Week 2, Zim had demonstrated an ability to consider alternative viewpoints and presented controversial points of view in the Discussion Board: "*I chose to discuss the growth of biotechnology*

*in India and the country's devotion to religion."* Zim clearly linked cultural concepts to prior knowledge and critically reflected on course assignments in the Discussion Board:

**Zim:** *I know personally in these last couple of weeks I've thought about this more when I meet people that are of a different culture or hear something on the news, I think about things I learned in class. Especially people from like India or something like that because I learned so much about India.*

She commented to her team members that the cross-cultural application exercises provided valuable intercultural lessons:

**Zim:** *I saw how we must overcome cultural barriers before being successful in another country. I was also amazed by how much growth is expected in India and would recommend that business in India be conducted with respect for the country's devotion to religion.*

In addition, Zim's *Week 2* journal log indicated a high degree of *introspective reflection* (Cornes' 10<sup>th</sup> category defined as the ability to review and learn from experience) by stating that she had "*never really thought*" about the impact religious issues had on Indian business practices. My feedback in **bold** and in [brackets]:

[Hi [Zim],  
**Continue to focus on the process that is unfolding as you participate in the course. What are your thoughts, feelings, and reflections about the collaborations and connections that you are making with your Brainpool team members as you participate in this online learning environment? What's working and what's not? Keep synthesizing the course content as you have done here and make it applicable to your experience by describing how it has changed your perspective.]** *In this module of the course I learned a little about doing business in India. I knew that there are cultural barriers to doing business in another country, but I never really thought that religion would be a primary barrier. [Did your research also uncover how the caste system may affect business*

**practices?]** *I assume this is because in the United States, business and religion are separate for the most part. Religion is rarely discussed and does not usually have an influence on how the business is conducted. [What do you mean by this statement? Are you referring to the day-to-day operations? Do you think enforcing national religious holidays, like Christmas, affects how business is conducted?]* *Therefore, I was surprised to learn that in India religion has a large impact on every part of life. [Did you learn about the impact of religion through collaboration with your colleagues or by doing your own research? How do you think the collaboration with your colleagues contributed to this new perspective? Do you think religion is something that you would feel comfortable discussing with your Brainpool colleagues?]* *The postings in our discussion area thus far have mainly focused on outsourcing, which I recognize as an important aspect of our business education. I also think it will be beneficial to be studying this country because we may likely work there or work with someone from India that works for our company or firm. I would like to learn more about how the outsourcing of American businesses to India has affected the country's culture. [There is a local company that has outsourced all their customer service to India. Maybe next semester we can offer a Brainpool/India course and tap into it for guest expert content (?).]*

Several phrases such as “*I never really thought*”, “*I was surprised to learn*”, and “*I recognize as an important part*” were indicative of *introspective reflection* (Cornes’ 10<sup>th</sup> category defined as an ability to review and learn from experience). She also demonstrated in this journal log that she possessed a cultural curiosity and would like “*to learn more about*” cultural differences in relation to American outsourcing. This comment suggested that Zim had *the ability to empathize with another’s viewpoint* (Cornes 6<sup>th</sup> category defined as a desire to understand another’s view of the world).

*Week 3: Cross-Cultural Value Dimensions – Part I. Week 3’s journal log, with my feedback in bold, continued to demonstrate that Zim critically reflected on her*



assumptions and applied the course concepts to prior intercultural learning. She demonstrated that she possessed a high degree of *introspective reflection* (Cornes' 10<sup>th</sup> category defined as the ability to review and learn from experience):

**[Hi [Zim],**

**Your case study analysis was well thought-out and executed and I'm glad that you found its application relevant to the course material. Case study analysis in the business world is essential and given the parameters of a one-credit class it is important to operationalize some of these concepts. Of course, my goal is to expose you to a variety of venues and experiences. Continue to make connections with your colleagues and have fun as you formalize your tasks for the final case study.]**

*This week's module brought more application of what we are learning. I thought the reading was interesting and valuable by presenting many different ways of dealing with cultural differences. The difficulties presented in developing international products made me think about how many of our products come from foreign countries and how we would not accept a product that did not fit all of our needs. I was also not aware that certain nations are classified as "universalistic" or "particularistic" as the case study labeled the United States and India as opposites.*

**[Where do you think you fit on the continuum? Could you rate yourself on the various dimensions?]** *I have to wonder how so many companies have been successful selling products internationally. I am curious to know which companies use a particularistic approach and which use a universalistic approach and the numbers of successful companies in each category. I definitely now recognize that implementing international products is even more difficult than I once thought. This module also made me think about how when I was in the Czech Republic that I was surprised by how all the writing in their cars (on the radio and dashboard) is in English, even though it was a foreign car. This was surprising to me because my host's dad picked us up and he did not speak a word of English, yet "compromised" to have English writing on this stereo.*

**[I'm curious if you found it comforting to see those English words in a foreign land? Did it surprise you or take away from the authenticity of being outside the United States?]**

Again, a high degree of *introspective reflection* (Cornes' 10<sup>th</sup> category defined as the ability to review and learn from experience) was evidenced by Zim's curiosity and ability to question cultural values and assumptions with such phrases as "*I have to wonder*", "*I am curious to know*", "*this made me think*", and "*I was surprised.*"

*Week 4: Brainpool Online/China.* Zim's interviews and Discussion Board posts in *Week 4* revealed further *introspective reflection* (Cornes' 10<sup>th</sup> category defined as the ability to review and learn from experience) that contributed to greater cognitive complexity and perspective taking. The assignment in *Week 4* was to examine a pharmaceutical marketing campaign for the 4-Star Plus product. During this week's activities, Zim entertained team members' ideas and put them into a context so others could fully appreciate their value and contribution to cultural understanding.

**Zim:** *Your idea to have the label translated once and then translated back is a very good idea, especially for a pharmaceutical product that most likely has directions for use. I can imagine that the company would be in a lot of trouble if "take one pill three times daily" was translated as "take three pills one time daily."*

This was also indicative of a *nonjudgmental outlook* (Cornes' 8<sup>th</sup> category defined as the ability to observe different values and behaviors impartially), *sensory acuity* (Cornes' 4<sup>th</sup> category defined as the ability to notice fine distinctions in the sensory information one receives), and *behavioral flexibility* (Cornes' 7<sup>th</sup> category defined as the ability to vary behavior to meet different situations). First, she accepted her team member's idea as plausible, then, she took the information, re-analyzed and presented it in an entirely different way so that other team members could relate to it, and finally, she emphasized the importance of understanding translation nuances.

During *Week 4*, my journal log response reinforced and encouraged her to “*continue to stretch [herself] and think outside the box*” in an effort to expand her cultural repertoires with new responses to cultural differences:

**SSW:** *Hi [Zim],  
Your insight that the responses in the discussion board were different is excellent. Perhaps, you now identify with these statements?: "the more difference the better--the more difference equals more creative ideas" or "I know they're really trying hard to adapt to my style, so it's fair that I try to meet them halfway"...These are comments indicative of a person who accepts and adapts to cultural difference. Group work isn't easy and there are always compromises to be made. You are doing a great job in the course and I'm glad that you found the use of guest experts helpful. [Xiao] and [Joe] bring 2 cultural perspectives to consider (or lenses, i.e., the way they view the world based on their upbringing, life experience, etc.) that contribute to an overall comprehensive perspective of what it might be like doing business in China. While it is not complete, it gives us a pretty good idea of what we can expect. There are no right or wrong answers...Continue to stretch yourself and think outside the box. That's where you will find the most surprises.  
Have a great week!*

Her journal log indicated that she was making distinctions between her own and other cultures. She valued the different perspectives of the Chinese guest expert:

**Zim:** *I liked how [Xiao] spoke about some of the "stereotypes" of Chinese culture... a lot of times we generalize about a certain culture based on one or a couple experiences with that culture.*

She demonstrated an intention to understand the material, interact and critically reflect on the content, relate her ideas to previous knowledge and experience, relate evidence to her conclusions, and examine the logic of her arguments. Her high degree of *introspective reflection* continued to be realized as a result of the online text-based assignments and online learning environment *design* and *delivery* themes were again

noted in my instructor/researcher journal. Particularly, I noted the value of journal log assignments as important feedback tools for developing intercultural sensitivity.

*Week 5: Cross-Cultural Value Dimensions - Part II.* In *Week 5* participants were asked to describe a personal situation that required them to reconcile cultural differences. Participants were required to use the value dimension framework provided by the readings' authors to evaluate their behavior and how they responded to the situation. The purpose of this activity was to help participants understand how their understanding of their own cultural orientations would help them to communicate more effectively in a cross-cultural context.

Zim took this opportunity to describe an incident that happened to her while studying in the Czech Republic. She had indicated that while she was only there for two weeks she was extremely frustrated because she said "*I am the type of person that always likes to be busy and not wasting time-as many Americans.*" She found that as a result of those intercultural experiences she learned "*to slow down and enjoy things more*" and went on to say:

**Zim:** *One cultural difference that I noticed is the soft-spoken nature of their culture in contrast to our more outspoken nature. I became immediately aware of this through rides on public transportation and visits to attractions and restaurants...*

She went on with a very thorough description of a particular event and linked it to the course concepts:

**Zim:** *At first, we wondered why everyone was so quiet on the bus to class everyday. We had many foolish theories about how they knew we were Americans and were whispering about us. However, we noticed this everywhere we went. At one restaurant, the Czech students with us became very angry because there was a group of about five*

*couples at the table next to us singing with the band and laughing rather loudly. We were surprised, because we had not even noticed their presence, yet all of the Czech students were ready to leave the restaurant. However, we were not at all surprised to find out that the couples were from the U.S. (actually from Wisconsin)...*

She continued to describe another specific experience regarding “*loud behavior*” on the bus. She realized afterwards that her behavior with her friends was inappropriate because they were loud and laughing and drawing attention to themselves. While she lacked the appropriate intercultural behavior at the time, she admitted that she would have exhibited greater *behavioral flexibility* (Cornes’ 7<sup>th</sup> category defined as the ability to vary behavior to meet different situations) with prior intercultural knowledge:

**Zim:** *We all wished we knew how quiet the Czech culture acted in public situations before we had embarrassed ourselves. However, sometimes experience is one of the best ways to learn...*

I noted in my instructor/researcher journal that I was impressed with Zim’s *humility* (Cornes’ 9<sup>th</sup> category defined as a realistic appreciation of one’s weaknesses and shortcomings) and *introspective reflection* (Cornes’ 10<sup>th</sup> category defined as the ability to review and learn from experience). I also noted that she exhibited *behavior flexibility* (Cornes’ 7<sup>th</sup> category defined as the ability to vary behavior to meet different situations) as the course unfolded. For example, she expressed concern in her first interview about navigating the online learning environment since she had no prior online course experience. Yet, as early as *Week 2*, she adapted her behavior and applied her self-described strengths, “*strong research and writing skills*” to the learning context. By *Week 5*, I also found Zim to possess greater *self-assurance and control* (Cornes’ 3<sup>rd</sup>

category defined as confidence and self-esteem) as she boosted team morale and offered additional support:

**Zim:** *Come on team, I need those write-ups by midnight so I can begin the editing process. What can I do to help anyone who is out there?*

Zim demonstrated that she stood stronger with her convictions to mobilize the motivation and the resources of the team to successfully execute the final team presentation.

*Week 6: Global Manifest Destiny.* The Discussion Board assignment in *Week 6* was designed to get participants to think about global corporate culture and the concept of Global Manifest Destiny. The readings' authors described this concept as the inevitable economic integration of humankind. Zim posted an articulate response that expressed the importance of *the ability to empathize with another's viewpoint* (Cornes' 5<sup>th</sup> category defined as the desire to understand another's view of the world):

**Zim:** *My understanding of global corporate culture has given me a sense of cross-cultural communication competence. Throughout this class, I have developed a framework, a paradigm, of how to approach other cultures from a business perspective. The best approach in developing a relationship in a business context starts with understanding. You need to treat this as a two way street. Those of other cultures must understand you as much as you understand them. To do this you must have a good sense of empathy for your business partner. These characteristics, at minimum, must be at the root of any attempt at building a successful global culture. For example, Parvinder Singh, chief executive officer of Ranbaxy Pharmaceuticals made this broad sweeping statement "we are ladies and gentlemen serving ladies and gentlemen". This simple yet powerful statement embodies the very essence of understanding and empathy. Ladies and gentlemen connotes professionalism. As we know to be professional you must be a good listener and attempt to understand as well as be understood. He also draws a parallel, in the sense, that we are serving people like ourselves. This approach connotes empathy. With these*

*words fresh in the minds of Ranbaxy's employees they were able to develop a strong competence in global corporate culture. The company went on to be a global success.*

Zim described how her understanding of global corporate culture and the examples provided by the authors contributed to cross-cultural communication competence. She also articulated what she thought drove global manifest destiny and how organizations with a global corporate culture continued to be sensitive to cross-cultural value dimensions through empathy.

*Week 7: Debriefing Session and Course Wrap-up.* After seven weeks, Zim progressed in intercultural sensitivity development according to IDI pretest-posttest profiles from Minimization (95.4) to Acceptance/Adaptation (130.54). In her final interview she stated:

**Zim:** *I was surprised at how much I could learn from an online class. Because at first I didn't think that I would be able to learn that much not having a teacher there every week but I almost felt like I learned more because I could sit and read things when I had time to focus on them. Everyone, most people participated and had good things to say and things that were like thought out so I thought it was helpful for that...It was a great course I hope they can offer it again because I learned a lot. It was a great experience having the on line class.*

By *Week 7*, the themes that were discovered primarily related to the importance of the online text-based assignments to promote and foster intercultural sensitivity development. The journal logs as a feedback tool, and Zim's abilities to seek feedback, consider controversial points of view, and link cultural concepts to prior intercultural learning were also indicative of Zim's *introspective reflection* (Cornes' 10<sup>th</sup> category defined as the ability to review and learn from experience) and *behavioral flexibility* (Cornes 7<sup>th</sup> category defined as the ability to vary behavior to meet different situations).

*Summary.* Zim embraced different ways of reflecting in discussion posts and many of her journal logs connected to different views of action. A strong leader despite her tender age of 21, Zim volunteered as team editor and demonstrated an understanding of course concepts and made cultural, political, and religious connections wherever possible to advance many online discussions. Zim's comments initially represented Minimization but by the end of the course, her comments represented Acceptance/Adaptation characteristics. Through case study development Zim illustrated that she had learned to appreciate, recognize and reconcile cultural differences by being curious and open to different perspectives.

Zim also demonstrated a *genuine desire to connect* (Cornes' 1<sup>st</sup> category defined as a sincere, unambiguous curiosity coupled with a positive intent) and a *nonjudgmental outlook* (Cornes' 8<sup>th</sup> category defined as the ability to observe different values and behaviors impartially). She exhibited Cornes' ten intercultural effectiveness categories in one form or another and expressed several online learning environment themes related to *design* and *delivery* that she believed impacted her intercultural sensitivity development from Minimization (95.9) to Acceptance/Adaptation (130.54). For example, Zim cited instructor feedback through journal logs and the multimedia approaches using guest expert presentations as design features that maximized learning. She found that the interaction with the guest experts provided one of the best ways to demonstrate course relevance as accomplished practitioners in their field. In addition, the readings coupled with cross-cultural application exercises along with my personal feedback, provided opportunities to develop an empathetic understanding of our diversity and increased her confidence to communicate her thoughts more clearly. These activities helped her make



connections between serious intercultural content and her personal life, values, and experience. Zim's case study points out the importance of structural course design and the delivery methods (i.e., the use of journal logs and guest experts) that were chosen to impact intercultural sensitivity development.

### *Trial I Summary*

In Trial I, Wit's regression from Minimization to Denial/Defense, Boston's progression from Denial/Defense to Minimization, and Zim's progression from Minimization to Acceptance/Adaptation were found to be influenced by degrees of course engagement as indicated by the number of authored posts and *introspective reflection* (Cornes' 10<sup>th</sup> category defined as the ability to review and learn from experience) as indicated by the quality of description in online text-based assignments. Qualitative evidence suggests that a more rigorous course rubric, or grading evaluation point system, could have impacted these participants' abilities to be more engaged in the course thus promoting greater *introspective reflection* (Cornes' 10<sup>th</sup> category defined as the ability to review and learn from experience) and leading to greater intercultural sensitivity development. For example, Wit who experienced the least intercultural sensitivity development of any participant in Trial I or Trial II, participated in the course at minimum capacity and submitted assignments that represented little *introspective reflection* (Cornes' 10<sup>th</sup> category defined as the ability to review and learn from experience). On the other hand, Zim, who experienced greater intercultural sensitivity development, participated in the course at a maximum capacity and demonstrated greater degrees of *introspective reflection* (Cornes' 10<sup>th</sup> category defined as the ability to review and learn from experience) in her text-based assignments. I also found that Boston

valued the highly interactive design of the online learning environment as it required her to make a conscious effort to manage the demands of virtual teamwork. She demonstrated *behavioral flexibility* (Cornes' 7<sup>th</sup> category defined as the ability to vary behavior to meet different situations) through cooperative and collaborative efforts. Finally, I concluded from Trial I analysis that prompt feedback through journal log responses facilitated progressive movement along the intercultural continuum and a better designed course rubric with measures for course engagement and *introspective reflection* (Cornes' 10<sup>th</sup> category defined as the ability to review and learn from experience) could be warranted for future trials. The next section explores Trial II cases and shows varying degrees of course engagement and how it impacted individual IDI stage shift for Jack, Roscoe, and Pepe.

