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Saudi Arabian Deaf Mothers' Raising Deaf and Hearing Children

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Abstract

A mother's hearing status can influence her motherhood experience, particularly when the mother is Deaf, and the children are Deaf or hearing. The study aims to describe and interpret the Deaf mothers' experience raising Deaf and hearing children. The study employed a narrative research design with three Saudi Arabia Deaf mothers of Deaf and hearing children. Data were analyzed using Clandinin and Connelly's (2000) three-dimensional narrative inquiry approach and content analysis. Seven themes emerged in their narratives: desire for a Deaf child, hearing child speech and language development, family support in raising the children, navigating the hearing community, role modeling and resilience, parenting style, and audism. The findings revealed implications that cut across disciplines, including Deaf studies, disability studies, gender studies, and speech and hearing sciences.

Keywords: deaf, disability, mothers, narrative study, transformative

Having a disability as a parent can present a unique experience when raising children (Amaya & Tomasini, 2014; Farber, 2000; Feizi et al., 2014; Kobosko, 2011; Kocher, 1994; Konrad, 2006; Mercerat & Sañas, 2020). Sometimes, both the parent and the child have a disability, making the parent's attitude and experience with their child with a disability different from that of a parent without a disability with a child with a disability (Farber, 2000; Kocher, 1994; Mercerat & Sañas, 2020). Additionally, some parents with disabilities depend on others in the family and community to support raising children (Poon & Zaidman-Zait, 2013).

According to the WHO (2021), over 5% of the world's population has hearing loss. Previous research shows that 90-95% of individuals with hearing loss have hearing parents (Caselli et al., 2021; Farhana & Malak, 2015; Geeslin, 2007; Kobosko, 2011; Mitchell & Kartchmer, 2005). Most studies focus on deaf parents of deaf children (Meadow et al., 1983), hearing parents of deaf children and, very few, deaf parents with hearing children (Ahlert & Greeff, 2012; Zaborniak-Sobczak & Perenc, 2017). The critical issue in the parent-child dynamic and relationship, when there is a difference in hearing status, is unshared language and culture, which affect parent-child attachment, communication, stress, and anxiety in both the child and parent (Meadow et al., 1983; Myers et al., 2010; Poon & Zaidman-Zait, 2013).

Deaf parents with Deaf children share the same language, culture, and experiences (Antia et al., 2020; Meadow et al., 1983) and are actively involved in their children's lives, including education (Geeslin, 2007; Szarkowski & Brice, 2016). Research shows that Deaf parents are language models to their Deaf children, resulting in early language access and acquisition (Filax & Taylor, 2019). Deaf children with Deaf parents grow up in a signing home environment and mostly attend schools using American Sign Language (ASL) alongside written English (Baker & van den Bogaerde, 2016). These Deaf children have early access to sign language, impacting their language and literacy skills (Andrew et al., 2014; Scott & Hoffmeister, 2017; Singleton et al., 2004; Strong & Prinz, 1997).

Ninety percent of Deaf parents have hearing children and may experience cultural, linguistic, and social differences that impact their interactions (Caselli et al., 2021; Malik & Jabeen, 2016; Searls, 2019). The hearing children of Deaf parents are raised in unique, extraordinary family settings in which they are exposed to and interact with two differing cultural, social, and linguistic systems (Gould & Dodd, 2014). This makes them bilingual/bimodal and bicultural, and these children become members of the Deaf community despite being hearing (Hofmann & Chilla, 2015; Moroe & de Andrade, 2018). The two differing cultural, social, and linguistic systems can impact how parents support their children's language, social, and emotional development (Banda & Nakstad, 2021; Humphries et al., 2012; Masaka, 2018; Searls, 2019; Singleton & Tittle, 2000). Additionally, some Deaf parents experience communication challenges that may affect their involvement in their hearing children's education (Banda & Nakstad, 2021; Myers et al., 2010). Also, due to early access to sign language, some hearing children become interpreters for their parents (Buchino, 1993; Banda & Nakstad, 2021; Moroe & de Andrade, 2018; Zaborniak-Sobczak & Perenc, 2017) although previous literature argues against using hearing children to interpret for their Deaf parents (Hadjikakou et al., 2009; Moroe & de Andrade, 2018).

Despite limited studies from the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, previous research showed that 1.4% of Saudi Arabia's population comprises D/HH children (Alyami et al., 2016). In Saudi Arabia, the major cause of deafness is genetic due to culture and religious practices that allow intermarriages within the family (Banda & Nakstad, 2021; Humphries et al., 2012). Most of these Deaf children attend mainstream schools due to the few schools designed for D/HH children (Alqahtani, 2017). Although Mohammad (2020) reported that the quality of life of the Deaf was not affected by their hearing loss, educational level, mode of communication, and school attendance, he noticed that Deaf women reported a higher quality of life than Deaf men. The current study focuses on Deaf women who are mothers raising both Deaf and hearing children.

Theoretical framework

The current study adopted a transformative paradigm to examine and propose social justice changes that would positively influence the lives of Saudi Arabian Deaf mothers. The Deaf mothers are members of a marginalized Deaf community vulnerable to oppression from a majority-hearing society. A transformative paradigm provides the lens to examine a society's

power dynamics, injustices, and inequalities and suggests possible social justice actions (Jackson et al., 2018; Mertens, 2017). Two theories that guided the research to embrace the transformative paradigm are the deaf critical theory (Gertz, 2003) and intersectionality theory (Crenshaw, 1989).

The deaf critical theory, like the predecessor critical race theory, focused on racism; the Deaf critical theory focused on audism. Audism is a form of oppression directed towards deaf people by individuals who believe that the ability to hear makes one superior to those with hearing loss (Dirksen & Bauman, 2004). Hence, Deaf critical theory facilitates the understanding of Saudi Deaf mothers' shared stories as experiential epistemology critical in understanding, analyzing, and interpreting their experiences with audism.

The second theory, the intersectionality theory, focuses on how the intersections of individual identities, including social class, gender, religion, sexual orientation, skin color, and race, result in oppression (Crenshaw, 1989; Skyer, 2021). In the current study, the Deaf mothers present a case of intersecting identities comprising social class, gender, religion, disability, and geographical location-Middle East.

Methods

The study presents the experiences and narratives of three Saudi Arabian Deaf mothers raising deaf and hearing children in the same homestead. The interviews conducted in Saudi sign language and transcribed and translated into English followed a narrative inquiry grounded on Connelly & Clandinin's (2006) three dimensions of narrative structure: temporality, sociality, and place. Temporality focuses on the time frame in which the events in their stories occurred, including pregnancy, birth, children's early years, and school age. Sociality addressed the Deaf mothers' feelings and interactions with family, children's school, and community. Finally, place examined the context in which the experience occurred. Following the re-storying using the three dimensions of narrative structure, the content analysis identified the emerging themes from the data.

Sampling Procedures

The two sampling procedures used to identify and recruit the three Saudi Deaf mothers included purposive and snowballing. Purposive sampling helped to identify and select participants with rich, in-depth information about the study (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2017). The inclusionary criteria included:

- Above 18 years of age
- Born and raised in Saudi Arabia
- Deaf mothers
- Deaf mothers who have Deaf and hearing children

Due to the challenge of finding participants who met the criteria, the researchers used a snowballing sampling procedure in which the participants helped to identify and contact more participants.

Study participants

The three mothers are Sara, Amal, and Khadija (their names are pseudonyms to protect their identity). All three Deaf mothers had Deaf mothers themselves. Table 1 presents the demographic information of the mothers.

Table 1

Demographic information

Demographic characteristics	Sara	Amal	Khadija
Age	Early 30s	Early 40s	Late 30s
Marital status	Married early 20s and now divorced	Married in her 30s	Married early 20s
Husband hearing status	Hearing uses Saudi Arabian Sign Language (SASL)	Deaf	Deaf
Educational level	High school	High school	High school
Children	Three sons, two deaf and one hearing.	Five children. Deaf: daughter (12 yrs) and son (8 yrs), Hearing: son (11 yrs) daughter (6yrs) Undiagnosed 7month son	Two children, a deaf son aged 16 years and a hearing girl aged 11
Home language	SASL Spoke Arabic	SASL	SASL Spoke Arabic
Deaf family members	Mother and grandmother	Mother, grandmother, and other relatives Mother died at age 9 and raised by Deaf relatives	Mother Deaf

Research Question

The central question that guided the narrative study was, "What are the experiences of Deaf mothers raising Deaf and hearing children in Saudi Arabia?"

Findings and Discussion

Seven themes emerged that described the experience of Saudi Deaf mothers raising Deaf and hearing children in the same homestead.

Theme 1: Desire for a Deaf child:

Being Deaf, all three mothers, at one point in their pregnancy, desired their unborn child to be Deaf so they could have a shared language and culture. For instance, Amal shared the birth of her first three children. Amal shared that,

I prayed during pregnancy that my children would be Deaf. I was very happy when my daughter was diagnosed at two months as Deaf and became deaf because I knew that my daughter and I could easily communicate with sign language as a shared language and communication. During the second pregnancy, I hoped my son would be deaf so he could share in the Deaf family's culture and likeness, but he was hearing, and I was just as happy as can be for a healthy child. The third baby, a son, was born Deaf, and my family was happy again that there was another deaf boy in the family.

Similarly, Sara shared that,

When I was first pregnant, I prayed to God that my child would be deaf so that the generation of deafness would continue. Deafness would be welcomed, and communication would be easy. I knew I could chat and communicate with my child in my language if it was deaf. Having strong deaf connections is so important, and that was my dream. My first boy was born hearing. Even though there was some disappointment in him not being deaf, I was so happy to have a healthy son. Five months after birth, my son's hearing diagnosis confirmed him as Deaf!

Khadija also shared,

I wished and prayed my child would be deaf because deaf culture is strong, and I knew that having a deaf child would be, in essence, having a child that is the same as me, and this is something I looked forward to. I longed for my baby to be deaf like me, although I would love a hearing child as a blessing too.

Theme 2: Hearing Child Speech Development

All three Deaf mothers shared their concerns about having a hearing child and how they could support the child in developing language and speech. Sara's husband was hearing, and she expected him to support the child in speech development, but after the divorce and the husband left, she had concerns about her hearing son's speech. She shared that:

While my husband was away, I was concerned with the hearing child's speech challenges. I did not know how to teach my hearing son to speak, so, at age six, my son was still not talking as expected. Unfortunately, family support from hearing members was not forthcoming. After receiving continuous reports about my hearing son's speech and language problems, I decided to seek the assistance of a private language tutor to support his speech and language development.

The other two mothers were married to Deaf husbands. They were equally concerned about their hearing children's speech development but hoped their hearing family members would step in to support their children in speech development. Amal shared that,

I knew my son could learn sign language from me, my husband, and his sister. I assumed he would learn to speak from his father's family, who are hearing. My hearing in-laws live near us.

Unfortunately, Amal dependence on her family failed her when the doctors misdiagnosed one of her children as Deaf while the child was hearing, and none of the hearing family members noticed and shared with her; hence, the child suffered speech and spoken language delays. Amal shared that.

At birth, the doctor told me that my daughter was deaf...at age two, the doctor...found that she was hearing. She was now behind on learning and needs to catch up on her auditory listening and speaking skills....

