INTERNATIONALIZATION OF TWO UNDERGRADUATE PSYCHOLOGY COURSES

BRENDA MORETTA GUERRERO

Maria De La Cruz, Loranel Pace Department of Psychology, Our Lady of the Lake University
E-mail: bjguerrero@ollusa.edu

Abstract - Increasing globalization has led colleges and universities to develop educational initiatives that provide students the skills they need to function as global citizens with a deep and comparative knowledge of themselves and their world. Study abroad and international student recruitment are popular educational initiatives to increase student intercultural competency. Another critical yet often neglected educational initiative includes course internationalization, which professional organizations such as the American Council on Education recommend. This article reports on the course internationalization experiences of the authors, who received funding through their university's Global and Strategic Initiatives Small Grants Program. Strategies for infusing global content, theory, and research throughout the courses will be presented, followed by student reactions to course internationalization and conclusions.

Keywords - College Students, Culture, Internationalization, Teaching Psychology

I. INTERNATIONALIZATION OF TWO UNDERGRADUATE PSYCHOLOGY COURSES

The American Council on Education's Center for Internationalization and Global Engagement conducts a comprehensive survey every five years to determine the trajectory of campus internationalization efforts across U.S. colleges and universities. The Center's most recent report, published in 2017, was based on data collected from over 1,100 colleges and universities and revealed an increase in internationalization efforts across campuses (Helms, 2015). Seventy-two percent of responding institutions noted enhancing student readiness for the global environment, diversifying the student body, faculty, and staff on campus, and increasing their appeal to both domestic and international applicants for students as their top three reasons for increased emphasis on internationalization initiatives. Further, the overall prioritization of globalization initiatives reported by universities/colleges included increased opportunities for student education/study abroad and increased recruitment of international students as the top two priorities, respectively. Inter-institutional partnerships abroad, curricular internationalization, and faculty development followed (The American Council on Education, 2017). It is noteworthy that the top three areas of institutional focus included initiatives that over look faculty contributions that can broaden internationalization efforts and enhance student learning.

II. LITERATURE REVIEWCOURSE INTERNATIONALIZATION

As noted above, most academic institutions prioritize student study abroad and recruitment of international students as the top two priorities for increasing internationalization initiatives on their campuses. However, Loncarich et al. (2017) reported that only 10-14% of undergraduate college students take advantage of study-abroad opportunities. Additionally, international student recruitment requires financial and staff investments that may not be feasible. However, encouraging faculty to participate in course internationalization and providing meaningful training and support is a cost-effective means to support institutional globalization and benefits students, faculty, and institutions.

Instructors use one of three approaches to infuse global content into their courses (Bond, 2003). They can "add on" one or more global elements for international consideration without requiring significant adjustments to the course's activities or content. Global immersion is not the goal. Alternatively, instructors may engage in curricular "infusion" of global content into an existing course, necessitating a significant time commitment for course reform. The "infusion" approach will likely result in students developing a deeper appreciation of intercultural values, beliefs, and behaviors over a semester. The third type of course internationalization is characterized by "transformation," which requires significant instructor planning and support. Cultural immersion and perspective-taking likely result in deep intercultural appreciation and understanding (Bond, 2003; Centre for Teaching Excellence, University of Waterloo, n.d.). Most instructors utilize the first two approaches when adding global course content to their college courses.

III. PSYCHOLOGY'S INTERNATIONAL GROWTH

The discipline of Psychology has not always been culturally inclusive. For example, in 2005, the American Psychological Association's (APA) Final Report of the Task Force on Enhancing Diversity (TFED) reported on the recognition of limited