### *Trial II Cases*

#### *Jack- Lowest IDI Stage Shift*

Jack is a 30 year old Persian American male who served as a lieutenant in the United States Navy. He taught in the NROTC program at the same Midwestern Jesuit University while pursuing his MBA degree. His military career began in 1993 when he enlisted as an Electrician's Mate (Nuke). He received his University of Michigan Bachelor of Science degree in Electrical Engineering and attended Navy Flight School. After pilot training, he was enlisted as Fleet Air Reconnaissance and flew several missions. Jack served as a Naval Flight Officer on the E-6B aircraft. All his interviews were conducted over the telephone. In his first interview, Jack described the extent of his prior online course experience:

**Jack:** *There is a lot of correspondence, they try and do a good job with making remote learning workable for the*

*Navy since a lot of people are on deployments and such so there's a lot of online courses that you can take. I've taken a few courses on the Navy Knowledge Online homepage.*

He also explained his involvement in the Navy as it related to prior global work or study experience:

**Jack:** *I wouldn't really call it that... I'm in the Navy and I've been overseas a little bit for a week or so at a time, but I really wouldn't call it global work experience.*

While Jack was from Persian descent and lived in Iran as a child, he indicated that he had lived in the US most of his life and considered himself to be “*pretty much Americanized.*” His military involvement indicated that he was exposed to cultural diversity and that the Navy was working on addressing diversity issues:

**Jack:** *For the Navy, actually the military on the whole, is very diverse, reflects a lot of cultural diversity. However, in the Officer Corps they really don't have that cultural diversity. It's still very much dominated by probably white males.....I know the Navy is trying to address that but it seems like they're not always successful getting the Officer Corps as diverse as the rest of the military.*

Jack was also an ROTC instructor and articulated his biggest challenge related to cultural difference:

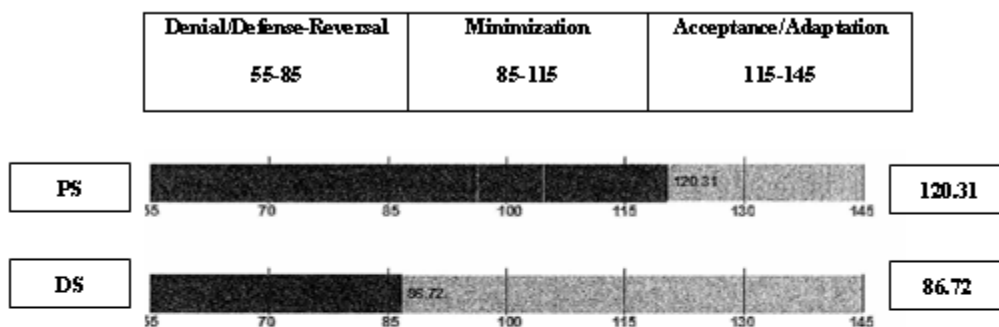
**Jack:** *There's a little of a divide between the younger students that are coming here and myself. I think it's kind of a cultural difference between people that are coming from civilian life at a young age and entering this ROTC program and then the difference between those students and the staff members who have been in the military for a long period of time.*

Despite Jack's willingness and desire to acknowledge, reconcile and accept cultural difference as it applied to military and life experience, his IDI pretest-posttest analysis showed a regression in intercultural sensitivity development from Minimization to

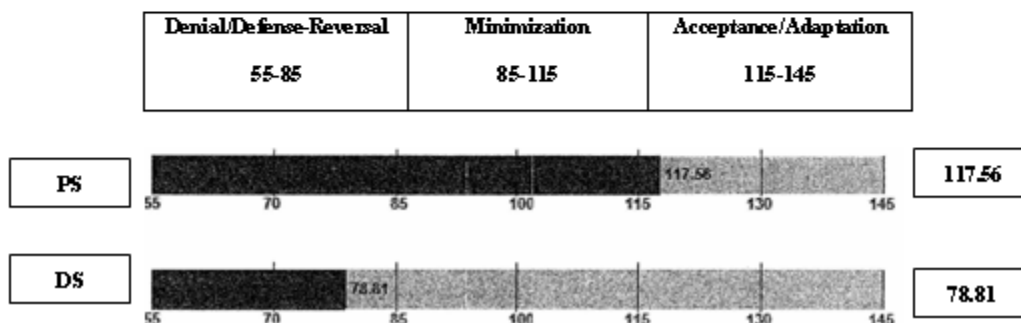
Denial/Defense (see Figure 13). He authored 41 posts (the average being 34 posts) and read 257 (the average being 220).

Figure 13. *Jack's IDI Pretest-Posttest Profiles*

### PRETEST



### POSTTEST



*Week 1: Course Overview and Introduction.* *Week 1's* orientation exercise in the Discussion Board was completed during the first face-to-face meeting prior to reviewing the course syllabus. Jack was introduced to the nuances of the course management system, D2L in the University computer lab, and completed his first virtual teamwork assignment with other enrolled participants. Through this first learning activity, Jack built cross-cultural collaborative connections with his team members. Participants were asked to respond to an orientation video showing a gazelle running across the savannah

and landing at the foot of a tree where a lion was resting. The discussion prompt for this exercise was:

**Orientation Exercise:** *Every morning in Africa, a gazelle wakes up knowing it must run faster than the fastest lion or be killed. Every morning, a lion wakes up knowing it must outrun the slowest gazelle or starve to death. It doesn't matter whether you are a gazelle or a lion; when the sun comes up, you had better be running." Arthur Blank, President and COO of Home Depot, uses this quote to motivate his employees. How does this fable motivate you as a Brainpool Online participant? Does the orientation video clip transform your perspective? Use this discussion exercise to get you thinking about your course goals. Post your reaction to the fable and video-clip in this discussion forum and respond to the posts of two course colleagues. When you complete this orientation exercise you are ready to begin Module 1.*

The intent of this learning activity was to get Jack thinking about his course goals and get him to connect with two team members. Jack made his first post and responded to the posts of two team members:

**Jack:** *The message I got wasn't that the lion wins by being lazy. The message I got was that if you are foolish, there will be someone there to capitalize on your mistake. Yep, that's the message I got. I suppose this will be the segue into establishing the course goals, so we have direction in this course.*

Jack's opening posts revealed a lack of *behavioral flexibility* (Corno's 10<sup>th</sup> category defined as the ability to review and learn from experience). He expressed a desire for more course structure indicating that he did not tolerate ambiguity or feel comfortable operating within ambiguous boundaries. Since Jack was an ROTC instructor, he was familiar with the importance of a syllabus to guide instruction and serve as a roadmap for coherent learning experiences. As the instructor, I often referred Jack to the syllabus to

review assignment assessments and course expectations. Since his IDI pretest score was in low Minimization (86.72), it was evident that Jack's cognitive orientation was not resolved in one stage or the other. He emphasized commonalities, a characteristic of Minimization, yet played down the value of cultural difference, a characteristic of Denial/Defense:

**Jack:** *I think cultural differences they can sometimes lead to conflict depending on where you work. But I think if you have a well-educated, very broad group of people, they really can kind of...the diversity really can be a lot of strength in a work group or in a community or anything like that.*

He articulated his course goals in *Week 1's* Discussion Board and demonstrated a desire and willingness to develop greater intercultural sensitivity development:

**Jack:** *My course goals are to:*  
*1) Get as much exposure to peoples' different opinions and experiences in working across cultural boundaries. 2) Gain some specific knowledge of different cultures. 3) Help develop my general sensitivity to cultural differences.*

His first journal log comments continued to represent Minimization-like characteristics:

**Jack:** *I think once somebody is immersed in the culture or at least exposed to the culture, they kind of really hit on those commonalities and they start to really see that the differences are a lot less than they at first thought. I think that the commonality idea is definitely true.*

Jack discussed the idea of commonality, which is identified by two Minimization forms:

(1) *human similarity* which views all cultures as the same and (2) *universal values* which suggests all human beings are or should be subject to a single, transcendent, and universal imperative or entity (Hammer & Bennett, 1998, 2002, 2004). In this previous excerpt, Jack represented a worldview that was theoretically ethnocentric as he tended to treat his own standards as central to the reality of all people.

*Week 2: Communication in Multinational Organizations.* The objectives for *Week 2* required Jack to describe and understand the difference between the role of emic (culture specific) and etic (culture general) within his Brainpool Online/Indonesia team. His team had selected Indonesia and team members began to use various Internet search engines to find current cross-cultural connections, evaluate cross-cultural current events that could be used to inform their final team presentation, and observe and model netiquette common courtesy rules. Jack submitted his Netiquette Quiz result in the Backstage Dress Rehearsal Discussion Area:

**Jack:** *I took the quiz and got 100%, so at least I have that going for me. I am somewhat familiar with boards, chat rooms and usenet groups, mostly from back in college when the internet was more of a useful tool, and less of a pervasive and unescapable marketing attack, but that is another topic.*

*The interesting thing about Netiquette to me is how little it is followed. Some people don't know, some don't care, and some enjoy behaving badly, so most unmoderated forums seem to devolve to the lowest common denominator quickly. Of course it is pointless to get very upset over the lack of good manners. In my experience it is best to practice good behavior and try to use well-moderated groups/chat rooms/etc.*

Jack's comments in *Week 2* reflected less of an ability to take on common universal perspectives and he was often unable to reach consensus with his team members. He had lamented in his first journal log that he found the discussion format in large virtual teams to be counterproductive:

**Jack:** *I think it might be better to sub-divide the class into much smaller groups of 4-5 people for the primary interaction. Some parts of the course could involve the entire class, but the bulk of the interaction would occur at the smaller group level. The small groups could make one*

*posting at a time to the entire class, with their consensus...  
There is a large volume of messages to read through, and  
pretty soon it tends to all blend together...It's too hard to  
reach consensus with a large group.*

While Jack intended to be helpful, he made no effort to consider how this unstructured teamwork approach could facilitate intercultural learning or improve online collaboration skills.

Virtual teamwork was intentionally designed to be open-ended and flexible with few parameters guiding discussions among team members. First, I provided teams with an intercultural sensitivity checklist and emphasized in the Course News that tolerance of ambiguity would be tested throughout this course. Second, I reminded participants that the virtual teamwork activities were designed to promote the development of cognitive, affective, and behavioral skills (i.e., cultural knowledge, motivation associated with the anticipation of an intercultural interaction, and appropriate behavior within an intercultural context). Therefore, I used a variety of teamwork activities to elicit uncertainty reduction strategies related to effective intercultural communication that would give participants control of their own learning in order to operate within ambiguous boundaries. For example, as a consequence of virtual teamwork which culminated in final team presentations, it was my hope that participants would learn how to reduce stereotypes and become more self-efficacious. Jack's tendency to jump to conclusions illustrated an apparent lack of *behavioral flexibility* (Cornes 10<sup>th</sup> category defined as an ability to vary behavior to meet different situations). He did not consider possible explanations or potential benefits of this instructional strategy to promote tolerance of ambiguity which would result in greater *behavioral flexibility* (Cornes 10<sup>th</sup>



category defined as an ability to vary behavior to meet different situations) and hence, impact greater intercultural sensitivity development.

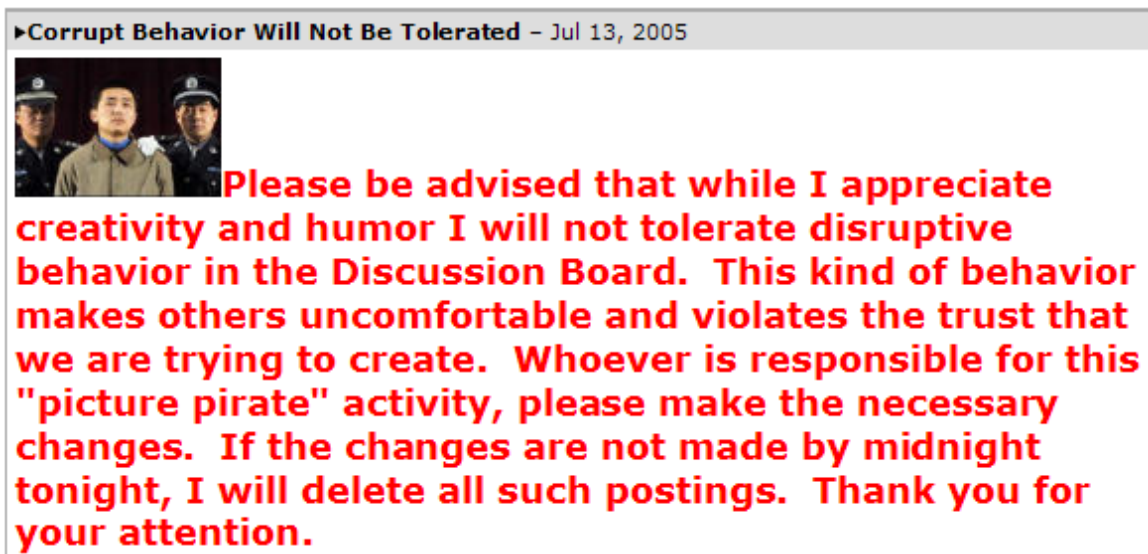
In addition, some of Jack's posts were perceived by team members to be "*over the top*" and above and beyond stated requirements. His competitiveness was noted in my journal: "*Rather than elevating the level of discussion [Jack] often causes his team members to question his behavior.*" For example, Roscoe believed that Jack should have been removed from the course for supposedly violating posting protocol in *Week 1*. A prize was to be awarded to the participant who was able to post participant photographs in the Class Roster with the corresponding names correctly into the "Classlist Area." The first participant who completed the Class Roster correctly and posted it into the Home Page area received a "pirated" Mont Blanc pen that I brought back from Shanghai, China. Roscoe informed me that Jack had "*breached security*" and violated confidentiality agreements with his team members by committing "*identity theft*" when Jack attempted to complete the challenge. While Roscoe may have been joking and used humor to spark excitement in the Discussion Board, he was totally serious when he privately emailed me his concerns. This incident challenged my course management and facilitation skills and was used as an intercultural learning opportunity since Roscoe admitted that he had jumped to conclusions rooted in his own self-described "*black and white engineering mindset.*" I recorded my reflections in my instructor/researcher journal:

**SSW:** *Could [Roscoe] be overreacting? Perhaps he didn't even consider all the possibilities? Maybe [Jack] is more computer savvy than he is and [Roscoe's] just jealous that [Jack] beat him to the punch... I can't imagine that Jack has a duplicitous agenda or that he would do anything to "breach security" and compromise his integrity with his team. I think he's just competitive and took a proactive approach to win the challenge.... It will be very interesting*

*to see how this unfolds and to find out if [Roscoe] will be satisfied with the explanation. Maybe we will experience our first aha! moment and learn something about D2L that we didn't know before...[Roscoe] seems to be very paranoid about security issues...Could this have something to do with his political orientations or his opposition to the war? [Jack's] military affiliation might be the trigger...I think I will use this as an opportunity to introduce the penalties for violating the "rule of law" and link [Jack's] "identity theft" to capital punishment in China.*

I addressed Roscoe's concerns privately and I publicly reminded participants that there were penalties for not adhering to the "rule of law." I posted a "warning" in the Course News to challenge participants' perceptions about what was transpiring in the course management system, D2L. The image captured participants' attention and then introduced the topic of capital punishment in China (see Figure 14).

Figure 14. *Topic of Capital Punishment*



Jack was not named as the culprit in this Course News announcement. I simply introduced a topic about capital punishment in China where over 10,000 people are executed a year for crimes against the "rule of law." Jack sent an email to me to explain privately what had happened:

**Jack:** *I saw when I logged on to D2L today there were some interesting developments, with my pic post. Just so you know, I'm not trying to breach any kind of security or be disruptive. I tried to post my picture into the body of my message instead of attaching it to the post. Unfortunately the URL for the pic I grabbed is actually the pic of the profile currently logged in. When I viewed it, it appeared as my pic, but when other people viewed it their pic appeared. In any case, I have figured out how to do it correctly (cross your fingers.) Sorry for the confusion.*

Jack admitted to Brainpool Online/Indonesia team members within 24 hours of the incident that he was the so called “picture pirate.” He posted an explanation in the Backstage Dress Rehearsal Discussion Area:

**Jack:** *For those of you who missed the exciting pirate adventures alluded [sic] to in the course messages, here's a quick rundown: 1) I am the "picture pirate" 2) I was attempting to post my picture within the body of my message instead of as an attachment. 3) Unfortunately, I did not realize that the picture I had posted was actually the generic pic of the logged in user. When I viewed the post it appeared correctly, but when other people viewed the post, they saw their Figure. 4) Hilarity ensues. So in any case, since I would like a nice pen, I am attempting to put together the homepage with the roster. So far it is incomplete, since I am not able to put everyone's names with the pics yet, and for all I know, what I view in d2l is completely different from what you see. But hopefully it will eventually work, if you click on the classlist, then on my home icon, it is possible you may see a file called Roster that will have some of the people in it. But maybe not.*

Participants, including Roscoe, responded favorably to Jack and thanked him for sharing his explanation. Together participants and I learned more about the nuances of D2L and capital punishment in China. The pirating incident also kicked off several discussions about Chinese copyright violations. Jack’s explanation was quite logical and since he was the only participant who took the time to formulate the Class Roster

correctly, he won the prize and was awarded the Mont Blanc pen at the final *Week 7* face-to-face meeting.

By the end of *Week 2*, Roscoe sent me an email to compliment my facilitation skills and expressed gratitude for publicly admonishing Jack's "*illicit*" behavior. This incident helps to illustrate two points. First, my role as the instructor/researcher was to not only to be a facilitator, subject matter expert, and course manager but to simultaneously model appropriate etiquette and effective use of the medium. Therefore, I continually modified the instructional design to make the course content interesting, engaging, and thought provoking. I also implemented participants' suggestions from the mid-course survey (a reality check of participants' perceived course satisfaction after three and a half weeks) to improve the latter half of the course. These included reducing the number of journal logs from seven to four and later using peer evaluations to assess teamwork for final team presentations. I also posted weekly due dates in the Course News and required participants to post text-based assignments within Discussion Areas rather than attaching Word Documents to save time and effort. By empathizing with participant experiences I was able to determine the extent to which these suggestions could add value to participants' learning experiences and improve perceived course satisfaction and outcomes. My ability to empathize with participants resulted in these formative curriculum and instruction strategies that ultimately influenced participants' abilities to build greater cognitive competencies and take on new inclusive perspectives to inform future action. Second, my role as the instructor/researcher involved course managerial responsibilities, in this case, which included providing posting guidelines as well as showing a high degree of empathy for participant experiences. Incorporating

multiple frames of reference and using the spectrum of participant experiences as the course unfolded was a valid source of knowledge that added to the rich insights and fostered greater intercultural learning.

*Week 3: Cross-Cultural Value Dimension – Part I.* Moving forward, Jack’s contributions in *Week 3* were well organized, articulate, and “*above and beyond*” stated course requirements. Unlike Wit in Trial I, Jack’s *Week 3* journal log was thoughtful and revealed a high degree of *introspective reflection* (Cornes’ 10<sup>th</sup> category defined as the ability to review and learn from experience). He included an additional addendum to which he responded to my feedback and probing questions. Remarkably, Jack’s efforts to critically reflect upon his assumptions in his journal logs did not move him from his Minimization mindset as he focused on commonality rather than differences in *Week 3*’s text-based assignment:

**Jack:** *This current event can tell us a great deal about doing business in this culture. Some of the considerations I had when researching this culture include: 1) Security considerations are extremely important. I think security and rule of law are necessary for any economic activity to be successful in the long term. It is important for a company to be able to correctly analyze the risk/rewards associated with doing business in a region with security risks...2) Building of cross-cultural dialogue through commonality...*

In this excerpt, Jack clearly articulated his worldview structure towards cultural difference. Jack suggested that the “*rule of law*” was an important consideration for long-term economic success and that the idea of “*commonality*” was essential to cross-cultural dialogue. Jack’s prior military experience may have precluded him from moving beyond his comfort zone to explore new and different perspectives more characteristic of an Acceptance/Adaptation mindset. For example, Jack could have expressed the same

idea, more tolerant of cultural differences, by stating that security risks in the region might require adapting the “rule of law” to meet specific local economic needs. This indicated that Jack could have been experiencing a “pendulum swing” between Denial/Defense and Minimization. He seemed to wrestle with course concepts and their applicability to his life experience.