Khadija shared how her hearing daughter, the only hearing member in the family, experienced speech problems. Khadija sought the help of her hearing sister to practice speaking with her daughter. Khadija said,

I noticed my daughter's speech problem when her daughter was three years old, and the problem persisted till the daughter was 4th grade. My sister helped to teach her words and sentences. They used the Quran to read and pronounce words well.

Theme 3: Family Support in Raising the Children.

In Saudi Arabia, the Arabic religion and culture consider family support vital. All three mothers received various forms of support from hearing and Deaf family members. In particular, all Deaf mothers shared how they expected their hearing family members to support their hearing children in developing language and speech. For example, Sara, while talking about her family support, shared how her Deaf mother and hearing sister supported her. Speaking about her mother, she said,

My mother stayed with us and supported me in raising the children while my husband and I went to work. When I divorced my husband, my mother continued to stay with me and assisted in raising the children. She used SASL and helped my children develop language and communication skills in SASL. She also taught my children Arabic culture, religion, and responsibility. She also assisted in disciplining the children.

Talking about her sister, Sara said,

Whenever I need an interpreter, I always request help from my older sister, who knows SASL. I feel much more comfortable because she knows and understands what I am saying.

Sara's sentiments on family support echoed the other two mothers, Khadija and Amal's views of the family.

Theme 4: Navigating the Hearing Community

The Deaf mothers expressed that their challenges were mainly with the environment. All the mothers felt no challenges when inside their homes. However, due to communication access, they experienced challenges outside their homes, where they needed an interpreter. They

expressed fear, anxiety, loneliness, and being left out when interacting in a dominant hearing space. They often resort to gesturing or writing to communicate. Sara shared that,

When I take my car to the mechanic, I use gestures and get the point across as best as possible. I always quickly let that hearing person know they need to look at me and that I will use my hands to communicate. I am bold and direct. In the rare cases where the gesturing does not work, I resort to writing.

Sara shared that sometimes, she had to use family members as interpreters to assist her in navigating the hearing world. Sara experienced challenges and had to be patient and guide the family members on how best to interpret because they were not trained interpreters. She remembers her interaction in a dominant hearing court system when she sought child custody following a divorce. Her sister helped interpret for her. She was frustrated with the communication and court proceedings, as she shared,

When my husband and I divorced, he took my two sons away. I decided to seek legal assistance. My sister was hesitant because of the advanced language used in the court and her limited SASL skills. After convincing her, she accompanied me to court... I realized that she was not fully interpreting for me and deleted some. So, I told her to come back again and interpret exactly what I am saying and stop refusing. She admitted that she had omitted some things information because she perceived it as unimportant or embarrassing. I had to educate my sister on the importance of voicing everything I signed. My sister returned to court and shared all the information I had presented to the court. With a clearer understanding of the situation, the court granted me custody of my children after three years of separation.

Also, Amal shared her experience at the prenatal clinic where all the service providers, doctors, and nurses were hearing.

I had complications with the baby's position in the womb and had to depend on her hearing sister to interpret from when I was two months pregnant till the birth of my child.

Additionally, Khadija shared how she navigated the dominant hearing environment of the hearing school system that her two hearing children attended. She said,

Due to a lack of interpreters in the hearing schools, I had to communicate with the staff through writing, which took time and effort.

All three mothers expressed how navigating the hearing environment could be frustrating and almost make them give up, but they had to encourage themselves for the sake of their children.

Theme 5: Role Modeling and Resilience

Having Deaf mothers as role models is instrumental in helping Deaf children develop a culture of resiliency (Alyami et al., 2016; Alzahrani, 2020). Deaf mothers in the current study demonstrated strong willpower and did not quit when experiencing challenges—they expressed how having Deaf mothers acted as role models and helped them develop resiliency.

Sarah shared that,

In my family, there are three Deaf mothers my mother, grandmother, and cousin. I watched them raise both hearing and deaf children. Having experienced Deaf mothers in the family visiting my home and even my Deaf mother living with us at one time helped me to find ways to handle my fears, worries, and anxiety concerning the security of my children at home and outside the home. I welcomed motherhood with open expectations of the child's hearing status and already modeled skills.

Amal also shared,

My mother and grandmother are deaf as well. Having my first Deaf child made me see my child the same way my mother and grandmother viewed me. Having a Deaf mother close by helped me to handle my motherhood experience better.

Finally, Khadija shared that genetic deafness runs in the family, and so not only was her mother deaf but several members of the family are Deaf. She shared,

I saw members of my family who are Deaf raise Deaf and hearing children. My Deaf mother did the same, so I have much experience as a Deaf mother raising a Deaf or a hearing child.

Hence, we can see that all three mothers had unique first-hand experiences raising a Deaf and hearing child from Deaf members of their family who lived with them, which does not always happen to most Deaf mothers from hearing families.

Theme 6: Parenting Style

All three mothers expressed that their role as mothers in Saudi Arabia was to be responsible for raising children based on Arabic religion and culture. As mothers, they instilled societal values that led to appropriate social behavior and prepared their children for an independent life through learning skills and knowledge through education. To do so, the mothers shared their parenting styles depending on the circumstances. The dominant parenting style reported by the three Deaf was the authoritative parenting style.

Sara shared an example of employing the authoritative style in a situation where no child wanted to admit to breaking an iPad. She said,

I sat them down and explained the importance of honesty and that it pays to be honest. I wanted to model what it meant to be honest, and I said, if you are honest and admit to breaking the iPad, I will buy you a new iPad and give it to you. Of course, the guilty child honored up.

Amal shared that she uses dialogues to solve problems even with her hearing children. Since all her children know SASL, she used SASL to converse with her children to understand the problem before acting. She gave this example concerning her hearing child's refusal to go to school.

One day I woke up my hearing son to go to school. He refused to get up, and I asked him what the matter was. We talked. He said that his teacher slapped him in school... I contacted the school's president and explained to him what my son had said... Everything

was resolved. Now, my son is happy because I communicated to the president on his behalf.

Khadija shared a similar situation with her hearing daughter.

My hearing daughter has had difficulty speaking from a young age... One time, I recall that I woke up my daughter to go to school, and she refused. I sat to talk with her to know why. She said that she was being bullied because she had difficulty speaking... I encouraged my daughter and told her to ignore all people and, no matter what, be strong and have patience, and she will be successful. My daughter has improved her speech skills, and things are going well.

From the three Deaf mothers' narratives, they preferred an authoritative parenting style, which, although it focused more on dialogue, provides their children an opportunity to express themselves, maintains reasonable rules that are carried out by the mothers being warm towards children, and allows them to be very responsive to the needs of the child.

Theme 7: Audism

Audism was a significant theme in the research as it was prevalent in the experiences of deaf mothers. Although the three participants did not report experiences of audism in their families, they had community challenges. Previous research reported experiences prevalent in the community (Alyami et al., 2016). The most common form of audism shared by the mothers was in the community refusing to accept them as Deaf and SASL users who needed communication access. Providing interpreters to the Deaf mothers was presented as critical for the mothers to be included in the community activities. Also, the mothers needed interpreters to access services for their children, like schools and hospitals. According to the three mothers, experiences of audism were prevalent because Saudi Arabia lacks sufficient services for deaf parents, like interpreters and licensed professionals, to facilitate communication in public spaces. Khadija shared the need for sign language interpreters at the doctor's office. She said,

When I go to the doctor, an interpreter is not requested because they are not readily available.

Amal shared the same concerning interpreters,

I do not request interpreters when I go to visit my children's doctor, hearing schools, or other places because it is too difficult to get one.

Similarly, Khadija said,

I depend on myself to write to a doctor, and sometimes I rely on my sister to interpret for me when she is available.

Besides the lack of interpreters, which all three mothers experienced, there were also instances in which the Deaf mothers experienced direct audism. For example, Sara said she experienced it whenever her hearing husband accompanied her. In these situations, hearing people who had interacted with her before would ignore her in the presence of her husband. When her husband was present, the hearing people would act as if they could not understand a

Deaf person. Khadija said audism occurred in how hearing people view Deaf mothers as people who should stay home and do house chores like cleaning jobs instead of being employed.

Discussion

Most pregnant women have positive expectations and desires concerning their children, which later can impact their interaction with the child. Most mothers attend prenatal clinics because they want to know about everything, particularly the health of the baby they are carrying (Oyen & Aune, 2016). Research shows that most pregnant mothers hold various beliefs, expectations, and experiences of their motherhood and its different stages (Adalia et al., 2021). Most hearing mothers who find out their children are Deaf after birth go through mixed feelings that include worry, grief, shock, anxiety, guilt, and helplessness (Ebrahimi et al., 2015; Flaherty, 2015; Kurtzer-White & Luterman, 2003; Jackson et al., 2008; Zaidman-Zait, 2016). The findings from the current study in which all the mothers are Deaf presented a different experience because all three mothers desired to have a Deaf child who shared their language and culture. It is important to remember that it is a unique case to find Deaf mothers who also have Deaf children because only 10% of Deaf parents have Deaf children (Geeslin, 2000; Kobosko, 2011; Poon & Zaidman-Zait, 2013).

The Saudi Arabian Deaf mothers, despite their initial desire to have a Deaf child, embraced their hearing children and demonstrated equal maternal love, attachment, and interaction with all their children irrespective of their hearing status. These findings concur with past studies on attachment and interaction between deaf mothers and their Deaf children (Antia et al., 2020; Farhana & Malak, 2015; Meadow-Orlans et al., 1983). Also, reports of Deaf mothers with hearing children show the uniqueness of how Deaf mothers raise their children bilingual and bicultural, and hearing children are not left out in the home interaction (Gould & Dodd, 2014; Hofmann & Chilla, 2015; Humphries et al., 2012; Leigh et al., 2004; Moroe & de Andrade, 2018). On the other hand, the current findings on how Deaf mothers embraced their hearing children are different from what research demonstrates how hearing parents embrace, develop attachment, and interact with their Deaf children due to the stress following the hearing loss diagnosis (Gilliver et al., 2013; Jackson et al., 2010; Szarkowski & Brice, 2016).

Additionally, Saudi Deaf mothers expressed that they had a responsibility to train their children to grow an understanding of the Arabic culture and Islamic religion and demonstrate acceptable behavior and moral responsibilities. In training their hearing and Deaf children, the three mothers exhibited equality across all children in three of the four main parenting styles, including authoritative, authoritarian, indulgent, and indifferent (Sarwar, 2016; Wibowo et al., 2017). The three mothers did not express any stress in behavior management and training of either their Deaf or children because communication access through the shared Arabic sign language enabled their parents to carry out their parenting roles. The current findings echo research in America in which Deaf mothers supported both their hearing and Deaf children to develop lifetime skills, literacy skills, and self-advocacy (Berke, 2013; Souza, 2010). The case of deaf mothers is different from that of hearing parents raising Deaf children who, due to

communication challenges, experience stress in performing their parenting roles with their Deaf children (Lederberg & Golbach, 2002; Tamis-LeMonda et al., 2002; Zaidman-Zait & Most, 2005).