inclusivity in the organization and an organizational initiative of being more inclusive and more committed to adequately meeting the needs of marginalized groups in clinical practice, training, education, and research. Similarly, other psychologists have also argued that the discipline has lacked global inclusiveness (Arnett, 2008; Cho, 2016;Neilson et al., 2017; Roberts et al., 2020; &Tindle, 2021). Zoma and Gielen (2015) suggested psychology is no longer dominated by American psychologists, with international psychologists now accounting for more than 75% of the more than one million psychologists worldwide. Given the increased number of international psychologists, one would expect American psychology to reflect that shift. However, as Takooshian et al. (2017) pointed out, American psychology curricula do not adequately reflect the surge in psychological knowledge and educational procedures worldwide. Faculty who teach psychology courses find global theories, research, conceptualizations, and case studies are often merely "add-ons" in college textbooks. Psychological videos and instructor materials are also frequently presented from an ethnocentric point of view. Consequently, faculty find themselves challenged to add or infuse intercultural content throughout their courses, often with limited institutional support.

The Authors' Course Internationalization Experiences

This article reports on the course internationalization experiences of the authors. All teach in the Department of Psychology at Our Lady of the Lake University (OLLU), a private, Catholic, four-year, Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI) in San Antonio, TX. OLLU offers bachelor through doctoral-level degree programs, and many students who enroll at OLLU are the first in their families to attend college.The authors chose to internationalize a Lifespan Development and Health Psychology course. Each instructor utilized content "infusion" rather than an "add-on" or "transformation" approach to course internationalization. Infusing global content throughout was optimal for adding a more robust international focus than the "add on" approach offers, without requiring a complete "transformation" of the courses.

IV. INTERNATIONALIZATION OF HEALTH PSYCHOLOGY

Health Psychology is a natural fit for including a global perspective because we live in an increasingly interdependent world, and health is truly a global concern. Health issues and diseases do not know national or cultural boundaries, as most recently illustrated by the COVID-19 pandemic. Further, there are disparities in health across communities, making this a social justice issue, and health issues can have a destabilizing effect on countries and communities. Given this, concern with global health has been on the rise, and there has been an increase in health psychology courses that include a global perspective. Accordingly, one of the authors chose to internationalize her advanced-level online Health Psychology course.

The Health Psychology instructor developed two relevant course objectives to inform her decisions regarding course content, design, and pedagogy. Those two student learning objectives include 1) explaining the role of social, cultural, and community factors in health and well-being at the individual, national, and global levels; and 2) applying an understanding of how cognitions, emotions, behaviors, and socio cultural context affect one's health. The first learning objective is foundational, facilitating student awareness and understanding of global health issues. The second is comparative, encouraging students to consider their health and wellness from a comparative perspective.

Critical global health concepts considered include health determinants, health status measurement, the importance of culture to health, the global burden of disease, risk factors for health conditions, and health disparities. Those concepts are discussed within the context of nutrition, infectious disease, environmental health, and child health. Additionally, the research, knowledge, and theory of health psychology facilitate the examination of health issues facing people in developing and developed countries.

As noted previously, the instructor infuses a global health perspective within the course content. To achieve this, she includes course readings, pedagogy, and learning materials that explore course topics from a global perspective and uses examples and case studies from different countries and cultures throughout the weekly learning modules. Exam questions, class discussions, a blog assignment on global health issues, a research paper, and a PowerPoint presentation shared with the class are assigned to integrate the global perspective further.

The blog post assignment relates to an issue of global health and psychology, and students must utilize an initial resource from sciencedaily.com or globalcitizen.org to identify a global health and psychology issue. Students then research their chosen topic and write a blog post on the subject, considering the intersection of a global health challenge or initiative and psychology.

A global health psychology research paper and presentation are other means of assessment utilized in the course. The report and presentation allow students to explore a topic of interest related to global health psychology and require them to present the subject in class. The meaning of illness, disease, and wellness; mental health conditions including addiction and

substance use disorders; treatment adherence; birth customs and traditions; spirituality; and the experience of pain are possible research topics. Ageism, racism, or sexism in medicine; nontraditional medicine; and culturally-based practices or health beliefs; are additional examples of global health topics students may choose to research. Students develop a greater understanding of how culture and health intersect when they are required to investigate a matter of interest in depth and to do so from an intercultural viewpoint. The knowledge learned is heightened through sharing their topic and findings with their classmates and engaging in class discussion.