*Week 4: Brainpool Online/China.* Throughout *Week 4*, Jack exhibited a high degree of *introspective reflection* (Cornes’ 10<sup>th</sup> category defined as the ability to review and learn from experience) and tried to link new knowledge to prior learning. His *self-knowledge* (Cornes’ 2<sup>nd</sup> category defined as knowledge of one’s strengths and blind spots especially with regard to interpersonal communication) was evident as he realized that in order to progress developmentally in intercultural sensitivity he would need to move beyond compromise, which is a Minimization mindset. He indicated in his interview his strengths and weaknesses:

**Jack:** *I tend to think things through. I think I have a pretty broad education so I can look at things from a lot of perspectives...Weaknesses I think maybe some ideas may be made up in my mind so it's tough sometimes to embrace new ideas if you think you've got the knowledge already. Sometimes changing your mind when you think you know what the answer is can be hard. It's always a challenge to try and keep reevaluating what is what you believe.*

Although Jack did not regularly embrace new ideas and revealed negative attitudes towards virtual teamwork, this example shows that he recognized the weaknesses that he brought to this experience.

Jack’s *Week 4* assignment was articulate and exceeded my expectations. Not only did he capture the importance of using multiple translators to inform the 4-Star logo marketing campaign but he linked his prior knowledge to complete the assignment:

**Jack:** *There were also some problems with initial US military operation “INFINITE JUSTICE” which was insensitive to the Islamic belief that Allah is the source of all justice-which was later changed to “ENDURING FREEDOM”.* In any case, it is a good idea to make sure your product is not sending the wrong message-you could be doing something very offensive you are unaware of, and even in the best case it will appear that an understanding and respect for the culture is not important to your company.

*Week 5: Cross-Cultural Value Dimensions- Part II.* In Week 5, Jack found storytelling to be “a great learning tool” and recognized anecdotal stories as an instructional strategy (*delivery*) that was a valuable online MBA course component. He believed that it “definitely” influenced his *sensory acuity* (Cornes’ 4<sup>th</sup> category defined as the ability to notice fine distinctions in the sensory information one receives) and expressed in an interview:

**Jack:** *I especially like to read the anecdotes that people have of examples of different things that they’re doing because I think obviously it’s very difficult to sit down with a textbook or something and just get all the information from the reading. I think we definitely learn a lot from the experiences of others so it’s really good to see real world applications of some of the things. I think that its easy to see online because everybody in class is able to participate a lot more easily whereas in the classroom you’re limited on time, you’re limited on some students who are going to be more active participants than others.*

Online learning environment *design* themes such as real-life applicability of text-based assignments and differences between “rules of engagement” between traditional classrooms and online courses were found in this excerpt. Jack found the online learning environment to be more liberating as time was taken out of the classroom context and discussion areas were open forums that fostered greater democratic participation and distributive team learning.

*Week 6: Global Manifest Destiny.* During *Week 6*, I perceived Jack to be highly engaged in the course, yet, he had become the most difficult participant to move along the intercultural continuum. His weekly assignment reflected that he was learning course concepts:

**Jack:** *In order to operate effectively across cultures, and successfully capitalize on the strengths of different groups while limiting their weaknesses, it takes a truly global mindset, and a cooperative spirit.*

I had concerns that Jack “*straddled*” the fence between Denial/Defense and Minimization and wrote in my instructor/researcher journal that “*he seems to get it and he’s not afraid to go there but then again he’s got some baggage from military training...like a jet contrail floating in Denial/Defense he has unresolved trailing issues behind him as he tries to fly towards Acceptance/Adaptation.*” Even though Jack challenged the intercultural content and was willing to interrogate course concepts, his *Week 6* assignment seemed to suggest he was breaking away from a Denial/Defense “us-versus-them” military mindset:

**Jack:** *Sometimes cultures come into direct conflict, and a “weaker” culture usually either adapts itself to face the new challenges, or is dominated...A dominating culture is not an optimal scenario-resentment, resistance, and blowback are all damaging, but the real damage is occurring in the repression of the free exchange of information and ideas.*

*Week 7: Debriefing Session and Course Wrap-Up.* Jack attended the final face-to-face meeting and was delighted to receive the Mont Blanc pen for being the first participant to correctly complete the Class Roster. By *Week 7*, Jack admitted that he had more work to do in the area of reconciling cultural differences:



**Jack:** *There's a lot of homework that needs to be done...The importance of having resources yourself, having a culturally diverse resource to draw on...One of the good things I added to my thought process was that whole idea of just not just seeking compromise, of trying to find win-win situations...*

He was also pleasantly surprised that his team members successfully completed the final team presentation when he had previously expressed doubts about virtual teamwork through large groups (*design and delivery*):

**Jack:** *During the last few weeks the course began to wrap up and the project started coming together. I think the collaboration on the project went rather smoothly, considering how many people, with very different schedules, needed to contribute to the final product. Everyone was able to make submissions at various points throughout the last few weeks, and several members of the group stepped up to provide organizational guidance and editing when it was needed.*

In his last email to me Jack wrote:

**Jack:** *Several topics I teach are intimately related to some of the topics we covered in the course. I'm going to be taking a fresh look at my lectures on international law, leadership, core values, and the DoD missions this semester, and basically all of my Naval History topics next semester. So far everything that we teach is very closely jibing with some of the cross-cultural principles from the class, which I think is no accident. Thanks for the course, I enjoyed it.*

Jack's IDI pretest score (86.72) was in low Minimization and his posttest score (78.81) indicated a regression to Denial/Defense. As a result of the online MBA course, however, Jack became more aware of his cultural shortcomings and showed *humility* (Cornes' 9<sup>th</sup> category defined as a realistic appreciation of one's weaknesses and shortcomings). He reflected that the course content was clearly applicable to other familiar settings:

**Jack:** *The ideas covered in this class are not just applicable to conducting business across cultures. They are generally useful in any cross-cultural communications, in a wide variety of settings: political, military, social, etc. I really thought a great deal about this after the last face-to-face class session, and applied the concepts from this class to some of the military topics I teach. Cross-cultural communication is extremely important to military success, and is once again at the front of military thinking, as lessons learned from Iraq are being analyzed....I think the hot moment for me was looking beyond simply compromise...I think I've got some appreciation for how difficult communication can be across cultures, how there's a lot of knowledge involved not just kind of having an open mind type thing.*

Jack came to grips with the fact that he had work to do in the area of reconciling cultural differences which exhibited as *self-knowledge* (Cornes' 2<sup>nd</sup> category defined as knowledge of one's strengths and blind spots especially with regard to interpersonal communication). He stated in his final journal log:

**Jack:** *As the course wrapped up, I think two main points stood out in my mind: 1) The idea that global manifest destiny is something that economic progress inevitably leads to. 2) The ideas covered in this class are not just applicable to conducting business across cultures. They are generally useful in any cross-cultural communications, in a wide variety of settings: political, military, social, etc.*

Jack's themes included barriers to consensus building, competition with team members, and the applicability of cultural concepts to other contexts. These themes along with Jack's cognitive orientations in Denial/Defense are explored in further detail in the following summary.

*Summary.* Jack possessed a high degree of *introspective reflection* (Cornes' 10<sup>th</sup> category defined as the ability to review and learn from experience) and was both conscientious and helpful to his team members and to me, the instructor. He was open-

mindful and valued multiple perspectives, used the Internet, demonstrated resourcefulness, and problematized cultural concepts by considering alternative view points. Despite Jack's ability to review and learn from prior experience, his IDI posttest score (78.81) placed him in Denial/Defense with a regression. IDI pretest-posttest differences also revealed consistently wide gaps between developmental intercultural sensitivity (DS) and perceived intercultural sensitivity (PS). Thus, developmentally, Jack resided on the low end of the intercultural continuum, in Denial/Defense, yet his perceived intercultural sensitivity resided in Acceptance/Adaptation. The implications arising from this discrepancy suggest that his worldview configuration towards cultural difference was still in conflict and unresolved.

Consistent with IDI profiles, little *actual* evidence was found to suggest that Jack possessed *behavioral flexibility* (Cornes' 7<sup>th</sup> category defined as the ability to vary behavior to meet different situations). While he had a *genuine desire to connect* (Cornes' 1<sup>st</sup> category defined as a sincere, unambiguous curiosity coupled with a positive intent) and demonstrated *introspective reflection* (Cornes' 7<sup>th</sup> category defined the ability to review and learn from experience as the ability to vary behavior to meet different situations), he did not demonstrate *behavioral flexibility* (Cornes' 7<sup>th</sup> category defined as the ability to vary behavior to meet different situations). By the end of the course, even though Jack revealed *humility* (Cornes' 9<sup>th</sup> category defined as a realistic appreciation of one's weaknesses and shortcomings), this was not significant enough to cause a progressive cognitive shift. Jack also demonstrated *self-assurance and control* (Cornes' 3<sup>rd</sup> category defined as confidence and self-esteem) and provided evidence of *introspective reflection* (Cornes' 10<sup>th</sup> category defined as the ability to review and learn

from experience) in online text-based assignments when I probed and questioned perspectives. At the conclusion of the online MBA course, Jack's IDI pretest-posttest profiles revealed a regression from low Minimization (86.72) to Denial/Defense (78.81) and a consistent discrepancy between actual (DS) and perceived (PS) intercultural sensitivity. This again suggests that Jack's worldview towards cultural difference was still in conflict and unresolved.

Jack began the course with an ethnocentric mindset in low Minimization and while he was an excellent candidate for intercultural sensitivity development, he did not progress along the intercultural continuum according to IDI results. This case study points out the importance of a well-designed syllabus to address the "rules of engagement" with specific procedures for selecting smaller, more heterogeneous teams to promote diversity and the acquisition of intercultural competence and sensitivity. Team interaction in smaller groups with targeted face-to-face learning activities could have helped move Jack more expeditiously to the next stage of development. I also surmised that Jack would have benefited more from the online MBA course if he had requested an IDI feedback session. Given more synchronous interaction, I could have reviewed the IDI profile, discussed DMIS theory, and proposed learning activities based on the IDI profile to help him become more culturally responsive and sensitive to cultural difference.

#### *Roscoe-Middle IDI Stage Shift*

Roscoe is a 43 year old European American male with work experience as a Project Engineer in a Customer Service capacity. He previously had worked for a large

medical manufacturer when outsourcing began in the 1990's. He described his professional work environment:

**Roscoe:** *It's not a very fun place to work. Every quarter you wondered who was going to be let go. There was no "team environment," everyone was looking out for themselves. The comment about "tapping" brainpower should read more like its cheaper to hire someone from India at a third of the cost. They definitely were brilliant programmers and fit the [company] mold of getting things done very quickly. It made many people change at [the company] realize that it's a small world.*

He went on to explain that new programmers from India had to live in the United States back in the early 90's, and he was laid off twice during that period of employment. He posted a comment in the Discussion Board that the CEO could enter a room, make a short speech and make employees feel great about their job performance and the next day send out pink slips. Roscoe wrote:

**Roscoe:** *He came into our place on a Thursday afternoon one day in the summer in 1994 and gave a brilliant speech about how the business was looking good and we should have a nice quarter and the next day laid off 10% of the engineers in the department I worked in.*

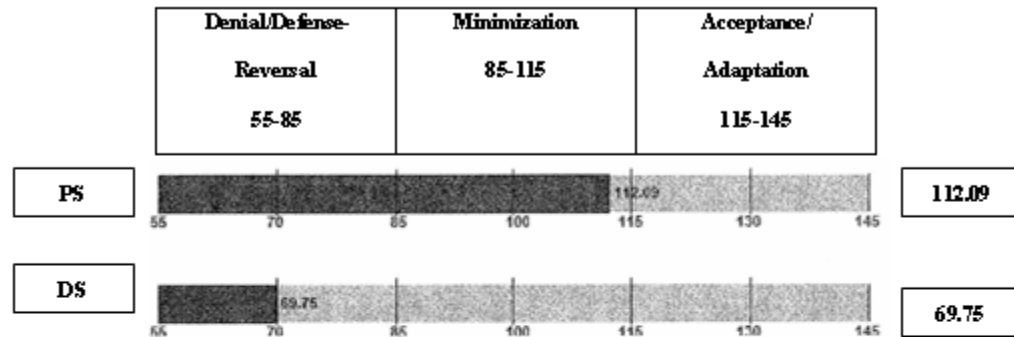
He credits those experiences with changing his life because he went back to school and finished his Bachelor's degree in electrical engineering.

Roscoe's approach to doing business as described in *Week 1* was indicative of Minimization even though his pretest score was in Denial/Defense (69.75). He focused on commonality throughout the course and often used humor as a way to establish common ground. Two interviews were conducted over the telephone; the other was done in a coffee shop. He did not have prior global work or study experience but he did have prior online course experience and frequently communicated with customers from diverse

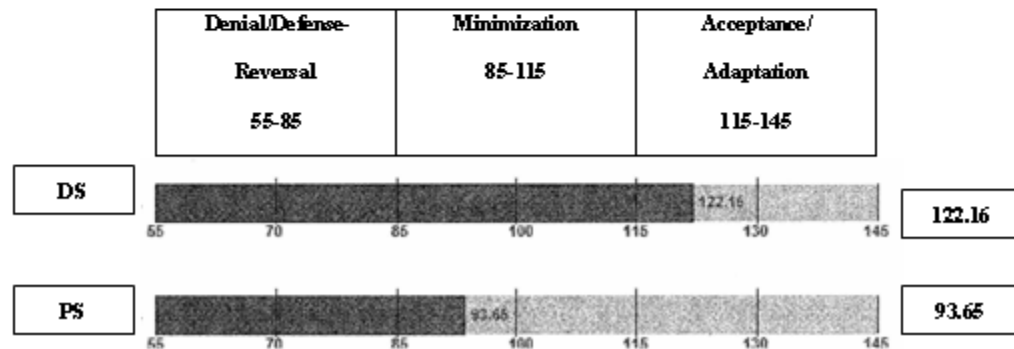
countries by telephone and by email. He authored 80 posts (the average being 32) and read 258 (the average being 220). His IDI pretest-posttest profiles show a progression in intercultural sensitivity development from 69.75 in Denial/Defense to 93.65 in Minimization (see Figure 15, Roscoe's IDI Pretest-Posttest Profiles).

Figure 15. *Roscoe's IDI Pretest-Posttest Profiles*

#### PRETEST



#### POSTTEST



*Week 1: Course Overview and Introduction.* At the first face-to-face meeting, the orientation exercise with the gazelle and lion video clip elicited a hearty laugh from Roscoe which I noted in my instructor/researcher journal. His appreciation for humor was evident in his first discussion post:

**Roscoe:** *It looks good on paper, but I have never seen the employee's in the Home Depot I go to running in order to help me out...The fable words mean that the its "survival of*

*the fittest" and that's a true statement in the line of work that I am presently employed in now. The video clip helped in seeing the gazelle and the lion...You have to be really careful not to do things too quickly because its very easy to do in an online course. You really don't have any boundaries other than the due dates... The other thing that pops in my head about the video is that you better know what you are doing before you take off on a tangent, as with brain pooling online. I have taken other online courses and you really have to stop and think about where you are going before you start a project.*

Roscoe revealed online learning environment *design* themes in this initial post. He suggested that online courses have more ambiguous boundaries and participants must “*stop and think*” before moving forward. These thoughts were indicative of the reflective online learning environment that I had set up in the Discussion Boards. Such inherent design features (i.e., text-based assignments) would require participants to develop degrees of *behavioral flexibility* (Cornes’ 7<sup>th</sup> category defined as the ability to vary behavior to meet different situations) and *introspective reflection* (Cornes’ 10<sup>th</sup> category defined as the ability to review and learn from experience) which would promote intercultural sensitivity development.

He expressed the use of humor as a way to bridge the gap between strangers and find common ground, a Minimization strategy. In his first interview, he articulated his business philosophy:

**Roscoe:** *I always approach every business relationship and try to get a relationship started with the people before I communicate with them...I want to learn everything about them and try to tell them the little things about me....I think the biggest thing that I use and I've always used it, that's worked, is humor. I try to find something that's humorous to both of us and normally that works.*

He emphasized that finding common ground, a Minimization characteristic, was necessary in order for humor to work.

Roscoe exhibited *a genuine desire to connect* (Cornes' 1<sup>st</sup> category defined as a sincere, unambiguous curiosity coupled with a positive intent) with his team members and CMS statistics confirmed that he authored and read the most posts for both trials—80 and 258 respectively. As the oldest participant in Trial II at age 43, he often complained that few of his team members were actively engaged in online discussions:

**Roscoe:** *It appears that I have four people in the group that are ready to get things done and a few others that are only going to do the minimum... I am trying to set up a time to chat online every night in case someone has a question. It's easy for me, I am online, or my computer is on 24/7, but I am not always there.*

His first journal log emphasized that he had Internet access 24/7 and that he was actively working at getting the team organized and frequently used the D2L Pager to connect with team members. For example, Roscoe maintained a humorous posture in the beginning of the online MBA course but he became more intense and task-oriented as the week progressed. He indicated to me in emails that he was getting impatient with his team's lack of accountability on the final team presentation. He responded to Jack's explanation about the "pirate incident" in *Week 1* with a bit of skepticism in the Discussion Board:

**Roscoe:** *Please give detailed steps because after I get home from work I plan on drinking a few cold ones and start practicing my java script on the deck. It might be fun.*

Then, after his team chose Indonesia to showcase for the final team presentation, he strongly urged his team members in the Discussion Board, with humorous coaxing, to begin the Brainpool Online/Indonesia outline:

**Roscoe:** *It seems some Western ways of life are invading Indonesia and as we can see in some current events happening all over the world, some Muslims don't like it...I think we need to come up with an outline for the paper...One more point...Can Packer fans live with Viking*



*or Bear fans? NO! They can't! Just kidding, I am a Dolphin Fan because I am from Miami, but my team sucks, so go Patriots. Sorry if I made a political statement, that wasn't my intention.*

Roscoe injected his own brand of humor relevant to current events and tried to get team members to move forward in a positive direction.

*Week 2: Communication in Multinational Organizations.* By Week 2, Roscoe expressed relief in his journal log when his team “finally” appeared to be making progress:

**Roscoe:** *Well our project case study is on a roll! We have some really smart people that want to get it completed as soon as possible, which I like a lot.*

Roscoe’s humor was contagious and he was active in all aspects of the course including the Backstage Dress Rehearsal Discussion Area. He participated in this discussion thread after completing the Netiquette Quiz:

**Sydney:** *My netiquette score was 80% - since I have never been involved in on-line chat rooms, I was surprised to learn that there are definitely very specific rules and/or guidelines for communicating via the Internet.*

**Treller:** *I'm with you, [Sydney]. I also scored an 80%, but I think I double clicked when I should have single clicked and got one wrong as a result. You should probably lose an automatic 3 points for that. I'm suddenly very self concious [sic] of what I type.*

**Roscoe:** *I think we are all checking and re-checking before we hit the "submit" button. Don't forget the "spell-check."*

**Pepe:** *Dang. Now I'm really consci.. conciou... consti... nervous.*

Roscoe quickly emerged as Brainpool/Online Indonesia’s team leader and often offered suggestions to improve the learning experience just as an instructor would do. Perhaps, it

was his age or his prior online experience that gave him this *self-assurance and control* (Cornes' 3<sup>rd</sup> category defined as confidence and self-esteem) with his team members.