A major concern that the three mothers raised was the concern of speech and spoken language development for their hearing children. The Deaf mothers reported that their children's speech and spoken language lagged compared to their hearing peers. There are mixed findings that focus on the speech and language development of young Children of Deaf Adults (CODA), with some indicating possible delays while others indicate normal development equivalent to their hearing peers (Brackenbury et al., 2006; Moroe & de Andrade, 2018; Murphy & Slorach, 1983; Prinz & Prinz, 1981; Rienzi, 1990; Sachs et al., 1981; Schiff-Myers & Ventry, 1976; Singleton & Tittle, 2000). Hence, there is a need to continue the research of CODA and identify interventions to support CODA to access comprehensible language input in both sign language and spoken language. Some Deaf mothers experience challenges supporting their hearing children to develop spoken language and other aspects of the hearing culture (Moroe & de Andrade, 2018). Existing research proposes that family members and schools support hearing children of deaf parents (Krige, 2010; Myers et al., 2010).

Finally, Audism is an oppressive and discriminatory action in which the hearing individual dominates Deaf individuals by exercising their power to hear (Bauman, 2004, 2018). Addressing Audism in society demands creating awareness of Deaf culture and Deaf identity and addressing the status of sign language and sign language users in society, including hearing signers (Wilkins & Hehir, 2008; Wilkson, 2019). The three mothers' narratives indicated a need to continue sensitizing the community about Deaf people and the need for programs that offer sign language to increase the number of sign language interpreters and the spread of SASL by increasing the number of SASL users. Like racism, which requires recognition and dismantling of the barriers of existing white privilege, with Audism, there is a need to recognize that hearing privilege exists. If not addressed, it is a barrier for Deaf people to maximize their potential in society. One way to address hearing privilege, as shown in the current study, is to recognize the heterogeneous nature of Deaf individuals and provide communication access and other accommodations without assuming that all community members receive information or communicate similarly.

Limitation

The current study included three mothers, which indicates a small sample size. Additionally, the three mothers have Deaf mothers; hence, it is important to examine Deaf mothers whose mothers are hearing. Lastly, the study focuses on only mothers, so there is a need for future research that examines the experiences of Deaf fathers with hearing children.

Conclusion

The field of Deaf education and Deaf studies tends to focus on Deaf children's language and literacy development and the experiences of hearing parents raising Deaf children. Unfortunately, the field has not taken a similar interest in CODA's language and literacy

development and the experiences of Deaf parents raising hearing children. Taking into cognizance that only 10% of Deaf parents have Deaf children, it implies that the majority of Deaf parents have hearing children. Identifying CODA as bimodal, bilingual, and bicultural, it is important to explore their language and literacy needs and specific early childhood interventions to ensure no language or literacy gaps.

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German and American Pre-service Teachers' Knowledge and Dispositions Towards Understanding Vulnerable Populations

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Abstract

Teachers serve as accessible personnel capable of identifying student vulnerability and suggesting resources and opportunities. To serve in this capacity, teachers need to identify vulnerabilities and know about resources. This study included 52 American and German preservice teachers (PSTs) who were given a scenario and asked to identify who needed help, label the vulnerability, and respond to the scenario. Findings indicated PSTs from both countries had limited insight into community resources, concerns regarding vulnerabilities, and pre-dispositions toward vulnerable populations. Suggestions for providing PSTs with opportunities to understand complex social systems, connecting PSTs to services, and introducing systems thinking within teacher education programs are offered.

Keywords: American, German, preservice teachers, teacher education, vulnerable populations

Teachers do much more than provide students with an academic education. They also focus on students' social and emotional needs. Teachers have always been essential and have served as liaisons between their students and their community (Ampofo et al., 2020), "often to the detriment of their own personal lives and families" (Thomas, 2012, p. 2). According to Peralta and Galaviz (2013), bringing together the community, the school, students, and their families is a "pivotal role" teachers play in aiming for overall student success (p. 183). As such, the teachers themselves take on the role of a community resource.

Teachers are often touted as trusted adults to whom students can reach out if they or their families find themselves in vulnerable situations. There is an expectation that teachers are safe people with access to resources to help students and their families. Teachers wear many hats and play many roles because they are expected to "meet [their] students where they are with what they need" (Collins, 2016, p. 78). While experienced educators may be well versed in school and

local services, preservice teachers (PSTs) are often unprepared for all the roles they will fulfill in their teacher education program.

In schools, teachers often need to respond to students and families who find themselves in challenging situations where they are vulnerable. Vulnerable populations, as defined in the context of this study, are individuals at higher risk for being wronged or harmed because they cannot protect their own interests due to societal and/or legal contexts. Vulnerable populations can be found in any country around the globe, yet their situations are not a world unto themselves; they and their situations intersect many aspects of society-at-large.

The danger of pre-service teachers not being knowledgeable about community resources for students and families in vulnerable situations is similar to the research on teachers saying they care but still harboring biases against vulnerable populations (Matias & Zembylas, 2014); it is inauthentic, leads to “false empathy” (p.320), and threatens the foundation of the teacher-student relationship that is essential to helping students and families in vulnerable situations.

Research indicates a significant association between teacher bias and student outcomes (Dennesen et al., 2022). Thus, if teachers cannot offer students and families access to community resources, it could indicate implicit bias related to the vulnerability and could impact students' development and overall success. To be effective teachers, PSTs need to be knowledgeable about community resources to serve all students and their families regardless of their vulnerabilities and the PSTs' biases against these situations. For teachers to serve in this capacity, they need to be able to identify vulnerabilities and be knowledgeable about appropriate resources. Learning about the resources available in the community could be helpful for PSTs to develop an unbiased understanding of vulnerable populations.

This study details an American and German research project initiated to gather knowledge of PSTs for helping vulnerable populations. The first aim of this project was to understand PSTs' ability to identify potential vulnerabilities and challenges. PSTs were provided scenarios (see Appendix) and asked to identify who needed help and why they were vulnerable. Second was the question of what academic and social supports PSTs suggested; thus, PSTs were asked how they would respond to the scenario. In summary, this study sought to explore PSTs' identification of, knowledge of, and dispositions toward understanding vulnerable populations.

Literature Review

Vulnerable Populations

Wisner (2016) posits that vulnerability is a concept with Western origins and develops when “political, social, and economic structures deny people the environment” that will enable them to thrive (p. 30). Vulnerable groups are understood as having definite strengths, rights, competencies, and potentials but cannot use them properly because of specific critical events. To understand vulnerable populations, it is crucial to understand the framing of social challenges. For example, Andersen et al. (2018) describe political, social, cultural, and material conditions when referring to refugees. Vulnerability is not only a psychological category but also a social one that needs to be discussed within educational and other societal systems (Stamm &

Halberkann, 2015). There is no explicit list of factors that create vulnerability (Martin, 2015). In general, educators have to keep in mind “systemic factors that affect the students they serve, especially those who are vulnerable to sociopolitical and system-based inequities and have limited access to resources” (Interiano-Shiverdecker et al., 2019, p. 61) as well as the individual, group, and discursive factors (Jaquith & Stosich, 2019) which can lead to an educational theory as opposed to being reduced to a simple individual circumstance (Janssen, 2018). Therefore, this study defines vulnerable populations as individuals at higher risk of being wronged or harmed because they cannot protect their interests due to societal and/or legal contexts.

School and Community Connection

The education system is one particular social structure that often interacts with vulnerable populations. Since schools are nested in the community, they are naturally connected to resources for vulnerable populations. Schools' connection with the community is seen as a powerful means of maintaining democratic and equitable schools (Auerbach, 2009; Jordan & Wilson, 2017). Leaders at the school are often encouraged to connect with the community (Ishimaru, 2013). For students with disabilities, connections with community resources, such as tutoring centers and health care professionals, are crucial to students' success during school and once they graduate, especially if they want to continue to college. The community is also accessed by the school in order to offer opportunities for enrichment through field trips, for example. Teachers collaborate with the community for science, technology, engineering, art, and math (STEAM) related programs and experiential learning opportunities related to technical or vocational career programs.

The common point-person for connecting students to community resources is the school counselor, psychologist, or social worker. These individuals are often perceived as the keepers of information about community resources. However, this is an ineffective perception because the average national ratio of counselor-to-student caseload is 250 - 450 students per school counselor (American School Counselor Association, 2021). Moreover, if a student approaches a teacher first, and the teacher sends the student to the social worker or counselor, that is an extra step that might delay timely access to services. For additional support, many U. S. schools have Community in Schools (CIS) programs. Since the 1970s, CIS has been providing support for students by connecting students to community resources (McShane, 2019). Yet, not all schools have school counselors or CIS personnel, and the work of identifying vulnerable students and generating support is not solely one person's job or a handful of people's jobs.

Teacher Roles

Teachers are well poised to assist students since they interact with students on a daily basis. If teachers begin to notice patterns of vulnerability manifesting in the classroom, they are in the position to ascertain the gravity of the situation and can then assess if they can intervene and protect. Teachers often initiate the referral process for services when they notice or are made aware of a student's need. Thus, teachers can collaborate and communicate with other staff to

triangulate and gather information regarding behavior patterns to provide wraparound services for vulnerable students. As such, teachers can begin mobilizing and generating support services that blend into the school's everyday workings, allowing students to move throughout their day without standing out. Of course, the approach taken should be one of dignity and respect and not of embarrassment and shaming. Ensuring that judgment and deficit thinking ideology do not impede the teacher's ability to support students and families is important. Acknowledging the systemic ways marginalization and oppression make students and families vulnerable is an important step for teachers. For example, capitalism, racism, sexism, colonialism, xenophobia, and other ways that marginalized groups are oppressed because of their social status can cause or contribute to many of the conditions students and their families face. Teachers must be aware that their position of access and power may influence whom they acknowledge as vulnerable and may impact the support they offer. Marianchuk's (2020) findings show that teachers' perceptions of student vulnerability resulted in teachers' acknowledging their teacher identity and how that impacts how they support their students. The participants in Marianchuk's (2020) study realized that teaching more vulnerable students was difficult but worth the work to support the students in their classrooms and schools.

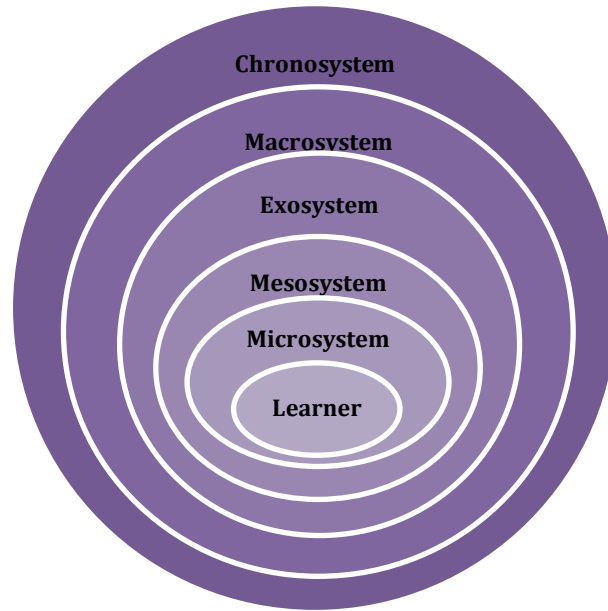
In summary, having defined vulnerable populations and the importance of the teacher's role in identifying and suggesting services for vulnerable populations, this study sought to explore PSTs' identification of, knowledge of, and dispositions toward understanding vulnerable populations.