V. INTERNATIONALIZATION OF LIFESPAN DEVELOPMENT

Two faculty members chose to internationalize their Lifespan Development course. One instructor teaches a fully online, asynchronous class section. In contrast, the other teaches the class in a hybrid format that includes asynchronous online content, face-to-face lectures, discussions, and experiential group exercises. Both instructors utilize the same readings, assignments, exams, videos, and discussion topics. The only substantive pedagogical difference across course sections is that in the hybrid section of the course, discussion group activities take place in the classroom, and those group activities occur on the discussion board for the online section of the course.

Lifespan Development is a required, lower-level course that all undergraduate psychology majors must complete to graduate. Lifespan Development textbooks often present American research findings broadly applied to all people of all cultural backgrounds. Accordingly, the instructors were committed to developing a course that infuses a more culturally diverse view of development throughout each stage of human development. Three student learning objectives reflect the internationalized content and include 1)analyzing international interconnections and interdependence in development across the lifespan; 2) critically reflecting on their cultural origins, practices, and habits of thought; and 3) empathetically and critically discussing how cultural contexts and discourses affect individual perspectives, including the views of developmental researchers.

The global learning objectives reflect the instructors' goals of promoting students' understanding of the real-world applications of principles from the course, fostering their ability to generalize research findings and developmental concepts, and using those ideas to consider potential solutions to international challenges. Course readings, assessments, assignments, discussions, and videos support student development in those areas.

Students are assigned readings from a popular Lifespan Development textbook and a second required text written by Harry Gardiner (2018), titled *Lives Across Cultures: Cross-Cultural Human Development*. Readings from Gardiner's text align with the primary text and correspond to each week's life stages and topics under consideration. Students also read articles published in professional journals with a global focus.

Relevant international films illustrating global development and intercultural traditions are assigned to bring course content to life. Students view eight to ten videos that highlight unique cultural traditions. Topics include worldwide infant development and parenting practices, middle childhood friendship development, comparative coming-of-age rituals and challenges, grief, bereavement, and dying rituals and beliefs, to name a few.

Throughout the semester, students also consider and discuss how developmental theories and research findings may or may not apply to people and cultures worldwide. The final course project allows students to learn firsthand about the influence of culture on development across the lifespan. The course project requires students to interview an elder from a different cultural background than their own and apply what they have learned about the relationship between culture and human development to their interviewee’s life. Students universally find the cultural interview assignment to be the most valuable class experience due to a heightened sensitivity to cultural differences.

VI. STUDENT FEEDBACKON COURSE INTERNATIONALIZATION

We have included a representative sample of student comments that reflect their sentiment related to international course content.

- It was interesting to notice my reactions as I was viewing the videos. I allowed myself to become immersed in another's perspective, culture, and traditional practices.
- The readings and the videos allowed me to reflect on my culture. I think about the practices I do, or rather the lack of practices or rituals we do not do within my family.
- It facilitates taking a more global perspective because I have never traveled around the world….Meanwhile, this class teaches me about some existing cultures and traditions.
- I have never thought about how people in other parts of the world lack access to there sources we have in America. For example, I am so used to having easy access to hospitals and doctors that I do not consider that some other parts of the

world do not necessarily have access to these resources.

- I feel it would deprecate knowledge if we learned only about the American way of lifespan development. There may be students in the classroom who are not from America and feel included because we discussed and broadened the international course context.
- The questions asked during the discussion were great for looking within and accepting the beliefs we all hold internally to ask: "Is this the best way of looking at things, and am I being culturally insensitive?" I went as far as showing my mother the video because I wanted her to recognize her own ingrained beliefs and try to see if her point of view changed a bit afterward (which it did! We had a lovely discussion!).
- The cross-cultural interview project was a perfect way to make students learn about someone and the environment they grew up in. I was placed in their shoes and heard of traditions, beliefs, and ingrained values that have molded this person into who they are right now! It was such an enjoyable project because of the connection it brought out with someone born into a completely different world than we currently experience.
- I enjoy that classes like this exist to ensure that we not only learn about information from our perspective (from the U.S.) More can be discovered if people worldwide are heard and communicate over things that each culture has researched and studied.