*Week 3: Cross-Cultural Value Dimensions - Part I.* By the middle of the course, Roscoe's cognitive orientation moved away from Denial/Defense and transitioned solidly into Minimization. He emailed me often which suggested his desire to increase his *sensory acuity* (Cornes 4<sup>th</sup> category defined as the ability to notice fine distinctions in the sensory information one receives) and cultural knowledge:

**Roscoe:** *It appears that I have four people in the group that are ready to get things done and a few others that are only going to do the minimum. [Treller] was the person that told me to go ahead and post the country along with [Sydney], they wanted to get started as soon as possible. [Cristina] has also given me some feedback. We have used the paging system entirely so far. I am trying to set up a time to chat online every night in case someone has a question. It's easy for me, I am online, or my computer is on 24/7, but I am not always there. I already have an article that discusses the President of Indonesia's view on living out of wedlock. He says its against the law and also religion. I thought that was an interesting cultural difference between US and Indonesia, is that what you are looking for? It was on the BBC webpage.*

Roscoe also displayed a *genuine desire to connect* with his team members (Cornes' 1<sup>st</sup> category defined as a sincere, unambiguous curiosity coupled with a positive intent). He had learned from prior online courses that confirming assignment parameters was a good strategy to keep him on task and create opportunities for collaborating with team members. His *Week 3* cross-cultural connection which required him to post something pertinent to Indonesia's cultural value dimensions complied with requirements, met weekly objectives set-forth in the syllabus, and elicited humorous responses from various team members:

**Roscoe:** *This Burger King promo poster of a recent commercial would not be acceptable in Indonesia according to President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono. Belly buttons are out in Indonesia.*

The article Roscoe posted was from the Jakarta Post “*Getting it straight: Naval temptations vs. gender equality*” and included a PowerPoint slide of Paris Hilton holding a Whopper sandwich and wearing a revealing outfit.

*Week 4: Brainpool Online/ China.* Roscoe continued to seek peer/instructor feedback and asked many questions. Since he had prior online course experience, he wrote in *Week 4’s* Discussion Board:

**Roscoe:** *What I have learned is that you really need to ask a lot of questions when you don’t understand something and make sure you broadcast it to the group so everyone will get the message. It’s funny how many people are afraid to ask simple questions, but its mandatory in the online environment.*

Coincidentally, I encouraged participants to frequently ask questions throughout the course. At a minimum, participants were required to ask two guest expert questions by the end of *Week 4*. Guest experts, Joe, Jeff, and Xiao, were then available to provide answers and address concerns. The questions and answers were posted in the Discussion Board.

Roscoe also cited poor language and writing skills as a barrier to email communication:

**Roscoe:** *I have to deal with language barriers all the time. One thing that is so difficult is when I ask a question, the person says, “yes, they understand.” But they don’t really understand. I try not to ask yes or no questions.*

Therefore, he stressed and modeled the importance of asking questions for clarification throughout *Week 4*.

*Week 5: Cross-Cultural Value Dimensions- Part II.* The primary learning activity in *Week 5* required participants to post a cross-cultural business principle application derived from the reading. As previously discussed, Roscoe sent frequent emails to me, several times a day in *Week 5*, to seek clarification on assignments or just send random thoughts about coursework:

**Roscoe:** *I have been reading ahead and this stuff is time consuming for me to understand. A lot of this stuff is over my head. It's all I can do to stay caught up. A lot of it is subjective though, so maybe I will have a chance with some of these smart people.*

In another email sent on the same day, he had some questions:

**Roscoe:** *I am missing something here? Are we supposed to be waiting for a case study that you will post on the webpage in order to post by this Thursday? ...I am sort of confused.*

Roscoe's emails were thought to be amusing because of their frequency but more importantly, the emails provided evidence of intercultural sensitivity development. That is, he used anxiety reduction strategies to increase his self-efficacy and foster his tolerance of ambiguity. Since the design and delivery of the course were intended for this purpose through virtual teamwork, I enacted immediacy behaviors and kept Roscoe actively engaged with course concepts. He claimed that the ongoing feedback helped him to formulate and articulate his opinions more thoughtfully using the "*written word*." The reflective nature of the course design enabled Roscoe to improve his writing and reading skills

*Week 6: Global Manifest Destiny.* By *Week 6*, Roscoe's team was nearing completion of the final presentation. The team would post '*the final product*' later that evening and he assumed a leadership role in the final outcome:

**Roscoe:** *Since we seem to have a couple of copies of power points floating around. I am posting the most up to date copy I have. I have about eight different copies, so I have to clean house and organize, so use this one to edit and copy as you wish. I have looked at long enough, I am starting to go blind. Please review and change if necessary, it's not due until midnight tonight.*

The notion of an open classroom where participants could come and go to review the status of the final team presentations was an aspect of online course *design* that facilitated teamwork. However, Roscoe's active involvement played out as he lamented in his final journal log that the "time spent" versus the "credits gained" were not quite as equitable:

**Roscoe:** *The course should be 3 credits instead of 1. More students would take it more seriously and put more of an effort into it and we would have more time to learn more.*

It should be noted that the one-credit status and seven-week time allotment for instruction were not under my control before the study was underway. I would have preferred to design and deliver a three-credit elective that included additional face-to-face interaction with IDI feedback sessions. However, the Assistant Dean in the College of Business had summer MBA program gaps in one-credit elective sequence offerings, so the one-credit status, allowed me to conduct my research, was a "good fit," and served as a potential model for future online business courses under consideration.

Roscoe's active engagement with the material and his team members indicated that he had built a community of difference and some serious bonds of friendship:

**Roscoe:** *I made some good friends on line, its amazing how that worked, but it did. We used the paging device almost every day.*

Roscoe frequently indicated that he used the D2L Pager on a daily basis. His ability to connect with his team members 24/7 was a course aspect that he enjoyed. He also

expressed that the course (*design*) forced him to really “*read*” the text-based postings from his team members to dig more deeply for the underlying meaning in language:

**Roscoe:** *I think the most important lesson I learned was "reading" and "understanding." It sounds elementary, but you have to really read and understand to be able to get through an on line class....I also worked on my patience with people and their opinions, it takes patience to get through an on line class because not everyone is as patient as the next person or as prompt.*

The course design facilitated Roscoe’s ability to develop greater *behavioral flexibility* and *introspective reflection* (Cornes’ 7<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> categories defined as the ability to vary behavior to meet situations and the ability to review and learn from experience).

*Week 7: Debriefing Session and Course Wrap-Up.* While Roscoe was unable to attend the debriefing session due to his work and travel schedule, he was very complimentary to his team members about the completion of the final team presentation. In Roscoe’s final interview, he said:

**Roscoe:** *I learned how to communicate better, which is a never ending skill that has to be worked on daily throughout life. I don't believe anyone masters that skill and they don't have to work on it. It takes concentration. It forced me to communicate my ideas through [written] words...to talk about things that I really don't understand that well...so it helped me a lot.*

Roscoe also shared in his final journal log that he believed that his team members piqued his cultural curiosity to an extent that he might now consider traveling outside the US which he had not considered prior to taking the online MBA course:

**Roscoe:** *I learned a good lesson about different cultures and this course made me more aware of those differences. I would like to visit the country I studied and learned about and I would love to have students from those other countries working on the same class online if it was possible.*

Roscoe's themes included seeking peer/instructor feedback, building community through the use of humor, and demonstrating a high degree of course engagement and cultural curiosity. These themes along with his cognitive orientations towards cultural difference in Minimization are explored further in detail in the summary.

*Summary.* Roscoe possessed a high degree of course engagement and cultural curiosity and often sought peer/instructor feedback indicating *a genuine desire to connect* (Cornes' 1<sup>st</sup> category defined as a sincere, unambiguous curiosity coupled with a positive intent). He was eager to complete his assignments and demonstrated *a nonjudgmental outlook* (Cornes' 8<sup>th</sup> category defined as the ability to observe different values and behaviors impartially) with his team members. Roscoe's IDI posttest score (93.65) placed him in Minimization with a progression from Denial/Defense. However, IDI pretest-posttest differences also revealed consistently wide gaps between developmental intercultural sensitivity (DS) and perceived intercultural sensitivity (PS). These incongruities suggest that his cognitive development was not resolved and was still transitioning at the conclusion of the course. Thus, developmentally, Roscoe resided in the middle of the intercultural continuum, in Minimization, yet his perceived intercultural sensitivity resided in Acceptance/Adaptation.

Roscoe's use of humor and online resilience were themes that promoted his developmental intercultural sensitivity and *behavioral flexibility* (Cornes' 7<sup>th</sup> category defined as the ability to vary behavior to meet different situations). Consistent with IDI profiles, *actual* evidence was found to suggest that Roscoe possessed a great deal of *behavioral flexibility* (Cornes' 7<sup>th</sup> category defined as the ability to vary behavior to meet different situations) and ability to navigate the online learning environment. For

example, he used anxiety reduction strategies such as sending frequent emails to me to ask questions and increase self-efficacy. While he had *a genuine desire to connect* (Cornes' 1<sup>st</sup> category defined as a sincere, unambiguous curiosity coupled with a positive intent) and *introspective reflection* (Cornes' 10<sup>th</sup> category defined as the ability to review and learn from experience) and *behavioral flexibility* (Cornes' 7<sup>th</sup> category defined as the ability to vary behavior to meet different situations). By the end of the course, Roscoe revealed *humility* (Cornes' 9<sup>th</sup> category defined as a realistic appreciation of one's weaknesses and shortcomings) and that the *design* of the course was a significant factor that caused him to think and write differently. Roscoe also demonstrated *self-assurance and control* (Cornes' 3<sup>rd</sup> category defined as confidence and self-esteem), and provided evidence of *introspective reflection* (Cornes' 10<sup>th</sup> category defined as the ability to review and learn from experience) in online text-based assignments when I probed and questioned perspectives.

Roscoe began the course with an ethnocentric mindset in Denial/Defense and ended the course in Minimization. This case study points out the importance of design criteria to foster reflective writing skills and the use of cooperative/collaborative efforts to promote intercultural sensitivity development and build a sense of community.

*Pepe – Highest IDI Stage Shift*

Pepe is a 35 year old European American male who worked as a Product Manager. He had 10 years of sales experience and 4-5 years of sales management experience as a customer service manager. He was recently promoted to a new position into a manufacturing role. Pepe described his job this way:

**Pepe:** *My job is essentially learn what the person who currently has that job does. He's been in this position, he's*



*been with the company for 42 years and has essentially had the same role and is really grown that division from the time that he came into the company. But for 42 years he's kind of done the same thing and in many respects he's done a lot of it the same way probably almost identically for the last 15 or 20 years.*

He had four more three-credit classes to complete his MBA. He enrolled in *Brainpool Online* because he said:

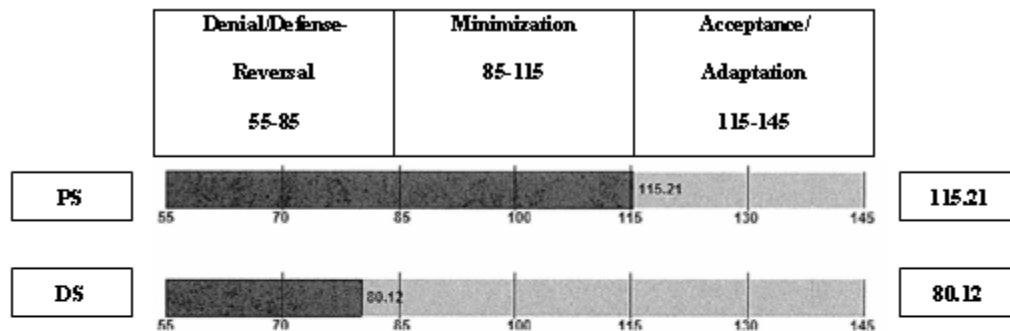
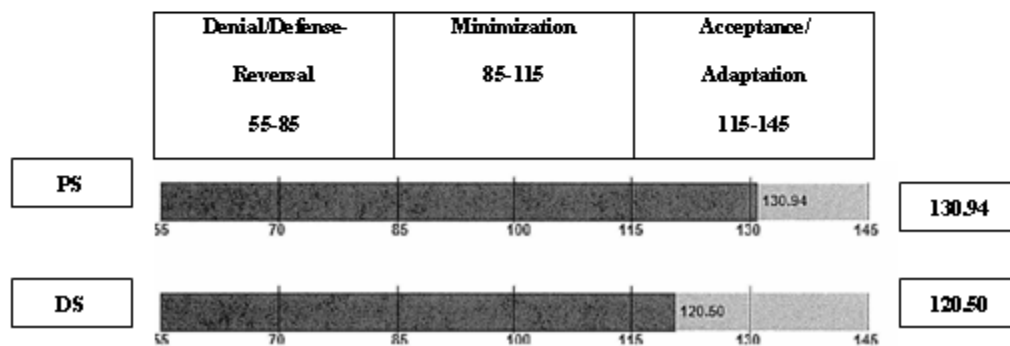
**Pepe:** *I needed to fill the one credit requirement and "Brainpool Online" seemed an intriguing title.*

In his first interview he indicated that he had never lived or worked in a different culture. He was born in the Midwest and indicated that he lived and worked in the same area all his life. He expressed his heritage:

**Pepe:** *I'm pretty American.*

Since he did not have prior global work/study experience or online course experience, the course content and delivery format would be completely new learning experiences. Interviews were conducted both face-to-face and over the telephone and provided thick descriptions of his self-described "*limited*" intercultural experiences.

Pepe was the only participant in both trials who progressed across two stages of intercultural sensitivity development, Denial/Defense to Acceptance/Adaptation, according to the IDI pretest-posttest scores. He authored 32 posts (the average being 32) and read 257 (the average being 220). His IDI pretest-posttest profiles show that he began the online MBA course at 80.12 in Denial/Defense and progressed to 120.5 in Acceptance/Adaptation (see Figure 16, Pepe's IDI Pretest-Posttest Profiles).

Figure 16. *Pepe's IDI Pretest-Posttest Profiles***PRETEST****POSTTEST**

*Week 1: Course Overview and Introduction.* The *Week 1* orientation exercise required participants to watch a video clip and respond to a President and Chief Operating Officer's quote that was often used to motivate employees:

Every morning in Africa, a gazelle wakes up knowing it must run faster than the fastest lion or be killed. Every morning, a lion wakes up knowing it must outrun the slowest gazelle or starve to death. It doesn't matter whether you are a gazelle or a lion; when the sun comes up, you had better be running.

The discussion prompt got participants thinking about their course goals and they posted their reaction in the Discussion Board and responded to the posts of two team members.

When Pepe completed this orientation exercise he was ready to begin *Week 1*. He wrote:

*Pepe: I actually really like this quote. I think one of the biggest killers of a successful company is contentment.*

*This just highlights that you have to get up every day and move closer to your goals etc.*

Later in *Week 1* he revealed *humility* (Cornes' 9<sup>th</sup> category defined as a realistic appreciation of one's weaknesses and shortcomings), "*I am culturally myopic*", and specified course goals "*I hope the course not only will help to familiarize me with D2L but to also broaden my perspectives.*" He elaborated on being "*culturally myopic*" narrow-minded, and possessing an ethnocentric worldview structure in his first journal log:

**Pepe:** *I think I'm culturally very boring. I was once in a class where we had to describe ourselves in terms of a fruit. I think I'm a red apple. A mango or papaya would be more exciting, but.... I'm an apple. What I'm somewhat shocked by is how many people in our class have experience traveling to, interacting with or living in other countries. I'm a fairly quick learner, so I don't have much of a problem getting involved in new things, but from a cross cultural communication standpoint, I feel I'm coming from so far behind most other people that it's very humbling.*

This example along with his first interview data also revealed *self-knowledge* (Cornes' 2<sup>nd</sup> category defined as knowledge of one's strengths and blind spots especially with regard to interpersonal communication) and a Minimization-like mindset:

**Pepe:** *I tend to believe that, this my limited view, but I believe that on a micro level people are people. They're pretty much going to be the same in most cultures... I have very limited exposure to other cultures.*

He reflected in his first journal log that his age and experience were not necessarily as valuable to him as stretching beyond his comfort zone to learn new cultural perspectives:

**Pepe:** *After the first week, I was humbled. I realized that, while my age and depth in my particular life long study, sales and management, is an asset, I have a very particular*

*discipline of study. This course has made me realize that I've gotten comfortable. Anyone who knows me would think that's crazy because I'm pretty driven, but my study has been very vertical and I lack breadth of study.*

Again, Pepe's *humility* (Cornes' 9<sup>th</sup> category defined as a realistic appreciation of one's strengths and weaknesses) and *self-knowledge* (Cornes' 2<sup>nd</sup> category defined as a knowledge of one's strengths and blind spots especially with regard to interpersonal communication) suggested a willingness to move beyond his limited worldview to one that was more tolerant of cultural differences. I provided him feedback in my journal log response to help move him along the intercultural continuum:

**SSW:** *I want you start thinking about events that occur in the workplace in a cultural context. You are immersed in it right now...Observe disputes and other communication interactions that result in misunderstandings...I would like you to write in your journal log next week whether or not you can attribute these observed disagreements to cultural difference. For example, if you were to solve these disputes, would you change your behavior to account for the difference in status between you and your counterpart?*

I suggested that applying cultural awareness to his workplace experience would depend on his ability to analyze the communication interactions and predict misunderstandings. This workplace strategy would ultimately expand his repertoire of business behavior and promote *behavioral flexibility* (Cornes 7<sup>th</sup> category defined as the ability to vary behavior to meet different situations) as well as provide him with the necessary mindset and skill-set to become a more globally competent manager.

*Week 2: Communication in Multinational Organizations.* The primary learning activity in *Week 2* was designed to help participants acknowledge, appreciate, and reconcile cultural differences using different sources of information. The *Week 2* reading was coupled with a cross-cultural application exercise. The purpose of this activity was

to get participants to use the Internet as a source of cross-cultural communication information and have an opportunity to express their creativity. The assignment required them to select something cross-cultural in the news that pertained to the specific culture (Indonesia) they had chosen for the final team presentation. It had to be a current event and they had to examine the artifact and/or resources that they found to identify the represented cultural dimensions of that culture. Pepe submitted a PowerPoint that was colorful, entertaining, and animated. He included an example of a marketing/advertising campaign of an American product in Indonesia.

**Pepe:** *For example, if GM were to build cars in Indonesia, (not sure if they do) the agreement with Japan and the tariffs on their cars would be of great interest to you. It may very easily be overlooked if you aren't paying attention. Understanding the interests of the topic country and the influence your company can have on the economy/business climate should not be underestimated.*

His *self-knowledge* (Cornes' 2<sup>nd</sup> category defined as a knowledge of one's strengths and blind spots especially with regard to interpersonal communication), *self-assurance and control* (Cornes' 3<sup>rd</sup> category defined as confidence and self-esteem), and *humility* (Cornes' 9<sup>th</sup> category defined as a realistic appreciation of one's weaknesses and shortcomings) were categories that continued to emerge as factors that influenced his intercultural learning. He also learned to question his assumptions on a regular basis and put new intercultural learning into action in both his coursework and workplace.