Theoretical Framework

Bronfenbrenner's (1976, 1979) Ecological Structure of the Educational Environment states that a learner's environment has nested structures (see Figure 1). The first structure is the micro-system. This is the immediate environment, or setting, for the learner. This setting has the elements of place, time, activity, and role. The second structure is the mesosystem, or the system of micro-systems since this setting consists of all the major settings of the learner's life (such as family, school, church, and friend groups). The third structure is the exo-system. This structure includes the major institutions of society at the local, state, and national levels. While the learner may not be directly involved with these institutions, they indirectly impact the learner's life. The fourth structure is the macro-system. This structure constitutes the institutions of the culture, such as social, educational, and economic, and carries information and ideology. The overarching cultural context influences the learner as well as the other systems embedded in the culture. The fifth structure is the chronosystem. This structure refers to the influence of changes that occur over time and impact the individual's interaction among the systems. Bronfenbrenner's theory of systems is useful as a lens to examine an individual's relationship within their immediate community and wider society. Understanding how the systems are embedded and interconnected and can work together to support vulnerable populations is also useful.

Figure 1

Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Structure of the Educational Environment



Methodology

The overarching research question was: Given a scenario, how do preservice teachers identify and respond to the needs of vulnerable populations, and what might their responses indicate about their knowledge and dispositions toward understanding vulnerable populations?

Setting and Participants

This study took place at two institutions. One institution is a public urban research university in the southeast United States. The other institution is a university of education in the southwest of Germany. All participants were enrolled in a preservice teacher education program. It was decided not to collect demographic or background information from the participants in order not to introduce labels that might influence their responses to the scenarios. While the sample was one of convenience (See Table 1), the contexts were relevant for both societies. Both German society and U.S. society are impacted by global vulnerability issues, such as the Syrian Refugee Crisis, the war in Ukraine in Europe, and the constant border disputes in the United States and Mexico.

Table 1
Respondents by University Course (N=52)

	German University		American University
Course 1	15 respondents	Course 1	18 respondents
Course 2	10 respondents	Course 2	9 respondents
Total	25 respondents	Total	27 respondents

Data Collection

As part of a class activity, PSTs were asked to read one of the scenarios. They either picked a scenario or were assigned one (See Appendix). PSTs were asked to first think about the scenario on their own. Next, they were allowed to discuss their scenario with a peer. Then, they anonymously submitted their answers for their scenario into an online Google Form. Participants were allowed to answer in either German or English. After all, answers were submitted, a class discussion was held, each scenario was presented and discussed, and community resources were shared.

The online Google Form included the following short-answer questions:

1. To which scenario are you responding?
2. In this scenario, who needs help?
3. In this scenario, how would you label the vulnerability?
4. As an educator, what answer would you provide for the question asked in this scenario?
5. Is there anything else you would like to add regarding this scenario?

Data Analysis

The short-answer responses for each question from the online form were aggregated and qualitatively analyzed by scenario and line by line using a constant comparison method (Strauss & Corbin, 1998) by the first two authors. Any responses in German were translated into English by the second author, who is fluent in German and English. Due to the research questions, it was determined that there would be codes related to disposition and labels of vulnerability. First, all the responses for each scenario were grouped together. The first two authors analyzed the data for Scenario 1 independently. Then, they met to discuss discrepancies and came to a consensus about codes. Next, the scenarios were divided into sets - evens and odds. Each researcher took the lead in coding one set. Afterward, they swapped and reviewed each other's data analysis. Last, they met to discuss discrepancies and reach a consensus on all codes and categories. NVivo 12 (QSR International, 2019) was used to facilitate data organization and management. Finally, they shared and explained the codes and categories with the other two authors, and together, all four of them applied Bronfenbrenner's theory as a lens for interpretation.

Results

Where applicable, findings are supported by direct quotes. The words in bold align with the codes described in the data display tables.

PSTs' Responses to the Scenarios

As seen in Table 2, PSTs offered suggestions for the vulnerable individual and the educator. Regarding the individual, suggestions fell into four themes: **Experience-based, Responsible Action, Practical Suggestion, and Confer with another professional.** PSTs

offered suggestions based on **experience**. For example, in response to Scenario 11, one PST wrote, “*I’ve actually had students come out to me in their writing before.*” Sometimes, PSTs offered to assume **responsibility** for the next steps. In response to Scenario 6, one PST wrote, “*I would offer to act as a liaison as necessary.*” Other times, PSTs provided **practical solutions**, such as for Scenario 6, where one PSTs suggested [he/she] “*would direct the father to an advocacy group for immigrant rights.*” On occasion, PSTs made suggestions for the educator to **confer with another professional**. For example, for Scenario 9, the PST suggested the educator would “*Acquaint [another] pedagogical specialist with the situation.*”

Table 2.
Response Suggestions Provided by PSTs

Category	Theme	Description	Exemplar Quotes
For the vulnerable individual	Experienced	Already experienced this scenario or something close to it and offers suggestions based on experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>I used to volunteer [in a place that did...]</i>
	Action Oriented Suggestion/ Responsibility	Takes on responsibility for figuring things out and helping	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>I would begin by getting her and her kids some food.</i> • <i>I would also try to assess the situation</i> • <i>I would also follow-up with the school counselor</i>
	Practical Suggestion	Suggests to implement something practical even though it might not completely solve the issue/problem	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Buy cheap food, e.g., in the "Tafel"</i> • <i>I would get the child some food from the cafeteria</i> • <i>I would make sure the student knows breakfast is free in the morning</i>
For the educator	Confer with another professional	The educator should confer with or inform another educator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Acquaint further pedagogical specialists with the situation.</i>

PSTs' Concerns

PSTs expressed concerns about aspects of the scenarios, and eleven themes emerged (See Table 3). PSTs expressed concerns based on the **individual** situation. The majority of this code

was composed of questions the PSTs asked about the individual and his/her agency in the circumstance. Many PSTs felt there was not a “*one-size-fits-all answer.*” PSTs expressed **caution** about responding to the scenario. For example, one PST indicated, in response to Scenario 1, “*There could be rules and legal consequences for the teacher, school, or district when getting involved.*” Some PSTs felt the individual’s **culture** or **language** would be a factor in the help they could get. For example, for Scenario 6, one student felt that “*the father’s country of origin [would be] information [that] may alter [his/her] response.*” PSTs asked many questions about the **societal rules** and **structures** in place to help vulnerable populations, structures such as public transportation and school-level resources. For example, for Scenario 7, two PSTs asked, “*what kind of rights does this person have?*” In other scenarios, PSTs seemed overwhelmed by the **complexity** of the issue. For example, for Scenario 9, a PST believed: “*It’s almost impossible for a student to stay in school and make it with a baby.*” For example, PSTs wondered about social spaces available for transportation and childcare help. In other scenarios, PSTs asked about **financial** supports. In some of their responses, PSTs subjectively **criticized** the systems and gave their point of view on issues. At times, PSTs drew conclusions that indicated they did not fully understand or lacked perspectives of the underlying vulnerability issues. For example, for Scenario 6, one student asked, “*If you work and pay taxes, why worry about getting deported?*”

Table 3
Concerns Expressed by PSTs

Theme	Description	Exemplar Quotes
Individual	Differences based on individualities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <i>There are many things to consider with each individual.</i>
Cautionary	List of roadblocks, other problems, and cautions against issues that might (or might not) arise.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <i>Sometimes [help] may not be wanted.</i> ● <i>It is always a good idea to include in the conversation the school counselor and/or principal.</i> ● <i>Is this single mom comfortable communicating and interacting with a man?</i>
Cultural	Felt culture would be a concern	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <i>Maybe she is of a culture that frowns upon unmarried men and women interacting</i>
Language	Felt language would be a concern	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <i>If her high level of education was earned in another country, possibly a non-English speaking country, and her English language skills aren't great...</i>

Structural	Infrastructure and resources such as the services that are in place in the community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <i>Is the student getting support they need?</i> ● <i>Does his degree count for anything in the States?</i>
Societal	Policies (Politik”) in place	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <i>What kinds of rights does this person have?</i>
Complex	Complex system concerns to navigate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <i>Why can you not become a citizen?</i>
Social Spaces	Availability or access to community spaces concerns	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <i>Are there any family members the mom knows that would allow her and the child to stay with them?</i>
Material Support	Concerns about money, housing, shelter, job	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <i>Employment opportunities and struggles</i>
Critical	Analyzes and criticizes the given system	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <i>I was curious if the classification was accurate or appropriate for this student.</i>
Lack of Perspective	Cannot imagine aspects of the situation and/or does not have knowledge about the vulnerability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <i>Why do you believe health care is not safe?</i> ● <i>If you work and pay taxes, why worry about being deported?</i>

PSTs' Dispositions

PSTs' dispositions towards vulnerable populations fell into four themes: **detached**, **empathetic**, **supportive**, and **reserved** (see Table 4). Some PSTs made statements that seemed they felt **detached** from the human issue presented in the scenario. For example, in response to Scenario 6, one PST responded, *“I would also inform the father that it is important that his daughter does not miss school as this will affect her performance in school and bring unnecessary attention to his family.”* In contrast, some PSTs seemed **empathetic**, and their responses indicated they had the capacity to understand what those in the scenario might be feeling. For example, in response to Scenario 10, one PST responded, *“I think it is awesome when anybody has a passion for something and they want to pursue it.”* In response to Scenario 6, another PST stated, *“I would inform him that neither of these clinics would deport him.”* In response to Scenario 10, another PST stated, *“My first reaction would be one of joy and support.”* Relatedly, some PST responses indicated they were sympathetic and could provide encouragement and emotional **support**. For example, in response to Scenario 10, one PST stated, *“As a teacher, you can be encouraging and offer support and motivation for the student.”* In response to Scenario 10, another PST said, *“I would also just generally be supportive and tell him that I think it is great that he wants to pursue something that he enjoys.”* In other cases,

some PSTs seemed **reserved** or hesitant to get involved and thus “passed” the issue onto someone else. For example, in response to Scenario 4, one PST suggested telling the mother to “*notify authorities of the abuse.*” In another example, in response to Scenario 5, one PST said he/she would “*point him to a local refugee center.*”

Many of the PST's responses pointed people away and gave direction or vague information, such as, “*I will point them to ...*” or “*I would provide information about ...*”. For example, for Scenario 2, one PST wrote, “*Point them to a homeless shelter (where they could stay), point them in the direction of an unemployment office.*” PSTs gave generic names for resources such as “*a women’s shelter*” or “*a mother-child home.*” For Scenario 8, a PST made a very general and generic suggestion: “*I would advise the woman to reach out to her community.*” This was in contrast to the response to Scenario 3 where the PST gave the name of a specific resource, “*He can go to the local food bank, Loaves and Fishes.*”

Table 4.
PSTs’ Dispositions

Theme	Description	Exemplar Quotes
Detached	Lacks concern or desensitization to the issue/problem/individual	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <i>Unfortunately, this type of scenario is very common.</i>
Empathetic	Engaged with feeling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <i>I can't imagine what it would be like in that situation</i> ● <i>We need to be mindful and careful when offering help so as to not hurt anybody’s feelings</i>
Supportive	Offers support and/or encouragement; cheerleader	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <i>I would encourage the mother</i>
Reserved	Takes a step to pass the work to the next person; includes words like “send them to...,” “get them in touch with...”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <i>Send to the employment office</i> ● <i>Get them in touch with a social worker</i> ● <i>School counselors are usually trained for these types of scenarios</i>

Through Bronfenbrenner’s Lens

As can be seen in Table 5, many themes could be placed into Bronfenbrenner’s systems. For example, the first category, *Scenario Responses*, falls into four themes: Experience-based, Responsible Action, Practical Suggestion, and Confer with Another Professional. Within these themes, pre-service teachers’ responses aligned with the micro level – for example, one person suggested: “*I would begin by getting her and her kids some food.*” Pre-service teachers’

responses aligned with exo-level - for example, “*I would also follow up with the school counselor.*” Themes fell only at micro- and exo-system levels, but not meso- and macro-system levels. Themes for *Concerns* and *Dispositions* could also be placed in Bronfenbrenner’s systems.