VII. CONCLUSION

Many students who attend Our Lady of the Lake University have limited travel and interactional experience with people outside of Texas, and many also lack the financial resources to study abroad. Consequently, students welcome the challenge to broaden their perspectives beyond their own cultural experiences and frame of reference and value learning how psychology applies to diverse populations. Overall, students become more well-rounded individuals who can understand worldwide cultural mores, customs, and life rhythms. Ideally, they will benefit from course globalization by becoming culturally attuned employees who can work in an increasingly complex and interconnected world and know their role in a global community.

REFERENCES

[1] American Council on Education. (2017). *Mapping internationalization on U.S. campuses: 2017 Edition*. Washington, DC: American Council on Education. Retrieved August 4, 2022, from http://www.acenet.edu/Documents/Mapping-Internationalization-2017.pdf.

[2] American Psychological Association Presidential Task Force on Enhancing Diversity. (2005). *Final report of the Task Force on Enhancing Diversity*. Retrieved from http://www.apa.org/pi/oema/resources/taskforce-report.pdf

[3] Arnett, J. J. (2008). The neglected 95%: Why American psychology needs to become less American. *American Psychologist*, *63*, 602–614. http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/0003-066X.63.7.602

[4] Bond, S. (2003). *Engaging educators: Bringing the world into the classroom*. Canadian Bureau of International Education (CBIE): Ottawa. Retrieved September 7, 2022, from https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED549850.pdf

[5] Centre for Teaching Excellence, University of Waterloo. *Strategies for Course Internationalization*. Retrieved September 8, 2022, from https://uwaterloo.ca/centre-for-teaching-excellence/teaching-resources/teaching-tips/managing-students/diversity-and-internationalization/strategies-course-internationalization

[6] Cho, G. E. (2016). Placing socioemotional development in cultural context. In D. Gross, K. Abrams, & C. Z. Enns (Eds.), *Internationalizing the undergraduate psychology curriculum: Practical lessons learned at home and abroad* (pp. 163–180). American Psychological Association. https://doi.org/10.1037/14840-010

[7] Gardiner, H. W. (2018). *Lives Across Cultures: Cross-Cultural Human Development* (6th Ed). New York: Pearson.

[8] Helms, Robin Matross, (2015). Internationalizing U.S. higher education: Current policies, future directions. CIGE Insights. Washington, DC: American Council on Education. Retrieved August 1, 2022, from http://www.acenet.edu/news-room/Documents/Current-Policies-Future-Directions-Part-2-US.pdf.

[9] Loncarich, H., Vernon, A., & Moos, C. (2017). *Student expectancy and barriers to study abroad*. Academy of Educational Leadership Journal, 21 (1).

[10] Neilsen, M., Haun, D., Kartner, J., & Legare, C. H. (2017). The persistent sampling bias in developmental psychology: a call to action. *Journal of Experimental Child Psychology*, *162*, 31–38. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jecp.2017.04.017

[11] Roberts SO,Bareket-Shavit C, Dollins FA, Goldie PD, Mortenson E. (2020). Racial inequality in psychological research: trends of the past and recommendations for the future. *Percept Psychol Sci*.;*15*:1295–309

[12] Takooshian, H., Gielen, U. P., Plous, S., Rich, G. J., & Velayo, R. S. (2016). Internationalizing undergraduate psychology education: trends, techniques, and technologies. *The American Psychologist*, *71*(2), 136–47. https://doi.org/10.1037/a0039977

[13] Tindle, R. (2021). Improving the global reach of psychological research. *Discov Psychol*1, 5.https://doi.org/10.1007/s44202-021-00004-4

[14] Zoma, M., &Gielen, U. P. (2015). How many psychologists are there in the world? *International Psychology Bulletin, 19*, 47–50.

★★★