By *Week 2* it appeared that Pepe was highly engaged in the course and promoted a level of discussion with his team members that was interesting and went beyond course parameters. I noted in my instructor/researcher journal that Pepe demonstrated a profound interest in learning new material (“*he's like a sponge*”) and that he had “*an*

*insatiable appetite.*” For example, he frequently posed questions in the Discussion Board and was not afraid to “*go out on a limb*” or show his lack of cultural experience:

**Pepe:** *In building rapport with members of a different culture, what are some of the different strategies utilized with large groups, vs. small groups or individuals?*

The guest experts were used to elicit participants’ real-world work experiences and get them to operationalize intercultural competence and sensitivity in practice. One of the guest experts responded:

**Joe:** *You can only build rapport with different cultures brick by brick. In other words you need to work on it relationship by relationship. Focus on the relationships at hand and if you are successful you will find acceptance with the larger group.*

He then expressed concern about the impact of the global economy on culture and whether or not the guest experts thought it had diluted other cultures around the world and received this response:

**Joe:** *This could take a book to answer. In many external ways, e.g. protocols and language to name two areas, there has been a movement toward cultural dilution so to speak. The amount of worldwide business done in English is an example. However, in the really gut level issues, I do not see dilution and in fact see little or no movement.*

Pepe’s curiosity and thirst for cultural knowledge was indicative of *a genuine desire to connect* (Cornes’ 1st category defined as a sincere, unambiguous curiosity coupled with a positive intent) and stretch beyond his “myopic” comfort zone. He also seemed to possess an *emotional perceptiveness* (Cornes’ 6th category defined as an awareness of one’s own and others’ emotional states) when he described his mentor-mentee relationship in his second interview:

**Pepe:** *In working in this class the thing that I realized is that the person that I'm...I never really looked at this as an inter-cultural issue. From a corporate culture standpoint, the person that I'm coming to replace has been probably one of the most successful people in his position and had some incredibly profitable division...it's very well run. His deliveries are among the best in the company but there's no transference of information so we really have an Achilles Heel because there's nobody there that knows what he does. What I'm trying to do is learn as much of it as I can.*

He began to realize that many of his work-related issues were generational issues with his mentor that could be resolved using the theoretical frameworks learned in class. For example, Pepe learned that cultural value assumptions are embedded within us. Like a fish who doesn't realize it lives in water until it's been removed from it, Pepe gained awareness and greater *sensory acuity* (Cornes' 4<sup>th</sup> category defined as the ability to notice fine distinctions in the sensory information one receives). Therefore, he learned about his own deep cultural patterns and that some people tend to be very independent minded and view authority from strangers as being patronizing. These people tend to believe that establishing credibility is more important than establishing rapport. In addition, he learned that some people like those from Asian and Latin American cultures tend to value family honor and privacy and find that self-revelation could be too direct and explicit. Learning about different cultural value dimensions and how it applies to a variety of interpersonal communication skills helped Pepe better understand how modes of experimentation could help him learn new problem-solving techniques with his mentor:

**Pepe:** *Essentially the challenge that we face and historically we've...it's not that we have disagreements but there's a lot of things that I would like to try that are...technologies that may have come about in the last say 15 years that he really has no interest in trying at all. So I essentially have to wait for a year for him to retire before I can really try these things. The problem with that is that I*

*don't know the processes as well as he does and if we're going to be experimenting with things, it would be nice to experiment with someone who has his experience, who has his ability to compensate or react to some of the unexpected things that will come up when you do these kinds of experiments.*

He also began to express Minimization-like ideas which suggested that he had moved from Denial/Defense:

**Pepe:** *I tend to believe that, this my limited view, but I believe that on a micro level people are people. They're pretty much going to be the same in most cultures as far as you're going to have some that are...money is more important, some family is more important things like that. On a macro level, I think you start to see a lot more, especially in organizations, when you get. ...every organization has culture.*

By the end of *Week 2*, Pepe had demonstrated an eagerness to learn and that he was capable of greater *behavioral flexibility* (Cornes' 7<sup>th</sup> category defined as the ability to vary behavior to meet different situations).

*Week 3: Cross-Cultural Value Dimensions – Part I.* In *Week 3* participants learned that universalist cultures generally define what is good and right and apply that principle to solve problems. Particularist cultures pay far greater attention to the obligations of relationships and unique circumstances. Pepe applied this concept to his own workplace and suggested that particularist individuals would not assume that there is only one course of action to solve a problem and that a friendship may have special obligations. However, he continued to ask questions and seek new cultural knowledge. For example, he pondered why Americans fell on the universal side of the spectrum:

**Pepe:** *It makes me wonder if, because of our diversity, we rely on rules and regulations to add stability? Don't know.*



While he understood the Universalism vs. Particularism concept, he interrogated it further by suggesting that Americans were more particularist than universalist when it came to purchasing consumer items:

**Pepe:** *I was really shocked to see that Americans are more universalists. I still struggle with that in that I see so many different products. It seems like we want a different gadget for everything so it seems like from a product standpoint we seem like particularists so I guess it's at least shown me that my scale may not be as broad as it should be or as it could be.*

He also shared “generational” differences that he warned “*is not as exciting as traveling to Japan or Italy.*” Through my journal log response I assured Pepe that he appropriately linked these course concepts and identified cultural themes that were relevant for discussion and consideration.

*Week 4: Brainpool Online/China.* In *Week 4* participants Chinese intercultural competence and sensitivity would be tested. The objectives for *Week 4* included:

- Define, analyze, and compare communication behaviors that exhibit differently in China.
- Evaluate and assess the Chinese business culture and how it impacts organizational growth.
- Reveal specific solutions to real work problems related to doing business in the Chinese marketplace.
- Demonstrate cultural sensitivity and understanding of the Chinese business culture.

Participants viewed the DVD presentations of two guest experts, Joe and Xiao, at their personal computer desktops and listened to another guest expert, Jeff, in an interview audio clip describing job responsibilities as President for US subsidiary operations in Shanghai, China. These guest experts presented inside and outside cultural perspectives related to doing business in China. Then, participants analyzed a pharmaceutical

marketing campaign and their product's 4-Star Plus logo design. Pepe's *Week 4* post revealed that he was grasping course concepts and considering alternative points of view. His interview data was also revealing Acceptance/Adaptation characteristics as his perspectives appeared to be more inclusive:

**Pepe:** *I have gotten a lot out of the discussions where we are looking at different articles, especially different articles found interesting about the country we picked...The fact that the comments that you get about other people's articles as well, there's a lot more perspectives on what's important in business and what people are trying to get out of this course than I would have expected and that also translates back to work.*

Pepe found online discussions to enhance his ability to take course concepts and immediately apply them to his work context (*design*). The real life applicability of course content was an online learning environment theme that emerged in his data including the relevance of guest experts to precipitate meaningful discussions.

*Week 5: Cross-Cultural Value Dimensions – Part II.* In *Week 5*, participants were asked to describe a personal situation that required them to reconcile cultural differences using the value dimension framework provided by the authors of the reading.

Participants were required to evaluate their behavior and how they responded to the situation. Pepe described a situation at work in *Week 5's* Discussion Board:

**Pepe:** *I know this is a pretty cushy position in that most people don't have a year to tap the cognitive [sic] vault of their predecessor prior to retirement, but the difference in approaches is sometime trying for both of us. I'm a negotiator at heart, not a production leader, so I rely on my negotiations experience. One negotiating analogy is to the martial arts with strong Chinese history. "If your opponent is bigger than you, use there [sic] weight, not yours." In other words, if you're up against a 400% gorilla, Judo is better than boxing....I respectfully use his*

*experience, knowledge, and to some degree, his arrogance, to pull him into experimenting with new technologies. It's a challenge, but I like it.*

This example suggests that Pepe was able to apply the framework to reconcile age difference with his manager-mentor who he was replacing after 42 years on the job. Again, the real life applicability of cultural value dimensions in the workplace facilitated his intercultural learning.

*Week 6: Global Manifest Destiny.* In *Week 6* participants were asked to challenge the concept of Global Manifest Destiny and describe how this applied to course concepts. Pepe demonstrated *behavioral flexibility* (Cornes' 7<sup>th</sup> category defined as the ability to vary behavior to meet different situations) as he tried different approaches in the Discussion Board to motivate his team members to stretch along with him:

**Pepe:** *I'll meekly go out on a limb here and say I believe it will be necessary to have influence over some international resources to be a fortune 500 company. I don't know when that will happen. (My science teachers in grade school said I'd be measured in centimeters by the time I was 20. That was 15 years ago). This evolution will come, but slowly.*

Additional examples in his final journal log illustrated *introspective reflection* (Cornes' 10<sup>th</sup> category defined as an ability to review and learn from experience):

**Pepe:** *I used to have a top 50 list. This is a list of things I wanted to accomplish before I fall off this pebble called Earth. I haven't done a list like this in probably ten years. I think it's time I do it again.*

In his final interview, Pepe spelled out additional *design* and *delivery* themes that contributed to his development from Denial/Defense to Acceptance/Adaptation. He

suggested that there were three online MBA course components that impacted learning outcomes:

**Pepe:** *Seeing stories in the readings about I guess experiences that people had abroad. The second would be the experiences that other people had had and the communication and I guess the point counter point that the students had with each other. Reading through those and the third would be the verbal instruction and direction from you don't just think about cross-cultural experiences as...in one of your e-mails you said you're surrounded by them, make sure you're paying attention and look for these things. And that's probably been the biggest contributor.*

He identified 1) the use of anecdotal stories, 2) online discussions, and 3) instructor feedback through journal logs as factors that promoted greater intercultural sensitivity development.

*Week 7: Debriefing Session and Course Wrap-Up.* Pepe along with the majority of his team members attended the final face-to-face session and informally shared examples from Brainpool Online/Indonesia's final team presentation that participants submitted in *Week 6*. While *Week 7* objectives did not include any formal instruction the objectives of the face-to-face meeting included an informal discussion of the cultural similarities and differences between the United States and Indonesia. Participants also completed final course evaluations and the Intercultural Development Inventory. Most importantly, participants reflected on the *Brainpool Online* experience and made suggestions on how to improve the case study process and analysis. Pepe believed that this online MBA course gave him an “*edge on some subjects in the MBA program*” and taught him a few lessons:

**Pepe:** *Lessons learned: 1) Every interaction with another person has value. Find it. 2) My methodologies for attaining my goals may be effective, but they can be*

*improved and both my goals and methodologies should be questioned regularly. 3) Others' goals may not be the same as mine, but that doesn't mean they are less valuable or that they shouldn't be incorporated into my own, or at the very least, I should strive to understand them...I admit I was pretty arrogant coming into the class feeling that I have a bit more experience in the work environment than many of my fellow students.*

Pepe's themes included recognizing one's limitations through self-understanding and confidence, translating cultural concepts to the work environment, valuing other's ideas such as those offered by guest experts, and risk-taking by asking questions. These themes along with Pepe's cognitive orientations towards cultural difference in Acceptance/Adaptation are explored in further detail in the following summary.

*Summary.* Pepe possessed a high degree of *humility* (Cornes' 9<sup>th</sup> category defined as a realistic appreciation of one's weaknesses and shortcomings), *self-knowledge* (Cornes' 2<sup>nd</sup> category defined as a knowledge of one's strengths and blind spots with regard to interpersonal communication), and *self-assurance and control* (Cornes' 3<sup>rd</sup> category defined as confidence and self-esteem). He was inquisitive and curious and often sought peer/instructor feedback. He was open-minded and valued multiple perspectives, used the Internet, demonstrated resourcefulness, and problematized cultural concepts by considering alternative view points. Pepe's IDI posttest score (120.5) showed that he progressed from Denial/Defense to Acceptance/Adaptation. IDI pretest-posttest differences also revealed narrow gaps between developmental intercultural sensitivity (DS) and perceived intercultural sensitivity (PS) suggesting few incongruities. Thus, developmentally, Pepe resided on the high end of the intercultural continuum, in Acceptance/Adaptation with perceived intercultural sensitivity also residing in Acceptance/Adaptation.

Pepe's *humility* (Cornes' 9<sup>th</sup> category defined as a realistic appreciation of one's weaknesses and shortcomings) and willingness to learn new cultural knowledge were found to greatly impact how he interacted with team members which consequently led to substantial IDI stage shift. Consistent with IDI profiles, much *actual* evidence was found to suggest that Pepe possessed *behavioral flexibility* (Cornes' 7<sup>th</sup> category defined as an ability to vary behavior to meet different situations). He demonstrated *a genuine desire to connect* (Cornes' 1<sup>st</sup> category defined as a sincere, unambiguous curiosity coupled with a positive intent) and *introspective reflection* (Cornes' 10<sup>th</sup> category defined as the ability to review and learn from experience). By the end of the course, Pepe revealed *humility* (Cornes' 9<sup>th</sup> category defined as a realistic appreciation of one's weaknesses and shortcomings) and was found to experience IDI stage shift from Denial/Defense-Reversal to Acceptance/Adaptation. Pepe also demonstrated *self-assurance and control* (Cornes' 3<sup>rd</sup> category defined as confidence and self-esteem) and provided evidence of *introspective reflection* (Cornes' 10<sup>th</sup> category defined as the ability to review and learn from experience) in online text-based assignments when I probed and questioned perspectives. At the conclusion of the online MBA course, Pepe's IDI pretest-posttest profiles revealed a progression across two stages of development from Denial/Defense (80.12) to Acceptance/Adaptation (120.5) and a much narrower gap between actual (DS) and perceived (PS) intercultural sensitivity. This DS and PS numeric analysis suggests that Pepe possessed a greater self-understanding of his "interculturality" in Acceptance/Adaptation and his worldview conflict was nearly resolved at the conclusion of the online MBA course.

Pepe began the course with an ethnocentric mindset in Denial/Defense and progressed along the intercultural continuum to Acceptance/Adaptation according to the IDI. The qualitative evidence suggests that Pepe greatly benefited from the course. He demonstrated that he was curious about cultural difference, applied course concepts directly to his workplace experience, used coping strategies to manage team interaction by soliciting the opinions of others and asking guest expert questions, and often went out “on a limb” to challenge intercultural boundaries. This case study points out the importance of a well-designed curriculum with specific learning activities to enhance team discussion, and a variety of instructional methods to promote and develop intercultural sensitivity, such as the use of guest experts to elicit real world experiences and applicability to the workplace.

#### *Trial II Summary*

In Trial II, Jack’s regression from Minimization to Denial/Defense, Roscoe’s progression from Denial/Defense to Minimization, and Pepe’s progression from Denial/Defense to Acceptance/Adaptation were found to be influenced by varying degrees of *behavioral flexibility* (Cornes’ 7<sup>th</sup> category defined as the ability to vary behavior to meet different situations). These behaviors included using humor, taking risks, and seeking peer/instructor feedback. In the context of the online MBA course, these participants revealed varying behavioral capacities based on prior socialization and knowledge which may have impeded or promoted their intercultural sensitivity development. For example, in the context of the work environment, Pepe used the cultural dimension value framework to gauge his mentor-mentee relationship, and Roscoe improved his reading and writing skills through the online text-based

assignments. Furthermore, Jack indicated that he would use elements of the online MBA course to improve upon his ROTC teaching experience. Roscoe also emphasized that peer/instructor feedback and online discussions facilitated his ability to develop his own opinions and beliefs about cultural differences. From his perspective, the “written word” and the use of the D2L Pager allowed him to articulate points with more freedom and to voice his own opinions through humor to build a community of “*friends.*”

#### Cross-trial Analysis

In order to compare the two trials, I explored IAS survey data and IDI pretest-posttest scores. This analysis surfaced an additional theme related to *intercultural effectiveness* and the *online learning environment*; the quality of virtual teamwork (or degree of virtuality, or richness of the CMS). The findings show that Trial II participants were more satisfied with the online MBA course content and instruction and experienced greater IDI stage shift than Trial I participants. The interpretation of the data suggests that because Trial II participants had access to a paging feature which was used to build a community of difference, this may have been a factor that impacted greater intercultural sensitivity development although this was not found to be statistically significant.

#### *IAS Survey*

The IAS survey, composed of five questions, was administered to participants at the conclusion of the online MBA course to assess perceptions of content and my ability as an instructor. The statistics compiled from both trials suggest that Trial II participants were more satisfied with online MBA course outcomes as interpreted by higher mean rankings and lower standard deviations (see Table 15).



Table 15

*Instructional Assessment Survey (IAS)*

*How would you assess the value of the concepts discussed in this course to your overall education as compared with other courses you have taken in the graduate curriculum at Marquette? Answer Key: 1-Poor 7-Excellent*

Semester	Mean / Std Deviation	Number of Respondents
Summer 2004	4.50 / 1.86	19
Summer 2005	4.81 / 1.22	16

*How much do you think this course contributed to your knowledge of the subject area? Answer Key: 1-Poor 7-Excellent*

Semester	Mean / Std Deviation	Number of Respondents
Summer 2004	4.63 / 2.01	19
Summer 2005	5.19 / 1.33	16

*Rate your overall satisfaction with this course? Answer Key: 1-Poor 7-Excellent*

Semester	Mean / Std Deviation	Number of Respondents
Summer 2004	4.84 / 1.92	19
Summer 2005	5.25 / 1.18	16

*Independent of personality, how would you rate this instructor? Answer Key: 1-Poor 7-Excellent*

Semester	Mean / Std Deviation	Number of Respondents
Summer 2004	6.00 / 1.41	19
Summer 2005	5.81 / 0.83	16

*Additional Comments:*

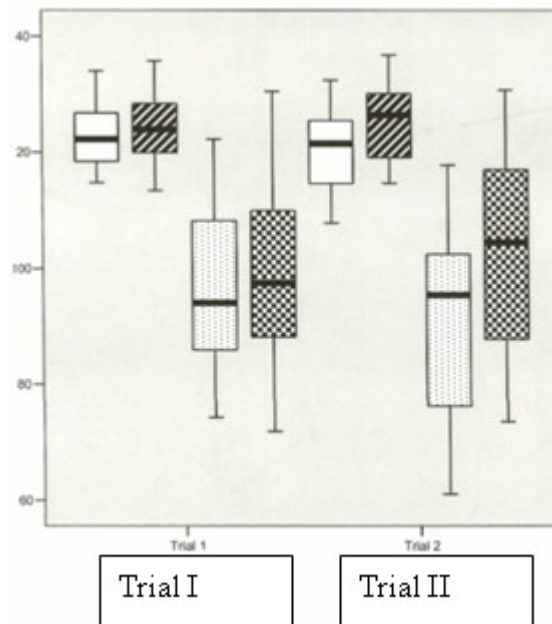
Semester	Comments
Summer 2004	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Loved it!</li> <li>-Have more content on specific cultures.</li> <li>-Incorporate in-class activities.</li> </ul>
Summer 2005	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Online course is fun.</li> <li>-Class needs to be 3 credits.</li> <li>-Cross-cultural communication is a valuable tool.</li> <li>-Case studies that included people's experience were the best.</li> <li>-Best course taken at [this University] yet. Hope they continue to expand use of format.</li> <li>-I learned quite a bit about D2L and the online class process. This format was highly effective and engaging-really sparked my interest in the topics.</li> <li>-Convenience of D2L was a big plus.</li> </ul>

While they appear to be measures of the effectiveness of my instruction and course design, they should be interpreted with great caution. For example, some variations could be expected because of measurement errors and/or factors that were beyond my control: 1) this was the only online course in the MBA program, 2) this was the first and second time I taught this subject matter, 3) this was the same survey used for one-credit electives and three-credit core courses, and 4) this was an incomplete data set (three anonymous participants did not complete this survey because they did not attend the final face-to-face meeting in *Week 7* when it was administered).