Table 5.
Alignment of Themes within Bronfenbrenner’s Systems

	Micro	Meso	Exo	Macro
Scenario Response	X (Experienced; Action Oriented; Practical)		X (Confer with another professional)	
Expressed Concerns	X (Individual)	x (Family)	X (Societal infrastructure)	X (Rights, Policies)
Dispositions	X (Empathy)	x (Supportive)	X (Reserved)	x (Detached)

Note: **X** signifies strong alignment; x signifies weak alignment

Concerns: Concerns about the individual in the scenario aligned with the Micro-level. Family-related concerns aligned with the Meso-level. Concerns around societal infrastructure aligned with the Exo-level, and structural concerns aligned with the Macro-level. Other codes within the theme of Concerns did not clearly align with Bronfenbrenner’s Systems. As seen in Table 5, the codes within the theme of Dispositions aligned with Bronfenbrenner’s systems.

Dispositions: The fact that many of the responses that fell into the Dispositions theme were of pre-service teachers “pointing away” towards an agency or suggesting to refer the issue to someone else could suggest that PSTs do not know enough about community resources, so they do not know how to respond or what to offer as a resource. There might be more concrete responses if PSTs knew about and could name opportunities, agencies, resources, etc. In the US, counselors and social workers are trained regarding resources and processes, and in Germany, social workers at school are trained; yet, teachers in both countries need this knowledge, too.

Limitations

The researchers created the scenarios based on previous personal experiences and knowledge about situations teachers have encountered. For future research, other scenarios could be added, and the scenarios should be vetted by individuals who have been in those vulnerable situations. It should be noted that PSTs’ responses to an academic exercise with hypothetical

examples might differ from their actual responses if they were truly faced with the scenarios in person and knew the individuals. The fact that these are solely scenarios could explain why some responses made it seem that the PSTs felt detached from the scenario. Since demographic and background information was not collected, it is impossible to know how personal factors contributed to PSTs' responses. Future research could attempt to ascertain if age, prior experience of vulnerability, and other factors influenced responses. Additionally, since this study did not find any differences between German and American PST responses, future research could further examine this. It is possible PSTs gave answers to scenarios they have never had to think about; they are not taught how to address these issues, and they are not yet in the classroom regularly where they might be confronted with some of these issues. Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Structure was used as a theoretical framework because this model is introduced in many educational foundational courses. Thus, for future research, it might make sense to use this model when educating PSTs about vulnerable populations and their intersection with the different levels. It was beyond the scope of the study to examine the responses through Bronfenbrenner's Chronosystem structure, which depends on a span of time. Future studies should examine if PST disposition and understanding evolve. Future research should survey PSTs at the beginning, middle, and end of their teacher education program to gauge growth in knowledge about vulnerable populations and available resources. Since the small sample size of PST (N=52) might be seen as a limitation, future research should increase the sample size of participants.

Discussion and Implications

This research study sought to gather knowledge, competencies, and attitudes of PSTs regarding understanding and helping vulnerable populations. Taken together, the findings have implications for teacher education. In this study, PSTs lack of concrete responses, such as the names of community agencies, showed the PSTs' limited insight into the available meso-systems. This lack of knowledge may explain some of the concerns PSTs expressed about the vulnerabilities in the scenarios as well as their dispositions towards vulnerable populations. Additionally, PSTs' dispositions might be linked to the preconceived notions and biases they bring to their teacher education program about vulnerable populations. This finding aligns with other research that also acknowledges the need for preservice teacher education to address the knowledge gap when it comes to vulnerabilities, such as mental health and suicide, and knowing about and facilitating direction and access to resources (see Maclean & Law, 2021; Whisenhunt et al., 2022).

Bronfenbrenner's ecological structure of the educational environment was introduced as a theoretical framework to conceptualize the different levels of social interaction and welfare necessary for coping with societal challenges. Learning about Bronfenbrenner's structures would be effective in helping PSTs understand and direct vulnerable populations toward appropriate resources. PSTs would benefit from becoming familiar with perspectives, analyses, and reflections on Bronfenbrenner's structures to work in schools. PSTs need to get information on

these different ecological structures, learn to define their role across these structural differentiations, and develop their competencies when dealing with students and their challenges on some or even all of those levels. It is important to realize that PSTs have a role as *individuals* as well as *professionals* across Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems. Therefore, they need opportunities to increase their personal and professional knowledge and competencies.

This combination of individual and professional increase in competence bears some complexity. Thus, becoming an educator does not only mean learning how to teach; it also means knowing how to behave with students and motivate, promote, connect, and advocate. PSTs should be given opportunities for self-reflection around this knowledge. This is a critical step in developing empathy and genuine concern for others. For example, PSTs can be provided opportunities to engage with diverse communities and critically reflect upon those experiences. They could go on neighborhood walks (Peralta & Galavis, 2013) or participate in a community resource mapping activity (Munoz, 2003). Specific prompts can be offered that encourage the exploration of concepts related to privilege, oppression, power, and marginalization. These points of self-reflection should foster responsible action and the development of strengths-based interventions rather than a teacher-as-savior mentality.

Given the context of working with vulnerable populations, PSTs can also be given opportunities to understand systems Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory contextualizes. In addition, teacher education should include an introduction of systems thinking approaches as a way of helping PSTs provide adequate responses to vulnerable individuals struggling to navigate multi-level and complex social systems. PSTs can create maps of the systems that exist within their communities. These maps can be used as a discussion point for how vulnerable populations may experience barriers to access to resources. Once barriers are identified, PSTs can explore strategies to support their students by collaborating with other professionals.

To understand how to connect students to services, PSTs may attend an information fair early in their preparation program, highlighting other school personnel, community agencies, and organizations that can support vulnerable populations. Then, they can visit those organizations later in their program to make further connections and gather first-hand practical suggestions. These experience-based opportunities may help PSTs understand the complex nature of accessing and navigating systems so they can critically reflect when the system is the cause of some barriers. Having an understanding of the barriers can also create a disposition of advocacy on behalf of students and their families. To understand and help vulnerable populations, PSTs need to understand more about the interconnections of education, socioeconomic resources, students' progress, and the educational system's embeddedness within the larger systems.

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Appendix Scenarios

Scenario 1: This morning you got to school to find one of your students telling you she was hungry. You call home and find out that the mother is...

- A single female in her 30's. She has a high level of education. She got laid off and has depleted all her financial resources over the last 9 months. She still has not found a job because of the competition in her field. She does not have family in this country. She will soon be losing her house. She has two school age children. She is trying to be proactive. Where do you begin to direct her for help? What information can you offer?

Scenario 2: You get to school this morning and one of your students points to the PE shelter and tells you that where his dad sleeps. You were curious and called his dad and found out that...

- He's a 27-year-old male. He lost his minimum wage paying job and couldn't pay rent. So, he had been couch surfing with various buddies, but had overstayed his visits and ran out of buddies. He did sleep in the PE shelter.
- You later confirm this information with his former sports coach/PE teacher who spotted him sleeping in the school's playground early one morning. What information can you offer the dad?

Scenario 3: You get to school this morning and one of your students is crying because he's worried about his grandfather. You call the grandfather who takes care of the boy and find out...

- The grandfather is a 60-year-old male. He never went to college so he never got a "real job." He's always made ends meet working here and there. He doesn't have any money saved to retire. Currently, he works at the local grocery store bagging groceries. Most of his income goes towards his medications and sometimes he doesn't have enough money left over for food. Even though he works at the grocery store, he is embarrassed to ask for a food handout. He thinks that if he asks, he might get fired and he needs your job because he needs your medicines. Where in the community can he go to get help?

Scenario 4: You get to school this morning and find one of your students crying and afraid. You call the mother and you find out...

- She's a 30-year-old female. She moved to town only three years ago and has been living with her boyfriend for the past year at his place. Within the last six months he has been struggling at work and he has been taking out his frustrations on her. First, he would verbally abuse her. Yet two nights ago he came home drunk and hit her. Last night he threatened to kill her. She believes he's capable of doing it and fears for your life. After he fell into a drunken stupor on the couch, she quietly and quickly left the house with nothing but her purse and the clothes on your back and picked up her child from school. They slept in the car last night. She doesn't have family or friends in town. What informational help can you offer her?

Scenario 5: Afterschool, one of your students' parents come to you and asks you for information....

- You find out he's a refugee from the Congo. He has been here for a little over two months. He wants to take language classes. Where can he go for information? How will he get there? What information do you offer him?

Scenario 6: This morning when you got to school, one of your students who has been absent almost every other day from school is sitting in the corner crying. She tells you she is worried about her dad. You call home and find out...

- The father is an immigrant. He just turned 31 years old. He has lived here longer than he lived in the country of his birth. He would like some help because lately he hasn't been feeling well (that's why his daughter stayed home from school). He is afraid to go to the hospital because he fears being deported. He would like to become a citizen; however, because of the law that brought him here, he cannot. With the recent political changes, he is scared. What information can you offer him about where to go to get health help and do so feeling safe?

Scenario 7: At a parent/teacher conference, you find out that one of your students' parents would not come to the school. So, you plan a home visit. While there, you find out....

- The father is a 41-year-old male refugee from Afghanistan. The last 10 years before fleeing, he had been working as an engineer in his country. He came here together with his family (wife, 5-year-old girl, 1-year-old boy) two years ago. He has been waiting since then for his allowance to stay there. Up to now he could not get that allowance. He cannot attend an official language course and so it is impossible for him to get any legal work. His plan is to learn more and have more opportunities for work. He understands the legislation and you he does not feel safe from being deported in the next months as some of his friends have been. What information can you offer him?

Scenario 8: In class, a student shared with the class that...

- He has a 79-year-old grandmother. She came into the country in 1973 together with her three children, to live here with her husband, who came as a foreign worker in 1966. After the move, she raised her children, lived in her small community in a large city, but did not learn the official language very intensely. Her children work and live in different regions of the country. Her husband died in 2014. Lately she has been feeling a little unhealthy. The student said she feels unsafe because she is not sure where to get suitable health care and social support. What information do you offer?

Scenario 9: You are walking out to your car one day after school, and one of your former students comes up to you...

- She is a 16-year girl who confides in you that she just found out she's pregnant. She told her boyfriend. She does not know how to tell her parents and she doesn't know where else to go. She and the boyfriend are both still going to school and want to continue going to school. What helpful information can you offer her?

Scenario 10: You are sitting at your desk early one morning and one of your students comes in and says he wants to speak with you. You find out....

- He is a 14-year-old teenage boy with a disability – he has long been classified as developmentally delayed. He enjoys working on cars with his dad and brother. He wants to graduate from school and find a job as a mechanic. His dream would be to work for Porsche. What information do you offer to him?

Scenario 11: You are sitting at home grading personal essays...