#### *IDI Pretest-Posttest Scores*

In conjunction with IAS survey results, visual boxplots of cross-trial IDI pretest-posttest scores show that Trial II (Team Three) experienced greater intercultural sensitivity development than Trial I (Team One and Team Two) (see Figure 17). Boxplots in Figure 17 summarize the following statistical measures in; median, upper and lower quartiles, and minimum and maximum data values of PS and DS pretest-posttest scores. Smaller white and striped boxes represent PS pretest-posttest scores; larger white and checkered boxes represent DS pretest-posttest scores. To interpret these boxplots, one can clearly see that the line in each box represents the median value of DS and PS pretest-posttest scores and these scores were greater on average in Trial II (Team Three) than in Trial I (Teams One and Two).

Figure 17. *Cross-trial IDI Pretest-Posttest Scores*



The boxes contain the middle 50% of the data. The upper edge (hinge) represents the 75<sup>th</sup> percentile of the data set; the lower hinge represents the 25<sup>th</sup> percentile. By using these boxplots, one can quickly compare DS and PS pretest-posttest differences between trials and see the symmetry and/or skewness. While the boxplots show cross-trial differences, they do not examine the team strength or variability of positive IDI change or shift. Therefore, I further explored each team's degree of heterogeneity, or diversity, and its potential impact on IDI score change and IDI stage shift using available participant demographics. The team's degree of heterogeneity was defined as the number of team members who represented different ages, genders and ethnicities other than European American, and who had status regarding prior global work/study, prior online course experience, and/or remote participation.

### *Team IDI Stage Shift Status*

There were three teams; two teams in Trial I (Brainpool Online/Brazil and Brainpool Online/India) and one team in Trial II (Brainpool Online/Indonesia). Boston and Wit were on Team One/Brazil, Zim was on Team Two/India, and Jack, Roscoe, and Pepe were on Team Three/Indonesia.

The first team, referred to as Team One/Brazil was composed of ten team members (five males and five females) representing two ethnicities; nine European Americans and one African American; eight were 22-30 years old while two were 31-40. Five participants had prior global work or study experience (PG), two participants had prior online experience (PO), and three were remote participants (RP). Six participants (or 60%) experienced positive IDI score change and of those, two (20%) experienced positive IDI stage shift (see Table 16, Team One/Brazil).

Table 16

### *Team One/Brazil Participant Demographics*

<b>Team One/Brazil Participant</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Ethnicity</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Status</b>	<b>IDI Score Change</b>	<b>IDI Shift Status</b>
<b>WIT</b>	2	EA	F	PO/PG/RP	-13.27	Regression
<b>LARRY</b>	2	EA	M	PG	-12.69	Regression
<b>ALLIE</b>	2	EA	F	None	-2.73	No Shift
<b>SUZANNE</b>	2	EA	F	PG	-0.65	No Shift
<b>WILLIAM</b>	2	EA	M	None	4.8	No Shift
<b>BOSTON</b>	3	EA	F	PO/RP	5.41	Progression
<b>ANTHONY</b>	2	AA	M	None	11.18	No Shift
<b>FERNANDO</b>	3	EA	M	PG	14.91	No Shift
<b>JUANITA</b>	2	EA	F	PG/RP	17.45	Progression
<b>JAMIE</b>	2	EA	M	None	20.26	No Shift

The second team referred to as Team Two/ India was composed of twelve team members (five males and seven females) representing three ethnicities; ten European Americans, one Indonesian, and one African American; one participant was 18-21 years old, nine were 22-30, one was 31-40, and one was 51-60. Six participants had prior global work or study experience (PG), two participants had prior online experience (PO), and there were no remote participants (RP). Six participants (50%) experienced positive IDI score change and of those, two (16%) experienced positive IDI stage shift (see Table 17, Team Two/India).

Table 17

*Team Two/India Participant Demographics*

<b>Team Two/India Participant</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Ethnicity</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Status</b>	<b>IDI Score Change</b>	<b>IDI Stage Shift Status</b>
<b>GEORGE</b>	2	EA	M	PG	-12.9	No Shift
<b>TEGO</b>	2	AA	F	None	-12.29	Regression
<b>RICH</b>	2	EA	M	None	-10.14	No Shift
<b>ELAINE</b>	2	EA	F	None	-10.05	No Shift
<b>ACE</b>	5	EA	M	PO/PG	-6.26	No Shift
<b>ISABEL</b>	2	IND	F	PG	-3.97	No Shift
<b>CHASE</b>	2	EA	F	None	2.04	No Shift
<b>JUDY</b>	2	EA	F	None	3.48	No Shift
<b>CHIPPER</b>	2	EA	M	None	3.99	No Shift
<b>BONO</b>	3	EA	M	PO/PG	5.57	No Shift
<b>WINNIE</b>	2	EA	F	PG	8.92	Progression
<b>ZIM</b>	1	EA	F	PG	34.64	Progression

The third team, referred to as Team Three/Indonesia was composed of sixteen team members (nine males and seven females) representing four ethnicities; thirteen European Americans, one Persian American, one Indonesian, and one British; one participant was 18-21 years old, nine were 22-30, four were 31-40, and two were 41-50. Seven participants had prior global or work study experience (PG), two participants had prior online course experience (PO), and there was one remote participant (RP). Fourteen participants (87.5%) experienced positive IDI score change and of those, six (67.5%) experienced positive IDI stage shift (see Table 18, Team Three/Indonesia).

Table 18

*Team Three/Indonesia Participant Demographics*

<b>Team Three/Indonesia Participant</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Ethnicity</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Status</b>	<b>IDI Score Change</b>	<b>IDI Stage Shift Status</b>
IMOGENE	2	EA	F	None	-26.48	Regression
JACK	2	PA	M	PO	-7.91	Regression
CRISTINA	3	EA	F	PG	0.42	No Shift
KREEN	3	EA	M	None	1.2	No Shift
SYDNEY	2	EA	F	PG	3.62	No Shift
TRELLER	3	UK	M	PG	5.69	No Shift
NICOLE	2	EA	F	None	8.47	Progression
HARVEY	4	EA	M	PG/RP	9.79	No Shift
RAM	2	EA	M	None	11.87	No Shift
SAN	2	IND	F	PG	12.96	No Shift
SALLIE	2	EA	F	PG	16.95	No Shift
BOB	2	EA	M	None	18.49	Progression
ROSCOE	4	EA	M	PO	23.9	Progression
WAYNE-	2	EA	M	PG	25.92	Progression
ELLEN	1	EA	F	None	27.92	Progression
PEPE	3	EA	M	None	40.38	Progression

### *Cross-trial Summary*

#### *Virtual Teamwork*

A factor that may have impacted IDI stage shift was an aspect of virtual teamwork, the degree of virtuality, known as the richness of the communication media typically used by members to accomplish tasks (Cohen & Gibson, 2003; Townsend, DeMarie, & Hendrickson, 1998) and the extent to which team members were separated by time and space. The quality of virtual teamwork and its impact on IDI stage shift was found to vary considerably across trials. For example, Team/Brazil and Team/India (Trial I teams) had three remote participants who posted assignments beyond a 50 mile range from campus but did not have access to a paging feature on the Blackboard CMS while Team Three/Indonesia (Trial II) had one remote participant and had access to D2L Pager.

The team with the greatest degree of heterogeneity (diversity) was Team Three/Indonesia which comprised four ethnicities; seven participants had prior global work or study experience, two participants had prior online course experience, and there was one remote participant. The tables show that 60% of participants on Team One/Brazil (6/10), 50% on Team Two/India (6/12), and 87.5% on Team Three/Indonesia (14/16) experienced positive IDI score change.

Many participants perceived that the acquisition of intercultural competence and sensitivity development occurred through asynchronous discussion which highlighted participants' different perspectives for resolving cross-cultural dilemmas (e.g. Zim, Trail I, and Pepe, Trial II). Online team collaboration genuinely challenged participants to resolve cross-cultural conflict (Roscoe, and Jack, Trial II). While the online learning



environment “*simulated a foreign country*” for some participants (e.g., Boston, Trial I), the online collaborative teamwork challenged others to confront cultural difference in open and “visible” discussion boards (e.g. Pepe, Trial II). Collaborative efforts were initially painful (e.g., Boston, Trial I) and some participants complained about working in large discussion groups or had doubts about completing the final team presentation (e.g., Jack, Trial II) or receiving little team member support (e.g., Roscoe, Trial II). However, over time, the sustained “visible” discussions made participants more “accountable” and team dynamics emerged to reveal the interplay between cultural values and assumptions. Adversarial tensions among team members (e.g., Roscoe, and Jack, Trial II) led to multiple interpretations and varied responses about resolving cultural dilemmas and completing final team presentations. Participants wrestled with frustration and struggle (e.g., Boston, Trial I, and Jack, Trial II) which simultaneously raised cultural awareness about the contexts of online learning and doing business across cultures. The asynchronous discussion generated misunderstandings and fears related to team roles and responsibilities (e.g. Boston, Trial I and Roscoe, Trial II). Some participants used consensus building, or building a community of difference, through humor and flexibility (e.g., Zim, Trial I and Roscoe, Trial II) as an essential ingredient for the resolution process of cultural dilemmas through “win-win agreements.”

A review of qualitative data analyses suggest that participants from both trials found *virtual teamwork* and the consistent use of cross-cultural case study applications, required cross-cultural collaborative teamwork, and guided cross-cultural discussions and reflections-as online MBA course components that worked together to reinforce behavioral skills (e.g., Zim, Trial I). Linking content to work experience was perceived

by participants to impact behavior in the workplace and operationalize the skills learned in the course (e.g., Pepe, Trial II). However, participants' actions to change or implement new behaviors were the most difficult to ascertain from a distance (e.g., Wit, Trial I). Stretching one's thinking to reevaluate cultural assumptions and continued development of cognitive knowledge depended on the cultivation of reflective thinking representative in the journal logs (e.g., Zim, Trail I). Repeatable behaviors through a recursive writing process and access to D2L contributed to participants' personal intercultural sensitivity development and to cultural insights (e.g., Roscoe, Trial II).

### *Conclusions*

The general impression of the online MBA course was positive and participants were excited about learning how to collaborate using an online learning environment. Some participants were skeptical about accomplishing the course objectives (e.g., Boston, Trial I, and Jack, Trial II) until trust had been established and all virtual teamwork had been completed. In the end, participants rejoiced a collective sigh of relief "*We did it!*" The online text-based discussions promoted participants' abilities to exchange, evaluate, synthesize, and apply knowledge as they worked together to recognize cultural dilemmas, reconcile them through synthesis and evaluation, and then link them to experience by making useful connections to business practice (e.g. Zim, Trial I and Pepe, Trial II).

The conclusions drawn from cross-trial analysis suggest that the quality of *virtual teamwork* may have been a factor that impacted intercultural sensitivity development. For example, the data reveals that Trial I teams did not have access to consistent use of a paging feature and participated on less heterogeneous teams, due to size and number of demographic variables. While the effectiveness and strength of virtual teams has been

found to depend on interpersonal relationships, the empirical research also suggests that advantages of team heterogeneity are best obtained after a period of meaningful interaction that allows for the development of relational ties (Callen, 2008, p. 34). Thus, the use of a paging feature for Trial II participants may have allowed them to build better relationships with team members through constant contact than Trial I participants. Over time, through continuous D2L paging interactions, the capacity to exercise intercultural competence and sensitivity may have been enhanced for Trial II participants, and later exhibited as a greater number of participants with positive IDI score change and positive IDI stage shift. Four of twenty-two (18%) Trial I participants and six of sixteen (37.5%) Trial II participants experienced positive IDI stage shift.

### Findings

The final analysis involved sorting and organizing themes, comparing them and describing the relationships between them, drawing conclusions from the organization of the data, and constructing explanatory schemas to describe in what ways the online MBA course impacted intercultural sensitivity development. Since the literature review in Chapter Two suggests that affective, behavioral, and cognitive competencies (i.e., attitude, behavior, and knowledge) must work together to develop intercultural sensitivity (J. M. Bennett, 2003; M. J. Bennett, 2001; Klopff, 2001, Lustig & Koester, 1999; Ting-Toomey, 1999; Wiseman, Hammer, & Nishida, 1989), the theme analysis, as expected, produced explanatory schemas related to these competencies. These explanatory schemas answer the research question: “In what ways did an online MBA course impact intercultural sensitivity development for graduate students along the intercultural

continuum.” I begin with factors related to *intercultural effectiveness*, followed by factors related to the *online learning environment*.

### *Intercultural Effectiveness*

Flexible cognitive orientations, coping strategies and cooperative/collaborative efforts emerged as factors that were critical to the understanding of how intercultural effectiveness is developed through virtual teamwork. These factors can be summarized as: 1) the degree to which a participant demonstrated flexible cognitive orientations in teamwork activities (knowledge), 2) the degree to which a participant used coping strategies to manage the complexities of teamwork interaction (behavior), and 3) the degree to which a participant used cooperative/collaborative efforts through task role management (attitude/behavior). These explanatory schemas describe the impact of intercultural effectiveness on intercultural sensitivity development:

1. Participants who demonstrated flexible cognitive orientations by updating and modifying their perspectives to be more inclusive developed greater intercultural sensitivity.
2. Participants who demonstrated coping strategies by reducing anxiety and increasing self-efficacy developed greater intercultural sensitivity.
3. Participants who demonstrated cooperative/collaborative efforts through task role management developed greater intercultural sensitivity.

### *Flexible Cognitive Orientations*

This factor refers to one’s knowledge used to update and modify cultural perspectives and respond appropriately to cross-cultural application exercises and scenarios. That is, a participant demonstrating a flexible cognitive orientation suspends judgment versus stereotyping, possesses inclusive versus exclusive perspectives,

possesses empathy, demonstrates flexibility and cognitive agility, and demonstrates an eagerness and willingness to learn.

To begin, Boston and Jack possessed different cognitive orientations. Boston's worldview configuration, or how she organized reality, simplified or polarized cultural difference (Denial/Defense) and Jack indicated a worldview that highlighted cultural commonality and universal values (Minimization). Despite these differences, Boston was more flexible and demonstrated compliance, resilience and optimism throughout the online MBA course while Jack appeared to be less flexible and demonstrated resistance and negativity. By the posttest, however, Boston and Jack revealed opposite results; Boston progressed to Minimization and Jack regressed to Denial/Defense. Even though Jack navigated the online MBA course brilliantly, he still questioned the benefits of using large virtual teams to facilitate the acquisition of intercultural competence and sensitivity. While Jack possessed online resilience like Boston, he was less flexible unlike Boston. For example, once William emerged as team leader in Trial I, Boston became more resilient and compliant in her online communication interactions with her team members. Boston stated, *"My trust level has really risen the last 7 days. Building a sense of trust and community is so vital to this effort."* Since resilience has been identified in positive psychology as one's ability to rebound or "bounce back" when faced with adversity (Luthans, Youssef, & Avolio, 2007), Boston became more motivated to persist and put forth the required effort to overcome *"hang-ups"* and *"control freak"* tendencies to pursue alternative pathways. Boston expressed clear relief when the course had ended: *"I have overcome some of my technical difficulties and made that leap of faith in collaborating with team members remotely on our final project."* Her optimistic attitude

combined with self-efficacy and self-awareness of her tendencies allowed her to achieve her goals. In addition, she possessed great empathy for team members by supporting the team with encouragement as she completed assignments from a remote location.

Furthermore, demonstration of cultural awareness, cultural transformation, and the acquisition of cultural knowledge or *sensory acuity* (Cornes 4<sup>th</sup> category defined as the ability to notice fine distinctions in the sensory information one receives) was also found in group data. Mid-course survey analysis of thirty-three of thirty-six responses showed that participants experienced a new heightened sense of cultural awareness. The Discussion Board and journal log data also provided evidence that Jack and Boston possessed a growing cultural awareness. The design and sequence of the collaborative activities caused them to move from dominant cultural ideologies and reflect on different ways of thinking, and experiment with new ideas. For example, Boston admitted that the cross-cultural course content piqued a general cultural curiosity that, in turn developed into her ongoing cultural awareness despite her earlier beliefs. Jack, as an ROTC instructor, articulated many ethnocentric worldviews and promoted a self-understanding that revealed little *actual* cultural transformation or *behavioral flexibility* (Cornes' 7<sup>th</sup> category defined as the ability to vary behavior to meet different situations) but despite his less flexible cognitive orientation, he insisted that he would implement new cultural frameworks learned in the online MBA course to design and deliver future ROTC courses.

### *Coping Strategies*

This factor refers to one's behavior used to reduce anxiety and increase self-efficacy in the context of the online MBA course. That is, a participant demonstrating

coping strategies manages emotion and stress with self-confidence, displays a positive sense of humor and high self-regard, exhibits entrepreneurial spirit and a desire for experimentation, takes risks to explore new ideas, recognizes and responds to adversity, uses anecdotal stories to make sense of ideas, and learns to cultivate patience by responding calmly to team members.

A prominent coping strategy found in the data was the use of humor exhibited by Roscoe to build a community of difference that valued diverse opinions. As a task management leader in Trial II, Roscoe believed that humor was a valuable asset for establishing relationships with team members and he modeled respectful behavior in the discussion areas. Roscoe also found that the online MBA course forced him to communicate his ideas through written words and challenged him to talk about things that he really did not understand that well. While Roscoe complained that few of his team members were actively engaged in online discussions at the beginning, he described an unintended outcome at the end; he made some “*good friends*.” He also managed emotion and stress with self-confidence by seeking peer/instructor feedback through emails and D2L Pager which helped him cultivate more patience and respond more calmly to his Brainpool Online/Indonesia team. Through teamwork activities, Roscoe acquired new cultural information, established interpersonal relationships, and learned to become more tolerant.

Rather than use humor as a predominant coping strategy which was a Minimization-like strategy, Pepe, on the other hand, exhibited entrepreneurial spirit and a desire to experiment with his mentor to learn new business practices. He took risks in the discussion areas to explore new ideas by asking guest expert questions and often went

“*out on a limb*” to solicit the opinions of others to inform his cultural knowledge and then applied them to his workplace setting. Using anecdotal stories in a variety of text-based assignments also increased Pepe’s awareness of cultural difference in the workplace setting.

Similarly, Jack recognized and responded to adversity to virtual teamwork and found that the use of anecdotal stories helped him make sense of course concepts by teaching him to respond more appropriately to different cultural contexts. The anecdotal stories helped Jack consider his further development along the intercultural continuum on three levels -- self, others, and military setting, in recognizing and in rejecting the ignorance and arrogance that produces many kinds of cross-cultural errors. The value of anecdotal stories and the different resolutions to critical cultural incidents posted in the online Discussion Boards provided kernels of wisdom that many participants found most beneficial. The IAS survey also elicited a response from an anonymous participant: “*Case studies that included people’s experience were the best.*” Boston, Jack, and Pepe reported that the use of anecdotal stories was perceived to be a valuable intercultural learning tool. These participants cited their particular enjoyment of reading other team members’ cross-cultural incidents as key features that seemed to be most appreciated.

#### *Cooperative/Collaborative Efforts*

This factor refers to one’s attitude and behavior used to manage the complexities of virtual teamwork and emerged as task management leadership. That is, a participant demonstrating cooperative/collaborative efforts uses humor to build relationships, maintains optimistic outlook, establishes credibility through relevant knowledge, solicits opinions of others, tries to achieve consensus through win-win agreements, draws out the



best from others, provides influence and direction, sustains efforts of others rather than individual interests, mobilizes others to implement desired changes, and shows concern for team interaction and accountability.

For many participants, like Boston, it became necessary to establish trust with team members early in the collaboration process and to work towards consensus when completing cross-cultural assignments. Hammer and Bennett (1998, 2002, 2004) suggest that individuals seek out and enjoy cultural experiences when they feel confident to take risks and confront cultural difference. Furthermore, building online communities of difference placed unique demands on participants to learn new ways of communicating in a text-based learning environment (e.g. Roscoe). One anonymous participant expressed in the final course survey that collaboration was difficult because one “*had little power to force the issue*” working on large virtual teams. Asking questions became an effective strategy for initiating collaborative activities. Like Roscoe, Zim frequently asked questions and demonstrated task role management through unique and different ways. For example, Zim used her reading and writing strengths and volunteered as team editor to execute tasks and motivate team members to complete the final team presentation. Participants learned that cooperating and collaborating through virtual teamwork required a concerted and conscious effort.

### *Online Learning Environment*

Course engagement, introspective reflection, and cultural curiosity emerged as factors that were critical to the understanding of how intercultural sensitivity is developed through the online learning environment. These factors are summarized in the following three conclusions: 1) the degree to which a participant was engaged in the

course (behavior), 2) the degree to which a participant demonstrated introspective reflection (knowledge), and 3) the degree to which a participant was predisposed to online learning or exhibited cultural curiosity using Web-based research (attitude). These explanatory schemas describe the impact of the *online learning environment* on intercultural sensitivity development:

1. Participants who were more actively engaged in the online MBA course by authoring and reading more posts developed greater intercultural sensitivity.
2. Participants who were more committed to introspective reflection by interrogating multiple perspectives experienced greater intercultural sensitivity and significant change in terms of their confidence to challenge, explore, and push their intercultural boundaries.
3. Participants who were more curious, more open-minded to online learning, and more often elicited diverse perspectives, reconciled cultural differences and developed greater intercultural sensitivity

### *Course Engagement*

This factor refers to one's attitude and behavior that was exhibited as active course involvement (e.g., this was evaluated quantitatively by number of posts and qualitatively by richness of data). That is, a participant who is actively engaged in the course authors and reads more than the minimum number of posts, models suggested behaviors and etiquette, tolerates course latitude, utilizes and accesses guest expert material, demonstrates resourcefulness versus helplessness, engages team members with a positive manner, seeks peer/instructor feedback, and uses proactive behaviors versus reactive behaviors.

Roscoe's abilities to actively engage in the course and his positive attitude towards building a community of difference helped him emerge as a facilitator of task role management. He authored the most number of posts (80) for both trials, developed

patience, and learned to work effectively with team members where everybody wins and makes contributions as opposed to wanting to be right and make all the decisions. He formed bonds with team members who shared different demographic experience and used the D2L Pager frequently to enhance communication in the online learning environment.

Contrary to displaying a win-win attitude and actively engaging in discussions, Wit made few contributions that elaborated on her understanding of cultural difference and often tried to solicit agreement. She authored the minimum number of posts (22) and maintained a position in her “comfort zone” rather than stretched her cognitive building skills. While she was a self-described risk-taker and had prior global study and online course experience, this translated into a lackadaisical attitude related to team performance. Her team members consisted of ten team members, one of whom was African American. Since she was distracted by work responsibilities, it cannot be assumed that she found her team members less engaging or interesting. In this case, prior cognitive knowledge of cultural concepts and prior online course experience provided Wit with a “security blanket.” Maintaining her comfort zone allowed her to manage the demands of coursework with simultaneous work and travel. Even though the online learning environment created “*a little bit of confusion, chaos, and mayhem in the beginning*” she found it quite amusing that her team members fumbled around to “*get [their] bearings*” and offered little or no assistance in the resolution process. Consequently, Wit’s lack of course engagement and her lackluster desire to perform above the minimum expectations, led to a regression in intercultural sensitivity development. Since she had 22 posts with the average being 29.8 for Trial I, it is not

surprising that she did not resolve her trailing Denial/Defense issues, like Boston and Juanita, who experienced positive IDI shift and had 32, and 39 posts, respectively.

### *Introspective Reflection*

This factor refers to one's knowledge that was used to review and learn from experience. That is, a participant who demonstrates introspective reflection challenges intercultural boundaries by linking prior knowledge, considers and interrogates multiple perspectives, links asynchronous discussions to text-based assignments, and links course concepts to workplace issues.

Zim and Pepe found it easier to communicate cultural perspectives and problematize issues in reflective writing while others struggled and conveyed frustration. The idea of developing online communicative competence (Bowers, 1984) required a unique form of interaction in which the instructor/researcher and participants were challenged to free themselves from identity constraints imposed by inherited language and ideologies. Zim and Pepe suggested that online learning promoted the democratization of ideas and gave voice to those who otherwise would remain silent. Zim's team was comprised ten European Americans, one Indonesian, and one African-American. Similarly, Pepe's team was comprised of thirteen European Americans, one Persian-American (Jack), one Indonesian, and one British. Both cases found that asking questions of diverse team members gave rise to new knowledge not previously considered in their reflective writings.

While Zim and Pepe were highly reflective and thrived in the online learning environment, at the conclusion of the course, Jack still preferred face-to-face courses while Zim would take another online course if it were offered. Anonymous survey data

revealed that five participants would not take another online course if it was offered to them and others suggested: “*Incorporate chat in-class activities.*” This is consistent with findings from Eom and colleagues (2006) who suggest that participants with visually and read/write learning styles were more satisfied with online courses and performance outcomes. Although Zim did not have prior online course experience, she maintained a “no holds barred attitude” by sharing political and religious opinions and was flexible, tolerant, adaptable, empathetic, sensitive, and patient with her team members. This further suggests that it is quite possible that participants, like Zim, had already been socialized regarding the uses and appearance of electronic communication through her work experiences (Atkinson & Kydd, 1997; Gefen & Straub, 1997).

The reflective nature of the online learning environment also promoted “praxis” and experimentation or “dress rehearsals” in the workplace that gave rise to new knowledge. The journal logs stimulated new ideas for managing the complexities of cross-cultural conflict in the workplace and he often interrogated the ideas presented by diverse team members. For Pepe, he learned new ways to consider experimenting with his mentor to improve his personal business practice. Pepe also summed up his “aha! moments” in his final journal log admitting that he had gotten too comfortable and that it was time to stretch beyond his comfort zone and create a “*Top 50 list*.” For example, Pepe explained that he was shocked and humbled about how many of his team members were not experiencing difficulty managing online course communications. His goal was to “*experience an online learning environment*” and overcome frustration and struggle navigating the online learning environment.

### *Cultural Curiosity*

This factor refers to one's positive attitude towards cultural difference that exhibited as an open mind towards new cultural perspectives, motivation to find Web-based resources to inform cultural knowledge, and a desire to engage in future intercultural interactions. That is a participant who demonstrates cultural curiosity seeks new cultural information, expresses interest in other cultures, and demonstrates a willingness to explore new cultural perspectives through Web-based research.

Evidence that Boston and Jack were motivated to pursue intercultural communication interactions outside the parameters of the course was also found. These participants expressed an interest in improving their intercultural communication interactions and their desire to pursue global work/study assignments during or after the completion of their MBA program. The structure of the CMS, and the nature of the free, open discussion areas, allowed them to choose which posts to read and which posts to respond to. Boston quipped "*it's kind of like being at a cocktail party where this person was kind of interesting and this one didn't have too much to say.*" They also chose to enroll in the online course with a certain degree of motivation and interest in improving their intercultural communication skills through virtual teamwork. Both cases varied in their levels of tolerance associated with their openness to the online learning experience which impacted learning outcomes.

Contrary to Boston and Jack, Wit possessed little cultural curiosity, demonstrated an attitude of disinterest and disengagement, and put forth the minimal amount of effort in her assignments. While her team was very proactive and exchanged interesting cultural information and Web-based links and research to inform the final team

presentation through active participation in the online learning environment, Wit had little impact on the final product.

### Summary

Chapter Four has attempted to answer the research question: “In what ways did an online MBA course impact intercultural sensitivity development for graduate students along the intercultural continuum?” The quantitative data analysis using ANOVA, Chi-Square, and Wilcoxon Signed-Rank tests scrutinized IDI pretest-posttest scores and revealed that twenty-six participants (68%) experienced IDI score change but only ten participants (26%) experienced IDI stage shift progression. Stated differently, 26% of participants progressed one developmental stage or more along the intercultural continuum from ethnocentrism to ethnorelativism, (e.g., Denial/Defense to Minimization, or Minimization to Acceptance/Adaptation). Of the remaining twenty-eight participants, five (13%) experienced IDI stage shift regression, and twenty-three (60%) experienced no IDI stage shift. Significant predictors of IDI score change were age, gender, and course engagement but these were not found to be significant predictors of IDI stage shift. Thus, quantitative findings suggest that the online MBA course did increase intercultural sensitivity development within stages (IDI score change), but not enough to significantly cause a shift between stages (IDI stage shift). Furthermore, survey results suggest that the quality of virtual teamwork may have been a factor that contributed to participants’ perceptions that the online MBA course was a useful and complementary addition to “traditional” MBA face-to-face courses. Finally, complementary qualitative data analysis using the constant comparative method (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) identified emerging *intercultural effectiveness* and *online learning environment* themes.

Explanatory schemas suggest factors such as flexible cognitive orientations, coping strategies, cooperative/collaborative efforts, course engagement, introspective reflection, and cultural curiosity impacted IDI stage shift.



## CHAPTER FIVE

### IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### Discussion

This study explored the impact of an online MBA course on intercultural sensitivity development. The primary research objective was to investigate in what ways the online delivery format contributed to or detracted from the educational experience for thirty-eight participants. I begin with a discussion of the key findings followed by the implications I draw from the data and my recommendations for improving and teaching the online MBA course. The chapter closes with ideas for conducting future research.

#### *Key Findings*

My primary goal as the instructor/researcher was to provide a coherent educational experience for all participants, while conducting two types of data collection and analysis (group data and individual case data) to surface themes that would then be used as explanatory schemas to answer the research question: **In what ways did an online MBA course impact intercultural sensitivity development for graduate students along the intercultural continuum?** The results of the study presented in Chapter Four showed that a majority of participants (26 out of 38) experienced positive IDI score change, or greater intercultural sensitivity development. The various analyses surfaced six major conclusions. The following sections review the key findings and present three conclusions related to intercultural effectiveness. This is followed by three conclusions related to the online learning environment

### *Intercultural Effectiveness*

The first three conclusions related to intercultural effectiveness and the ways in which participants interacted with team members as they engaged in activities designed to increase their intercultural sensitivity development:

1. Participants who demonstrated flexible cognitive orientations by updating and modifying their perspectives developed greater intercultural sensitivity.
2. Participants who demonstrated coping strategies by reducing anxiety and increasing self-efficacy developed greater intercultural sensitivity.
3. Participants who demonstrated cooperative/collaborative efforts through task role management developed greater intercultural sensitivity.

Participants with varying degrees of positive IDI stage shift possessed flexible cognitive orientations which were exhibited as behaviors such as suspending judgment versus stereotyping, asking questions and demonstrating an inquisitive nature, and tolerating ambiguity while seeking out new cultural information. These participants also used coping strategies by maintaining an optimistic outlook, demonstrating an eagerness and willingness to learn, and managing emotion and stress with self-confidence and high self-regard. In addition, participants enacted cooperative and collaborative efforts by using humor to build relationships, soliciting opinions of others, trying to achieve consensus through win-win agreements, drawing out the best from others, providing influence and direction, sustaining efforts of others rather than individual interests, and mobilizing others to implement desired changes. These participants possessed the ability to be sensitive to cues that were often unfamiliar, thus requiring them to adapt their behavior and expectations accordingly.

### *Online Learning Environment*

The second three conclusions related to the online learning environment and the ways in which design and delivery themes shaped the participant's learning experience:

1. Participants who were more actively engaged in the online MBA course by authoring and reading more posts developed greater intercultural sensitivity.
2. Participants who were more committed to introspective reflection by interrogating multiple perspectives experienced greater intercultural sensitivity and significant change in terms of their confidence to challenge, explore, and push their intercultural boundaries.
3. Participants who were more curious, more open-minded to online learning, and more often elicited diverse perspectives, reconciled cultural differences and developed greater intercultural sensitivity.

The online MBA course was intentionally designed and delivered to encourage participants to interact with one another, through asynchronous online postings, as they explored new course concepts and negotiated new perspectives. The analysis revealed that participants who authored and read more posts showed more evidence of intercultural sensitivity development. These participants used the discussion area and pager to openly and curiously inquire about course assignments and thrived on the latitude of self-managed teamwork. They successfully utilized and accessed guest expert material, demonstrated resourcefulness and online resilience, sought peer/instructor feedback, used proactive behaviors to complete assignments, valued asynchronous discussions and the real-life applicability of course concepts, and showed concern for team interaction and accountability. In addition, those participants who committed themselves to introspective reflection by interrogating multiple perspectives, and exhibited cultural curiosity also showed great intercultural sensitivity development which indicated a capacity to exercise intercultural competence. Finally, those participants who

demonstrated an ability to navigate the online course and proactively resolve online learning challenges, and employed appropriate online etiquette also developed greater intercultural sensitivity. In the next section I explore the implications of these key findings, and offer six recommendations to improve the online MBA course.

### *Implications and Recommendations*

Findings from this study suggest that an online MBA course designed to develop intercultural competence and sensitivity does work. Thus, it seems reasonable to argue that since newly minted MBAs are reporting to work with major gaps in their intellectual toolkits (Hogan & Warrenfeltz, 2003), offering an online MBA course that incorporates real-world application (involving international guest experts) and simulating cross-company, cross-cultural team work (through virtual teamwork) could help to produce more globally competent managers with higher levels of intercultural sensitivity development.

Furthermore, it has been argued in the literature that the future of graduate management education relies on a list of critical success factors for business schools in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. In Chapter Two, I highlighted MBA program trends that include teaching both hard and soft skills through online education designed for action learning. It has been further argued that participants completing online MBA courses focusing on managerial global competence through virtual teamwork could develop the necessary skills to become more globally competent managers (Collins & Davidson, 2002), and that business schools could learn more about how to begin to structure necessary courses for success in the new millennium (Friga et al., 2003). To that end, *Brainpool Online* provides a ‘template of experience’ which MBA instructors could now use to develop

variations of the course across disciplines. Therefore, I make the following recommendations to further develop this online MBA course: 1) expand length of course, 2) incorporate role of intercultural coach, 3) include synchronous components, 4) provide clearer course expectations, 5) structure purposeful teams, and 6) enrich course content.

#### *Expand Length of Course*

While findings suggest that participants found the online MBA course to be a complementary addition to traditional MBA courses, this course would be perceived as more effective and useful if it were developed into a three-credit core MBA program requirement. As noted previously, participants reported that there was not enough time to delve into course concepts, and suggested that more time was needed to thoughtfully connect the readings to the discussions. The three-credit status could allow participants to raise more questions about the readings, engage in more depth in a wider variety of course activities, and incorporate periodic self assessments. The use of guest experts as online mentors could also be increased to further facilitate intercultural learning through the sharing of real life experiences that connect course concepts to concrete challenges in the international world of business. Finally, additional synchronous time, more fully explained below, could allow the instructor and the guest experts who serve as online mentors to reinforce culturally appropriate behaviors and modify culturally inappropriate ones by providing verbal feedback.

#### *Incorporate Role of Intercultural Coach*

Once the course has been expanded, the instructor could take on more of an intercultural coaching role (Cook, 2008) incorporating andragogical approaches such as experiential learning. The role of an intercultural coach is similar to professional

coaching but takes into account the participant's cultural perspective and those of the people around him/her. As an intercultural coach, the instructor could systematically focus on creating an 'intercultural climate' where participants are presented with an intercultural conflict and are then asked to role play as the conflict unfolds, and is ultimately resolved. By modeling appropriate responses to intercultural conflict, the instructor creates options for participants for resolving cultural dilemmas that they may have not otherwise considered. This promotes a learning environment that encourages risk-taking as participants "try on" new behaviors. In addition, the expansion of the course to three credits would provide the time for the instructor to develop a stronger group learning environment where participants' intercultural experiences are shared and critiqued in more depth.

#### *Include Synchronous Components*

Final course evaluations revealed suggestions for course improvement that included the delivery of additional content via synchronous or same time chats. These synchronous activities could provide both the time and opportunity to build deeper relationships with other participants and resolve unanswered concerns, clarify confusing content, extend discussions related to resolving cultural conflict. They would also allow participants to interact more regularly with guest experts. Participant comments ranged from "*Make the students use chat in order to get to know other students informally*" to "*Have a common time when everyone meets online.*" The synchronous option enables participants to communicate easily, quickly, and efficiently over the Internet from any location (world-wide). This could better meet the needs of participants who are traveling and in need of flexible options, while maintaining many of the elements of meeting

together in a face-to-face classroom. The variety of synchronous options available, including tools such as Live Meeting, Skype, and video conferencing, could allow the instructor and participants to delve deeper into course topics, develop intercultural learning plans based on IDI results, and analyze the cultural issues that could be impeding further development. In addition, these same tools could be used in the beginning of the online MBA course to help create the social dimensions that virtual teams need to successfully operate. These synchronous components could be structured team activities designed to improve team interaction and accountability related to the completion of the final team presentation.