- You find out one of your students is a teenager who identifies as male. Yet he is currently struggling with determining his sexual desire. He would like some help. In the essay he asks: Where can I go? Who can I speak with at school or in the community? What do you offer in response?

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Cross-cultural Aspects of Fake News Literacy

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Abstract

This paper reviews research “fake news” using a cultural lens to identify possible cross-cultural factors impacting how audiences react to misleading news. A cross-cultural communications cycle provides a framework for understanding the processes behind fake news and the consequences of the resultant fake news. Linguistic and visual cross-cultural issues are discussed, and strategies for discerning fake news and its cross-cultural implications are provided, culminating in an argument that fake news can serve as a motivating means to gain news literacy and cross-cultural competence.

Keywords: cross-culture, culture, disinformation, fake news, media literacy, news literacy

With the spread of the Internet and connected devices, news can spread globally and almost instantaneously. Unfortunately, the quality and veracity of the news spread by these means is very uneven, with available content including reliable facts, skewed but not inaccurate interpretations, innocuous fiction, and harmful deceit, often intermingled to make the value of each component challenging to determine. More than just frustrating to the knowledge-seeker, misleading and false information has real consequences that can lead to poor decision-making and even death. More than ever, news literacy is needed so that consumers can protect themselves by discerning fake news.

This situation is exacerbated when news travels between cultures, the most apparent recent instance being news about COVID-19. At the least, when audiences encounter news from a different culture – be it social, political, or ideological – they may misinterpret the news because they do not understand the assumptions or communication styles of people unlike themselves. Both language and images have culturally defined meanings, and the news topics link to varying cultural values. Especially if the news is created or broadcast from an oppositional group (e.g., a neo-Nazi group condemning Jews), there may be an intense emotional reaction and possible polarizing action. These cultural differences (e.g., attitudes toward gender roles, educational approaches, power distance) show that cultural competence is also needed to deal with fake and prejudicial news.

Literature Review Methodology

This paper reviews literature about fake news using a cultural lens in order to identify possible cross-cultural factors in terms of audience reaction. EBSCO databases (Academic Search Complete, Communication Source, ERIC, Library, Information Science & Technology Abstracts APAPsycinfo and SocINDEX) and Google Scholar were consulted using the key terms fake news, disinformation, digital literacy, information literacy, media literacy, cultural

competence*, global competence*, and cross-cultural*. Only English language sources were consulted. Because of their long-standing commitment to literacies related to fake news, the American Library Association and UNESCO websites were also searched with the same key terms. Cited references from the above sources led to further relevant resources.

Definitions

A few terms need to be defined to lay the foundation for this issue. Basically, fake news is deliberate, published disinformation that purports to be true (Media Matters, 2016). *News literacy* is the ability to access, evaluate, interpret, and communicate news messages in various formats (Maksl et al., 2015). News literacy is a subset of *media literacy*, which entails the same competencies but is applied to many different kinds of media messages (Aspen Institute, 1992). *Digital literacy* is the cognitive and technical ability to responsibly access, evaluate, interpret, use, communicate, and generate information using digital technologies (American Library Association, 2011). The umbrella term *information literacy* is the ability to locate, access, evaluate, interpret, use, manage, communicate, and generate information responsibly (American Library Association, 1998).

Culture and *cultural competence* have their own set of definitions. UNESCO (2001) defined *culture* as “the set of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features of society or a social group, and that it encompasses, in addition to art and literature, lifestyles, ways of living together, value systems, traditions, and beliefs” (p. 3). Cultures encompass both internal assumptions and attitudes as well as external behaviors based on norms and values. A person may belong to several cultures: family, ethnicity, profession, social club, or political party. People respond to culture at different levels, intellectually and emotionally. Some of a person’s lived cultures may overlap or even contradict, in which case, the person or group needs to live with the disequilibrium or resolve the conflict, which can occur on multiple levels. *Cultural competence* may thus be defined as a congruent set of knowledge, skills, and dispositions about one’s own culture and others that enable people to work effectively in cross-cultural situations (i.e., those situations where people from different cultures interact) (Isaacs & Benjamin, 1991). Cross et al. (1989) listed the following criteria for cultural competence: 1) cultural self-assessment, 2) cultural knowledge, 3) valuing diversity, 4) management of the dynamics of difference, and 5) adaptation to cultural contexts.

The act of communicating across different cultures has two facets: If people from different cultures interact and share information, it is called intercultural communication. On the other hand, cross-cultural communication consists of comparing interactions among people from the same culture to those from another culture (Chen, 2007). In the latter situation, fake news creators might affirm their own culture in their message (e.g., “White supremacists fired Black employees”). However, people from another culture might find that message upsetting. If after the people of those two cultures have read that fake news, they then discuss that news, then it would be intercultural communication – and it might be confrontational if they are not culturally competent.

These cultural differences (e.g., attitudes toward gender roles, educational approaches, power distance) show that cultural competence is also needed to deal with fake and prejudicial news. How do fake news creators manipulate culturally sensitive language to impact their audience? To what extent does that language get misunderstood and differently interpreted by people of different cultures? How does that knowledge of several cultures help to decode fake news? In that respect, the more one knows how fake news is created – and for what reason – the more that one can see the need to be culturally aware and competent.

In light of these issues, research questions emerge:

- a) What possible cross-cultural factors impact how audiences react to misleading information?
- b) What strategies can audiences use to deal with those factors?

Cross-cultural Communication Cycle

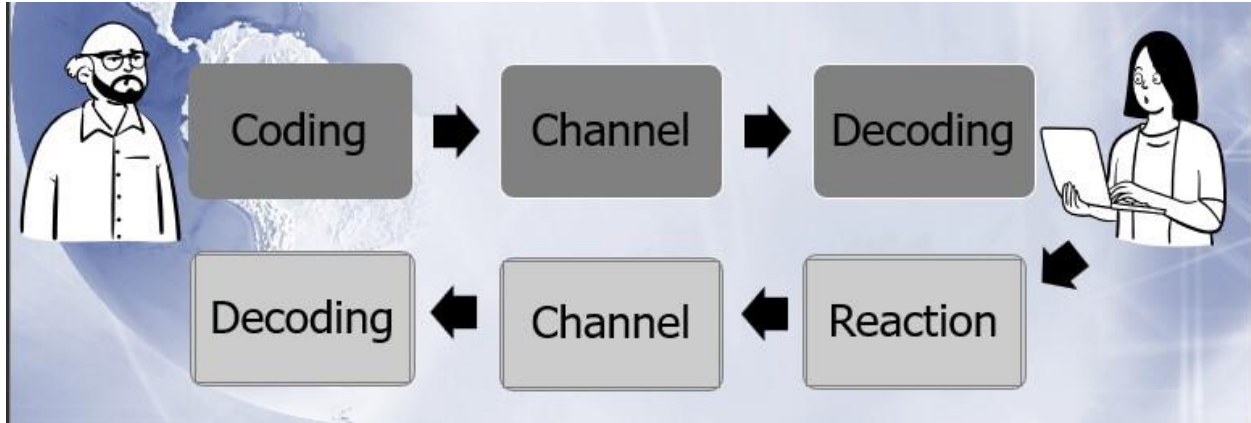
Schramm's 1948 communication cycle model offers a framework to understand the processes behind fake news communication and the consequences of the resultant communication. Traditionally, mass media, which includes news content, has consisted of one-way broadcasting; the audience does not co-create the news and might not ever directly communicate back to the news creator. That one-way communication still exists and tends to feature in fake news creation.

Schramm's communication model (see Figure 1) starts with the originator (one or more persons) who expresses an idea by coding it into some shareable medium (e.g., words, image) and then disseminates that coded message through some type of communication channel (e.g., radio, periodicals, Internet, television). People encounter the communication channel and receive its embedded message, then decode it; one could say that they consume it. The receiver/consumer might react (which is why the bottom line of actions are in a lighter shade) and send a message. That message could go in several directions, not necessarily to the creator (there is not a definitive arrow back to the originator – although if it does reach the originator, that action would then close the communication loop). When the receiver belongs to a different culture from the originator and perceives the message differently from the originator, then that situation constitutes cross-cultural communication. Furthermore, if the recipient sends a message back to the originator, the originator will likely decode and interpret it differently from the response's intent.

This cross-culture application of the communication cycle can thus provide a framework and critical lens to understand the processes behind fake news and identify possible cultural factors that impact the consequences of fake news.

Figure 1

Schramm's Communication Cycle



Media literacy may be applied in this cycle. Specifically, the Center for Media Literacy (Jolls, 2022) developed media literacy questions for recipients to ask when examining fake news in particular, as well as news and, even more broadly, mass media in general:

- Authorship: who created the message (for example, the fake news)
- Purpose or motive: why the message was created
- Audience: the intended targeted audience
- Content of the message: ideas, values, lifestyle, point of view represented or omitted
- Format and production techniques: techniques used to attract audience attention and engage particular viewers or groups.

Practically anyone can create fake news; however, most fake news creators hold some kind of power they want to keep or increase (Funk et al., 2016). To that end, in framing a particular idea or agenda, fake news creators often make negative assertions about another culture they do not like – or feel threatened by – to diminish the power of that culture, a tactic that may work if such cultures are often already vulnerable. Their message may be directed toward their own culture to gain more supporters or toward the opposing culture to disturb or provoke those they consider their opposition. For instance, a White supremacist may claim that Mexicans are taking away Whites’ jobs, inciting fellow supremacists to threaten Mexicans in general.

As the fake news creators code the fake news for a communication channel to broadcast, they tend to use evocative language and images, which may be false or misleading, such as “explosive evidence” or mangled dead bodies. Moreover, fake news is likely to omit counterclaims or evidence. At this point, cross-cultural communication comes into play. Stereotyping and “othering” encourage fake news, particularly in war times or during political campaigns (Huber et al., 2022; Wasserman, 2020). Each culture has a unique linguistic vocabulary, word patterns, and vocal tones that might appear aggressive, jarring, or easily misinterpreted by members of a different culture. For example, some cultures, such as Chinese, might find American English speech too blunt and aggressive. Some images might be considered insensitive or inappropriate in some cultures, such as minimal clothing on a woman, which may evoke negative feelings that impact the viewer’s attitude and action. Sensitive and

taboo subjects are socially defined, and fake news can leverage such controversies to incite anger or polarization between cultures. This is especially likely when fake news is disseminated without context or human interaction, in such contexts as online memes where fewer cues are provided to clarify sometimes very ambiguous meanings (Holtbrügge et al., 2011).

Next, the fake news is sent through a communications channel, of which a wide variety is available, and these can vary significantly in terms of oversight, dissemination range, and ethical practice. Each medium has unique properties that shape and manipulate the messages its viewers consume. For news, that medium is likely to be evocative newspapers, which require reading literacy; authentic-sounding radio, which requires close listening skills; mass media television, which requires information literacy; and interactive Internet, especially social media, which requires digital literacy and other literacies. Members of some cultures may prefer certain mediums or specific news outlets, such as religious-affiliated television or radio broadcasts in their home language, especially if members of their own culture manage those broadcasts. One clever tactic that fake news creators may employ is depicting themselves as members of the targeted culture or using the targeted culture's favored news outlet to gain more credibility.

To be impactful, fake news has to be decoded, i.e., received and understood by an audience. This step assumes a degree of openness or neutral ignorance on the part of the recipient. If the news confirms a culture and its values, it is more likely to be believed, even if the news is fake. However, automatic disapproval or skepticism may result if the news comes from an oppositional group or frame. In addition, cultures may distrust other cultures, often based on past negative experiences, as evidenced by colonialism; surprisingly, skepticism of government news results in more susceptibility to fake news (Rampersad & Althiyabi, 2020; Wasserman, 2020). As an example of this phenomenon, during the COVID pandemic, even valid news, such as advice on wearing masks, coded and communicated by a reputable government health agency, was commonly decoded as an attack on personal liberty by less educated libertarians.

A compounding problem is how the audience decodes the message, which requires several literacies many audience members may not possess. Audience members may have limited education (which may stem from cultural expectations of females in some conservative religions), digital literacy issues (which may reflect cultural values), and linguistic differences (Udeogalanya, 2022). When people do not understand another culture, they are more likely to misinterpret that other culture's message and make bad decisions. For example, a Christian might misinterpret the Koran term "jihad" solely as a call to a violent holy war and commit a hate crime against a peaceful Muslim. That action then completes the communication cycle, increasing misunderstanding and retaliatory action. When fake news creators manipulate that misinterpretation to instigate action, the intensity and negative consequences may increase.

Cross-Cultural Factors

Culture poses a unique factor in discerning fake news, and cross-cultural aspects add a dimension to the issue that is likely to result in more misunderstanding and culture clashes. In the final analysis, discerning and decoding fake news should be examined in light of one's self-awareness, knowledge, and context, including culture. What are one's own cultural experiences, situations, and biases that may trigger personal reactions to different news, including fake news? Cultural perspectives influence the development of personal beliefs (e.g., religious dogmas), and personal experiences influence cognitive biases (e.g., getting bad service from a salesperson of a different ethnicity). Both of these types of biases impact the creation, dissemination, and discernment of fake news (Ciampaglia, 2018).

Literacy-specific cross-cultural factors impact the ability to discern fake news. When encountering a news item, one usually first tries to understand it, but even that task may be challenging. The most obvious literacy and linguistic focuses are on written and verbal use of language. Different cultures value different concepts so that relevant words may be more or less nuanced. Even seemingly objective words such as "swipe," "snatch," and "dog" have totally different meanings in different contexts; for these terms, swipe may mean to move or to steal, snatch may mean to grab, or it can refer to a sexist vulgarism, and dog may refer to a pet or something worthless. Idioms, in particular, may have different connotations in different cultures. Sports-related idioms highlight that issue; which cultures understand the meaning of "one for the Gipper" or "go the whole nine yards"? Some cultures emphasize the context of statements so that when a statement is extracted without context, it may be misconstrued or lose its meaning. For instance, "I'm dying to see you" could have a romantic intent, but it could also be misinterpreted without context to indicate that someone is literally on their deathbed. Similarly, cultures vary in how they structure arguments; some use a linear approach, and others use a spiral approach that moves from generalities to specifics. When reading a case built by a writer from a different culture who uses a different structure that they are not used to, the audience might not follow the argument's logic.

Visual aspects also color the interpretation of fake news. Regarding news, cultures may have preferences as to visual approaches, such as considering gender when photographing people (e.g., taking photos of women only in groups rather than individually) or avoiding eye contact. Some news topics may be taboo in terms of visualizing them, such as religious ceremonies. Color connotations can speak volumes; depending on the culture, white can evoke weddings or death, red can evoke festivity or violence, and yellow can evoke royalty or cowardice (Tektronix, 1998).

Strategies

No easy answers exist in uncovering and accurately interpreting cross-cultural connotations. Fortunately, several heuristics and tools are available to help individuals address the objectivity and validity of news – and their reactions to news – considering cultural differences. Identifying the source of the news is a good first step. Does that information truly originate from the source, or is another entity disguising itself as the authentic group? Tracing a

story's origin can be challenging; Wayne State University has a useful LibGuide to facilitate that process (<https://guides.lib.wayne.edu/sift/trace>). Learners also need to check their biases and cultural “triggers,” so they do not have a knee-jerk reaction to evocative words and images. In the final analysis, understanding more about other cultures, particularly their communication styles and values, helps learners maintain an open mind when trying to interpret the validity of news from other cultures.

These cross-cultural factors and heuristics can be codified into news and media literacy curricula. As educators seek support for a culturally sensitive curriculum, they need to know about their learners' cultures to discern different shared values and expectations. In his adult training handbook, Craig (1996) asserted that ignorance or denial of cultural norms will spell disaster for cross-cultural initiatives. Both the dominant and minority cultures should learn about each other's cultural knowledge and values so they can promote mutual respect and understanding. To lay a credible and trusting foundation, educators first need to learn about the population they serve: their backgrounds, their interests, their needs, and their resources. Such tasks can be difficult in online environments without explicitly asking for such information in non-threatening ways. To optimize such group knowledge, individuals with multicultural experience can serve as cultural “brokers” for monocultural members. Those whose cultural background overlaps with other group members can integrate knowledge from different cultures, and those whose culture does not overlap can elicit knowledge from those other cultures. Both cultural functions enhance the group's performance (Jang, 2017).

Melo-Pfeifer and Gertz (2022) offer several beneficial practices in teaching critical cross-cultural news literacy.

- Examine samples of fake news about critical incidents that showcase situational clashes from a cross-cultural perspective, interpreting the situation from each represented culture.
- Analyze news about the same topic from different cultures to determine patterns of fake news.
- Analyze fake news in terms of its believability, depending on the culture.
- Study a culture's underlying linguistic and visual approaches, then use that knowledge to analyze fake news by that culture and by the culture targeting the culture.
- Compare a culture's representation, both in terms of frequency and quality, in a news outlet's general news in contrast to fake news.
- Have each learner study the pattern of fake news over time for one culture, and then have students compare their culture's approach and use of fake news to identify cross-cultural patterns.

Conclusion

As fake news increasingly crosses cultures, it behooves people to discern possible culturally defined content and possible cross-cultural misinterpretations. People need to use

media literacy skills to discern misleading efforts, especially when fake news may try to provoke conflict between cultures. Discerning cross-cultural factors in fake news helps people understand the values and belief systems that drive the expectations and behaviors of people of different cultures. This knowledge aids in communicating effectively and working together for mutual goals.

Future Research

This area of research is prime for investigation. Many configurations of fake news that crosses cultures could be researched, noting which cultures were the creators and which were the targeted “other” culture. Even the types of cultures (e.g., political, ethnic, gendered, social, religious) could be compared in terms of the kind of fake news created and how it was discerned and addressed. Regarding cross-cultural factors, the fake news topic and communication channel could also be researched. Researchers could also conduct a content analysis of the text and images of fake news to reveal possible cross-cultural factors. Interviews could reveal significant patterns, particularly ones that involve verbalizing the decoding processes and reactions of cross-cultural audiences to fake news. These investigations could provide the basis for designing and implementing cross-cultural news literacy training, which could then be assessed in terms of effectiveness.

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Appendix

The following media literacy education organizations provide news and media literacy guidance from different parts of the world.

- UNESCO (<https://www.unesco.org/>)
- EAVI: Media Literacy and Citizenship (<https://eavi.eu>)
- Evens Foundation (<https://issuu.com/evensfoundation>)
- IREX Europe (<https://irex-europe.fr/>)
- Le centre pour l'éducation aux médias et à l'information (<https://www.clemi.fr/>)
- Ofcom (<https://www.ofcom.org.uk/>)
- Netwerk Mediavijsheid (<https://netwerkmediavijsheid.nl/>)
- Media Smarts (<https://mediasmarts.ca/>)
- AMLA: Alliance for a Media Literate America (<http://www.AMLAinfo.org>)
- Center for Media Literacy (<https://www.medialit.org/>)
- Media Education Lab (<https://mediaeducationlab.com/>)
- Media Literacy Now (<https://medialiteracynow.org/>)
- National Association for Media Literacy Education (<https://namle.net/>)

About the Author

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Bending Time and Space: Internationalization at Home in Kansas

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Abstract

This article and project perfectly illustrate community, connection, and collaboration across disciplines and institutions. As history has shown us, sometimes it is difficult to study abroad or offer cultural immersion opportunities for students when global catastrophes or geopolitics make travel difficult. Instead, this project approximates cultural immersion through engaged learning projects and teleconferencing. Featured most proximately is a project that includes three communities (a Ugandan vocational school, a Kansas university, and a city library) and is interdisciplinary in practice. As an international community of learners, this project brings together people from different backgrounds and continents. Among other things, the project allows its participants an opportunity to recognize the global community and shared humanity that we all belong to. Breaking down stereotypes and misperceptions creates space for learning from and about one another. One way to overcome geographic, political, and even catastrophic global health challenges may be to create engaged learning opportunities where students conduct investigations.

Keywords: engaged learning, immersion opportunities, intercultural education, teleconferencing

Study abroad immersion opportunities provide students with exceptional opportunities and unparalleled chances to learn. However, for many reasons, most students will not study abroad. Recent trends illustrate the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, with 82% of United States universities canceling international travel for students and 88% canceling international travel for staff and faculty (Open Doors, 2020, p. 3). Following the worst periods of the pandemic, study abroad opportunities are beginning to rebound. However, for many students, studying abroad cannot be a reality. These students rely on their local learning communities to nourish their international education.

The catastrophe of the pandemic is one reason studying abroad has suffered, but there are other trends persistent trends that reduce the study abroad population. Approximately 66% of the students who studied abroad in the 2020-2021 school year were women (Open Doors, 2022). These data reflect the same basic trend for the last twenty years: two-thirds of study abroad students are women. This should not be the case: discussing the benefits of the study abroad experience for all genders is easy. Studying abroad improves cross-cultural competence and adaptability (Mapp, 2012; Douglas and Jones-Ridders, 2001), lifetime wages (di Pietro, 2021; Asankulova and Thomsen, 2023), language acquisition – which improves employability (NAE, 2017), problem-solving skills and social change (Barnett, 1953; Tortter, 1954; Cho and Morris,

2015), and general academic success upon return (Hadis, 2005). Research also suggests that more time abroad is better – that duration improves the experience's positive effects (Schroeder, K, Wood, C., Galiardi, S. & Koehn, J., 2009; Dwyer, 2004). Moreover, while the positive effects of studying abroad are well-documented for all genders, studying abroad is dominated by women.

While studying abroad is suitable for every student, socioeconomic disadvantages and prejudice may make students less likely to participate in education outside the United States. Women tend to study abroad, while men and minorities avoid studying abroad (Wagner et al., 2020). And, while men in general do not study abroad, this trend is especially true among African-American students (Wagner et al, 2020; Lee & Green, 2016). The obstacles that African American students face attending university, in general, are especially applicable to studying abroad.

There are some remedies for bridging the gap between populations who want to experience international education. *International Research and Review* has already published the need for international education and the means by which professors can bring the world to students when students cannot travel. Specifically, Osakwe (2022) considers the “focus in higher education discourse that has been on Internationalization at Home, which stresses the need to focus on all students when planning for global learning” (2022, 2). This concept of Internationalization at Home has long been a focus of universities, offering students an opportunity to learn about communities they may never visit (Crowther et al., 2001; Beelen & Jones, 2015). Learning can take various forms, including club activities, curricular or co-curricular activities, internships, and service-learning programs. Torres and Statti (2022) and Kovas (2020) consider expanding student learning across borders without taking students abroad. It is increasingly necessary for US students to gain an international perspective while they face growing challenges to studying abroad, from personal incentives, costs, geopolitical conflict, and disease. Meeting students’ interests while facing these challenges amid vacillating institutional support continues to challenge post-secondary education.