#### *Provide Clearer Course Expectations*

Clearer course expectations could ensure that participants who enroll in the course are prepared to engage fully in all aspects of the course including discussions, team projects, and reflection assignments. The evidence showed that participants who developed greater intercultural sensitivity demonstrated a high degree of introspective reflection and course engagement. Thus, a better designed syllabus with a rubric that emphasizes detailed criteria for successfully participating in virtual teamwork, and prepares participants for the challenges of reflecting on content is needed. Since building virtual teams requires that participants value divergent opinions and beliefs, confront the possibility of disagreement and opposition, and participate fully in all aspects of the course, the rubric should guide participants through the process of reviewing previous intercultural experiences, assessing their own strengths and weaknesses, and reaching conclusions that could then inform and improve future actions. Such a rubric might help to ensure that participants fully engage in reflection assignments

with additional criteria that clearly lays out expectations that addresses such things as engaging in discussions in a timely fashion, completing one's fair share of work or making meaningful contributions to the final team presentation. This rubric would provide the online learner with the extra scaffolding needed to more successfully negotiate an online course. Finally, it would appear that providing clearer expectations for all assignments could contribute to more appropriate and meaningful participant interaction.

### *Structure Purposeful Teams*

The literature supports the claim that virtual teams are much more successful at completing their objectives when dependable processes and strong interpersonal relationships are established during the initial team formation (Callen, 2008). As mentioned earlier, it would appear that future courses should include synchronous activities, perhaps during an initial face-to-face meeting to learn how to better navigate the CMS, and allow participants more time and opportunity to build relationships through structured team activities and social interaction. In addition, the study results also suggested that the greater the team heterogeneity, the greater the intercultural sensitivity development. Thus, the optimal scenario would require participants to complete the IDI as a prerequisite for enrollment, then their scores would be used to structure highly diverse teams consisting of participants residing in different IDI stages: this focus on diversity, of course, should also include ethnicity, gender, age, and educational experience.



### *Enrich Course Content*

In the final course evaluation, specific suggestions were made about how to improve course materials and requirements. For example, one participant suggested that the course should include international participants while another wanted to see more cultures, other than China, studied. Thus, using a richer and wider variety of multi-media tools could help participants interact more with diverse content and participants. When using a tool such as WebX or Live Meeting, for example, guest experts from different cultures could be invited to discuss intercultural issues with course participants. In addition to these tools, E-textbooks, interactive simulations in web-based applications such as 2<sup>nd</sup> Life, video-lectures that can easily be replayed for review purposes, and audio files that include both instructor and participant comments are but a few of the emerging technologies to also consider. Finally, delivering content that could be easily downloaded to handheld devices is also perceived as highly desirable (Arbaugh & Warell, 2009). The message here is that integrating enriched media resources into course management systems, such as Desire2Learn (D2L), addresses participant learning style differences, creates a more visually stimulating environment, and ultimately improves course engagement.

### Directions for Future Research

Conclusions drawn from this research suggest that there is indeed a future for online delivery of courses intended to teach intercultural sensitivity. And, *Brainpool Online*, redesigned to integrate the recommendations suggested in the previous sections, could serve as a template for future course designers. With this in mind, four directions for future research emerge: 1) test course effectiveness using larger graduate student

samples, 2) examine the effects of different team composition on intercultural sensitivity development, 3) compare a blended learning environment with purely online delivery, and 4) conduct longitudinal studies to measure behavioral change. The following sections describe these proposed research agendas in more detail.

#### *Test Course Effectiveness Using Larger Samples*

The development of a new online MBA course that expands the length, incorporates the role of intercultural coach, provides clearer expectations, includes synchronous components, structures purposeful teams, and enriches media content could be studied to determine to what degree the recommendations set-forth in this research impact intercultural sensitivity development. Using both qualitative and quantitative methods with larger samples, questions such as “In what ways does the revised online MBA course impact intercultural sensitivity development?” and “How predictive is the number of authored posts of participant success?” and “In what ways does the instructor role of “cultural coach” impact intercultural sensitivity development?” could be examined. In addition, it would be interesting to study whether IDI pretest scores are predictors of course success: a specific question, “Is this course more effective for participants who enter the course lower on the IDI scale than those who have already reached Minimization or even Acceptance/Adaptation?”

#### *Examine Issues of Team Composition*

The second research agenda could examine to what degree varying team composition impacts intercultural sensitivity development. Team size, the degree of virtual-ness (how many team members are remote participants), the length of time the team is together, IDI scores of team members, the perceived cultural sameness or

difference between and among team members, and professional work roles (sales, engineering, software analyst, accountant) could all be varied to create different team compositions. Also, team heterogeneity, although not found to be significant in this study, remains conceptually important. Determining what combination of factors contributes most to growth in intercultural sensitivity could lead to the structuring of virtual teams for maximum success.

#### *Compare Blended and Purely Online Courses*

The third research agenda could ask the question “Does supplementing online instruction with face-to-face instruction enhance intercultural sensitivity development?” Additional interesting questions are “What components of teaching intercultural sensitivity development are best suited for the online environment?” and “How effective is the face-to-face environment for teaching intercultural sensitivity development?” These are important questions because few studies in the online management education literature explore the role of the instructor in non-traditional learning environments, such as blended or online. A question such as “What instructor skills, in both blended and online environments, are correlated with increasing participants’ intercultural sensitivity development?” could also help to inform instructional design decisions related to delivery formats.

#### *Conduct Longitudinal Studies*

The fourth and final research agenda should follow a participant’s behavioral changes over a longer period of time. Post-course surveys and interviews, for example, could be used to document perceived and actual behavioral changes after one to five years (see Appendix F). Since, intercultural sensitivity is, for some, a time intensive,

developmental process, it is possible that exposure to cultural differences in the highly interactive online learning environment where diverse opinions were shared, and cultural dilemmas through case study analyses were resolved, precipitated a progression along the intercultural continuum after the course had ended. Obtaining a history of experience from multiple trials could help to better understand whether the online MBA course has a lasting impact on participants' behaviors.

As Pascarella and Terenzini (1991) suggest, post-course surveys that measure the impact of higher education on its participants can only reveal correlations rather than infer causation. Hence, it would be difficult to argue that the online MBA course impacted behavioral outcomes because there would be too many confounding variables (socio-economic levels, career choices, maturation, and/or motivation to respond). Despite these limitations, longitudinal studies could offer unique opportunities to demonstrate the benefits of the online MBA course, and could also surface data across areas such as post-course intercultural sensitivity development, career impact, and personal growth. In addition, mixed methods research using both qualitative and quantitative approaches could be used to further explore the original online MBA course as well as the impact of course variations on intercultural sensitivity development.

### Conclusion

The marriage of three distinct literature bases (intercultural communication, graduate business education, and online learning) combined with interpretative thematic analysis grounded in adult learning theory offer a new approach to understanding intercultural sensitivity development in the online environment. This is important because I did not find prior studies that dealt with the confluence of cultural difference

and online intercultural learning in the intercultural communication, graduate business education, or online learning literatures. However, some adult educators are now beginning to address this deficit with a focus on examining the use of computer-mediated technologies to enhance introspective reflection as a means to transform intercultural perspectives (Ziegahn, 2005). In addition, multiple-method approaches are also beginning to appear in the management education literature, which may advance online learning research across disciplines (Allan, 2007). In the past, the management education literature was comprised of studies that emphasized quantitative methods focused only on management issues. We must now recognize that qualitative research in this area of study enriches our understanding of what constitutes intercultural sensitivity development, and is perhaps best suited to explore whether these soft skills can be delivered effectively using online delivery formats.

The evidence presented in Chapter Four along with the previous discussion in this chapter suggest that intercultural competence and sensitivity can be learned using an online delivery format, as well as measured with the IDI. Since these competencies are reported to be important criteria for an individual's success in the global business environment, MBA course developers should take what was learned from the *Brainpool Online* 'template of experience' and expand course length, augment the role of the instructor, include synchronous components, provide clearer expectations, structure purposeful teams, and enrich course content.

The future looks promising for more online MBA coursework that could help to produce a cadre of globally competent managers which could then reshape our shared business world. This will require a thoughtful and deliberate approach to online MBA

course planning and teaching. The results of this study help to inform this process by establishing the viability of an online educational alternative for developing intercultural competence and sensitivity, while also contributing to the growing body of research that examines the development of management soft skills using online delivery formats.

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**APPENDIX B****Mid-course Survey**

Does the way this course is being taught make sense to you? If so, why? If not, why not?

Does the course cover enough ground? If not, what else should the instructor do?

Is the instructor trying to do too much in this course? Would it be better to focus on just a few things? If so, what might they be?

What do you think about the textbook?

Would you like to suggest a quick fix - some little thing that would make the course better?

Do you think the time spent online is worthwhile in comparison to time spent face-to-face?

Do you find the online resources (Web links) helpful? Why or why not?

Has it been helpful incorporating the use of guest experts? Why or why not?

Do you think that the online discussion forums make this a better class? Why or why not?

Does the online content facilitated by the instructor appear integrated? In other words, do the assignments link together to help you learn cross-cultural communication competence in an effective way?

Has this course made any difference in the way you think about your job?

Are you learning enough from the instructor?

Does having you and your colleagues take a leading role in our online class make the class a better one from your point of view? Why or why not?

If you could change the way the grading in this course works, what would you change? Why?

If you could remove one or more of the learning outcomes, which would you take out? Why?

What else do you think I need to know about the way this course has been set up?



**APPENDIX C****Final Course Survey****Question 1**

Check any of the following words or phrases that, to you, describe your instructor:

1. Organized
2. Empowering
3. Boring
4. Ineffective
5. Unfriendly
6. Confident
7. Lenient
8. Effective
9. Biased/One-sided
10. Hard to understand
11. Cold
12. Open
13. Knowledgeable
14. Disorganized
15. Encouraging

**Question 2**

Check all that apply.

1. I took this class online because it was only offered online this semester.
2. If this was offered both online and on campus, I still would have taken it online.

**APPENDIX C continued**

3. I took this class online because the online format most fit in with my lifestyle.
4. I took the class online because I prefer to take courses online.
5. I took this class online because I like the convenience and flexibility of online courses.
6. I took this class online because I like the opportunity to reflect on my work which an online format affords.

**Question 3**

Check any of the following words or phrases that, to you, describe your instructor:

1. Stimulating
2. Enthusiastic
3. Friendly
4. Warm
5. Hostile
6. Interesting
7. Incompetent
8. Helpful
9. Caring
10. Flexible
11. Poor sense of humor
12. Clear/concise
13. Responsive

**APPENDIX C continued**

14. Good sense of humor

15. Supportive

**Questions 4-44**

On the following questions, please indicate whether you SA- Strongly Agree, A- Agree, D- Disagree, or SD- Strongly Disagree. Please feel free to explain your responses to any items in the space provided at the end of the evaluation.

**Question 4**

Blackboard/D2L was easy to use.

**Question 5**

Because of the online format, I felt comfortable asking difficult or awkward questions.

**Question 6**

Because of the online format, I put more thought into my comments.

**Question 7**

Blackboard/D2l worked well for learning the course material.

**Question 8**

Course assignments were useful learning tools.

**Question 9**

Discussions were useful learning tools.

**Question 10**

Given the nature of the course, the workload demands were realistic.

**Question 11**

I could have responded to other students more.

**APPENDIX C continued****Question 12**

I felt comfortable sharing with the instructor when I had a complaint or suggestion.

**Question 13**

I felt disconnected from the rest of the class.

**Question 14**

I felt like I knew other students in this course.

**Question 15**

I felt like I took responsibility for my own learning.

**Question 16**

I knew how to get technical assistance if I needed it.

**Question 17**

I received adequate technical assistance when I needed it.

**Question 18**

I received sufficient feedback from the instructor.

**Question 19**

I was comfortable participating in discussions in this course.

**Question 20**

I worked hard to master course material.

**Question 21**

If and when I desired help outside of class, the instructor was available (by email, phone, fax or in person.).

**APPENDIX C continued****Question 22**

Learning in this course was enhanced by the interaction of the instructor and students.

**Question 23**

Links and URLs provided in this course were operative and correct.

**Question 24**

My effort in this class was equal to or greater than other classes I've taken.

**Question 25**

My learning style is appropriate for an online course.

**Question 26**

Taking a course online was more convenient for me than taking a traditional course.

**Question 27**

Technical issues DETRACTED from my learning experience in this course.

**Question 28**

The assignments and discussion prompts were clear and easy to understand.

**Question 29**

The computer I used worked well for taking an online course.

**Question 30**

The course texts/resources provided adequate and appropriate information.

**Question 31**

The discussion questions were stimulating.

**Question 32**

The grading procedures and criteria were clearly communicated.



**APPENDIX C continued****Question 33**

The grading procedures in this class fairly assessed my performance.

**Question 34**

The initial training about how to use Blackboard was helpful.

**Question 35**

The instructor gave useful feedback and made useful comments in this course.

**Question 36**

The instructor helped clarify the concepts in this course.

**Question 37**

The instructor helped connect the concepts in this course to “real-world” situations.

**Question 38**

The instructor helped me understand how well I was doing in this course.

**Question 39**

The instructor motivated me in this course.

**Question 40**

The instructor responded to my discussion postings in a timely manner.

**Question 41**

The instructor was an important part of the learning community.

**Question 42**

I would take another online course.

**Question 43**

I would recommend taking a course online to my friends.

**APPENDIX C continued****Question 44**

The requirements of this course were clear.

**Question 45**

I would give this instructor an overall rating of superior, average, fair, or poor?

**Question 46**

I would give this course an overall rating of superior, average, fair, or poor?

**Question 47**

What specific suggestions do you have to improve the course materials, requirements or presentation of this course?

**Question 48**

What might the instructor do differently to enhance this course in its future offerings?

**Question 49**

Feel free to explain any of your responses in the space below. Please, indicate the item number to which you are referring.

## **APPENDIX D**

### **Interview Questions**

#### **INTERVIEW ONE**

**What is your background around cultural differences?**

- Where and how long have you lived in a different culture(s)?
- What kinds of family experiences have you had around cultural differences?

**How would you describe your philosophy or viewpoint regarding cultural difference?**

- How do you see the relationship of commonality and cultural difference among people?
- What do you see as the opportunities and obstacles, if any, to cultural differences?

**How would you describe your work challenges related to cultural difference?**

#### **INTERVIEW TWO**

**What are the greatest challenges you are facing-personally at home or in your workplace around cultural differences?**

- Have these challenges changed over time?
- What kinds of solutions/directions are you contemplating for dealing with these challenges?

**What is going on in your organization/community around cultural differences?**

- Have there been any specific initiatives, programs, or other efforts undertaken that address cultural differences?
- What have been the outcomes-successful or unsuccessful-of these initiatives, programs or efforts?

#### **INTERVIEW THREE**

**What approaches do you use in the workplace when you confront cultural difference?**

**How has the online MBA course contributed to your abilities to critically reflect upon your cultural assumptions?**

## Appendix E

### Categories and Themes

#### **Intercultural Effectiveness Categories and Themes (Warell, 2009)**

##### *Cognitive Orientations*

- Suspends judgment vs. stereotyping
- Possesses inclusive vs. exclusive perspectives
- Demonstrates flexibility and cognitive agility
- Asks questions and demonstrates an inquisitive nature
- Tolerates ambiguity and seeks out new information

##### *Coping Strategies*

- Maintains optimistic outlook
- Demonstrates an eagerness and willingness to learn
- Manages emotion and stress with self-confidence
- Displays a positive sense of humor and high self-regard
- Exhibits entrepreneurial spirit and a desire for experimentation
- Takes risks to explore new ideas
- Recognizes and responds to adversity
- Uses anecdotal stories to make sense of ideas
- Learns to cultivate patience by responding calmly

##### *Cooperative/Collaborative Efforts*

- Uses humor to build relationships
- Establishes credibility through relevant knowledge
- Solicits opinions of others
- Tries to achieve consensus through win-win agreements
- Draws out the best from others
- Provides influence and direction
- Sustains efforts of others rather than individual interests
- Mobilizes others to implement desired changes

#### **Design/Delivery Themes (Warell, 2009)**

- Virtuality (i.e., richness of CMS)
- Team heterogeneity (i.e., team composition)
- Course engagement (i.e., number of authored posts)
- Online resilience/ frustration
- Models suggested behaviors and etiquette
- Tolerates virtual teamwork latitude
- Utilizes and accesses guest expert material
- Demonstrates resourcefulness vs. helplessness
- Seeks peer/instructor feedback
- Uses proactive behaviors vs. reactive behaviors
- Values asynchronous discussions
- Values real-life applicability of course concepts
- Shows concern for team interaction and accountability

## APPENDIX F

### Post-Course Survey

The purpose of this survey is to obtain information about your participation in last summer's *Brainpool Online* course and how it might impact your current work experience. Your identity will be kept confidential and your name will not be associated with the data obtained from this survey. Your chosen research participant pseudonym will be used to represent the data in the published dissertation and in future publications about the impact of an online graduate business course on intercultural sensitivity development. Please circle the response that best reflects your experiences as a result of the course. **How well did the *Brainpool Online* course materials, discussions, assignments, instructor interaction, and student interaction prepare you to?**

1. Communicate more effectively, both verbally and nonverbally, with work colleagues who are from different cultures other than your own.

<u>Not at all</u>		<u>Somewhat</u>		<u>Very Much</u>
1	2	3	4	5

2. Use “active listening” and pursue other possible interpretations of what is said by work colleagues.

<u>Not at all</u>		<u>Somewhat</u>		<u>Very Much</u>
1	2	3	4	5

3. Pay more attention to visual cues when you communicate with work colleagues whose language you do not speak and check your perceptions with a person of the culture to verify meanings behind spoken words.

<u>Not at all</u>		<u>Somewhat</u>		<u>Very Much</u>
1	2	3	4	5

4. Base your work decisions on what you find important in a situation and act on them regardless of what other team members think or value.

<u>Not at all</u>		<u>Somewhat</u>		<u>Very Much</u>
1	2	3	4	5

5. Value work colleagues who are different, particularly those people about whom you used to have negative stereotypes.

<u>Not at all</u>		<u>Somewhat</u>		<u>Very Much</u>
1	2	3	4	5

**APPENDIX F continued**

**How well did the *Brainpool Online* course materials, discussions, assignments, instructor interaction, and student interaction prepare you to?**

6. Enjoy interacting with work colleagues who have very little in common with you and who think differently than I do.

<u>Not at all</u>		<u>Somewhat</u>		<u>Very Much</u>
1	2	3	4	5

7. Enjoy spending time with a variety of work colleagues and volunteer to participate in unfamiliar work activities.

<u>Not at all</u>		<u>Somewhat</u>		<u>Very Much</u>
1	2	3	4	5

Please provide an example.

8. Work effectively with your team members where everybody wins and makes contributions as opposed to wanting to be right and make all the decisions.

<u>Not at all</u>		<u>Somewhat</u>		<u>Very Much</u>
1	2	3	4	5

Please provide an example.

9. Apply cross-cultural knowledge and cultural value orientation(s) to reconcile a work dilemma that derived from differences in cultural value orientation(s).

<u>Not at all</u>		<u>Somewhat</u>		<u>Very Much</u>
1	2	3	4	5

Please describe how you think *Brainpool Online* might have contributed to increasing your intercultural sensitivity development. How did your perspectives about cultural differences change as a result of the course?