It is impossible to provide the same experience students have studying abroad on an American residential campus. However, that does not stop professors from inviting international students as much as possible into classrooms and onto campus. This paper aims to explore one such effort in a residential Liberal Arts university in eastern Kansas. Global Problems is an introductory class I teach annually at my small liberal arts university. The class has focused on recurrent global issues and innovative ways that different communities address those problems.

The global problems class is the second of three required courses that international studies students take in the interdisciplinary major. The first course focuses on international studies as an interdisciplinary major, recognizing applications to the global community for majors like political science, economics, history, geography, and anthropology. This interdisciplinary approach to the introductory class invites students from different disciplines and illustrates how students from various disciplines can gain from studying international studies. With this interdisciplinary ethos in mind, it is logically and pedagogically consistent to approach

even a topic like global problems from different angles within one class. An immersive, nested learning environment can promote these learning outcomes by combining cultural and commonplace life abroad with elements of life abroad that make it different from their everyday life.

Through engaged learning techniques, this class connects students with their three communities (an international community, a town community, and a campus community). Our readings explore issues common in the developing world, and our activities make those readings tractable by asking students to share with the Baldwin City community (a town of 4,700 inhabitants). Partnering with the Baldwin City Library, students develop learning tools, including puzzles for the magnet board, bilingual idioms/proverbs for the language tree, backpacks full of cultural games, and reading recommendations of books by contemporary Ugandan authors. As a political scientist, one of my countries of focus is Uganda. I hoped that students would be able to develop a keen awareness of Ugandan life from my study of this country. To start with, Uganda is an excellent choice because English is so widely spoken there, and virtually no one studies abroad there. There were 318 US study abroad students in 2019-2021 and 21 students in the 2021-2020 school year, according to Open Doors (2022). While I have traveled to Uganda, I recognize that this is a place where students are unlikely to go. However, this small, largely rural, central African country of 45 million people provided plenty of concepts for American students to learn about.

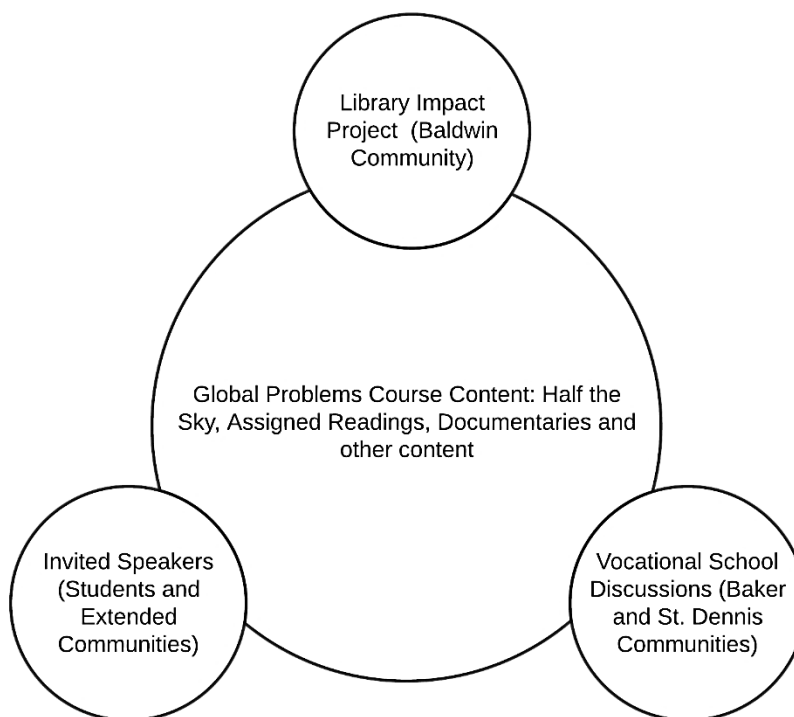
In groups, students complete one of these four assignments while our weekly readings and class meetings explore global problems generally and how Ugandan communities specifically respond to those challenges. Another layer to this integrated model is communication between Baker University students and students in Uganda. Through personal and professional connections, I arranged for teleconferencing between my American students and a colleague's Ugandan students. In addition to cultural differences, another significant difference is that my colleague's students are pursuing an education at a vocational school. While there are innumerable differences between 18-22-year-old Kansans and 14-25-year-old Ugandan vocational school students, the Baker students will learn that our shared humanity transcends these differences.

With that conceit, my class learns more about how brilliant, hard-working, capable, and innovative people overcome obstacles and challenge structures. We discuss global problems with communities that have no choice but to meet those problems, and we learn new ways to think about education, health, economic development, and violence. However, knowing the country for much more than just these things is essential. Introducing Baker students to the culture and people of Uganda, as well as the struggles, helps to reduce inherent 'othering' that can occur when we only study the problems of others. My work as an instructor compels me to educate from this holistic perspective. While they learn more about Uganda's people and culture, they create educational materials for Baldwin City's library patrons. Library patrons learn about Uganda's culture and people, not just its problems, through engaging material that Baker

students create. Sharing some of these lessons – and Ugandan culture – with the town allows students to contribute positively to their community.

Graph 1

Content Integration



Purpose

This paper will analyze a cultural immersion program within residential university communities. The term *Internationalization at Home* takes on many shapes and is rife with opportunities for engaged learning. While my university has many study abroad options and invites students for short international experiences in May and January for university course credit, these opportunities are unavailable for the majority of students on the majority of campuses. Aside from financial hurdles, personal life upheaval, tight windows to complete required courses in pre-professional majors, sports demands, and other recurrent, practical obstacles, international travel remains challenging because of geopolitical upheaval, global health crises, and problematic trends in study abroad programs.

My program and other programs at the university have been provided with increasing incentives to meet the needs of students who want or need international experiences without actually traveling abroad. Whereas there is no alternative for study abroad opportunities, the material fact of few students willing or able to study abroad has compelled several programs at my university to seek low-cost, high-impact options. These options do not replace study abroad but try to deepen students' on-campus experiences with international course content. To that end,

my program and others seek new, innovative ways to develop curricula to project students from the classroom to spaces far away from that classroom.

Course Content

The Global Problems class, nested in the interdisciplinary major of International Studies, spends the first half of the semester inspecting a series of persistent global problems, especially from the perspective of Americans. For instance, while domestic terrorism, anti-democratic nationalist governments, wars between states, and global health are problems for many countries, we begin our analysis from the US experience with these issues as a class. In the first meeting, we defined the problem and how the United States government views the issue. The purpose of this first meeting is to meet students where they are: Most students in this class have a general interest in international affairs, but they are unlikely to have taken any college classes in international studies, international politics, or other disciplines that explicitly treat international activity. As such, it is prudent to start within a context they are likely to be familiar with from high school courses. In the next meeting, we move beyond the US and investigate how other governments, communities, and individuals respond to different crises. Students watch documentaries and read various types of reports (peer-reviewed journal articles, periodicals, and reports from government institutions) to educate them on the course topics. They take an exam as a learning assessment tool.

In the second half of the class, all students read excerpts from the Nicholas Kristof and Cheryl WuDunn (2008) book *Half the Sky* to prepare them for the first weekly class meeting. We discuss the chapters (topics including human trafficking, maternal mortality, child marriage, and educational inequality) using the chapters as content. In our second meeting, we focus on one country – Uganda – and how the topics that *Half the Sky* explores are relevant in Uganda. *Half the Sky* might not mention Uganda by name, but the topics that the authors introduce are present in Uganda, as well as many states in the developing world. Table 1 shows the general topic from *Half the Sky* and the Ugandan content that the class explores in the second meeting. The problems in *Half the Sky* are almost universally applicable to any country, including the United States.

Table 1

Global Problems and Ugandan Problems

Week of Class	<i>Half the Sky</i>	Uganda Content
9	Girls' Education	Brookings Institute, 2018
10	Human Trafficking	Trafficking in Persons Report 2022
11	Maternal Mortality	Uganda Health Ministry Report, 2022
12	Child Marriage	Ending Child Marriage, World Bank Report
14	Girls' Education	Peer-reviewed article on Ugandan girls' education

While these topics are grim, Kristof and WuDunn spark hope in the reader by always including 'success' stories and stories of personal triumph. The authors avoid the declinist narrative and

the narrative of tragedy by discussing how women (and men) achieve great things despite the horrors that befall them.

The personal stories that the authors introduce show that while horrible things can happen to a person, that person can continue to grow and help others. Though it is a bit dated now, the book blends those personal narratives with statistics to illustrate that every individual who makes up a statistic has a story. The purpose of taking these statistics and narratives from the many countries to just Uganda was threefold: first, to illustrate that though the authors discuss global data and may focus on specific countries, they may be speaking about trends occurring globally; second, to update the data that they use to make the content more contemporary; and third, to focus students' attention on to just one country, and to routinely return to that country so that they can better understand global problems (especially from a developing nation, where most of the world lives). Just like *Half the Sky's* purpose of focusing on individual stories to apply global trends, the class focuses on Ugandan experiences to illustrate global trends.

The global problems that *Half the Sky* introduces us to are not unique to the cases they study or Uganda. Similarly, the grit and ingenuity that the heroines and heroes exhibit in the book are also found everywhere. Since the first half of the course treated the American response to global problems, and students know their country relatively well, it is fitting to introduce them better to Uganda through its culture. In the same way that students would not characterize their country or community by its most challenging parts, I ask them to think about Uganda from different perspectives. The intuition behind this approach is to explore global problems and characterize them as a feature in people's lives instead of their only identity. The Uganda Impact project seeks to position this knowledge of problems within a greater understanding of the individuals who comprise a complex and dynamic Ugandan community.

Uganda Impact Project

Students enrolling in courses at small liberal arts universities explore a variety of topics and disciplines. As instructors, we appreciate our universities' available options and lament options that disappear with retirements, programmatic reassessment, and reallocation through time. It is never our intention, as instructors, to overstep our expertise or exceed our mandates as professors in a specific field. To that end, though my training is limited to political science, I ask students to consider learning about history, literature, language, education, sociology, and other disciplinary topics. Though this is not exactly 'staying in my lane' as a professor, my campus community generally approves my effort to fill this niche.

Students in International Studies 212 (IN 212) engaged in one of four impact projects this fall: a KiSwahili proverbs tree, an early education geography magnet board, a book review of a Ugandan author, or the creation of a backpack filled with East African children's games. The intuition behind this impact project was to have students step outside of what Adichie (2009) calls "A single story of Africa. A single story of catastrophe." Instead, students began to appreciate the intersectionality and human side of people facing global problems, in this instance, in Uganda. In some ways, Africans may uniquely face this challenge because of how

few Africans study abroad in American universities and how few Americans study in African universities. Indeed, though a domestic cultural program does not replace an international immersion program, such course design takes students far beyond a unidimensional approach to politics or a people. The necessity of interdisciplinary education is one of the great insights from language programs and the study of human geography.

The impact projects allowed Baker students to act like a bridge between the town and Uganda's people and cultures through an existing community resource: the town's public library. Libraries themselves are community tentpoles. Libraries have many roles in their communities (though mostly through the entrepreneurial ingenuity, hard work, and passion of libraries), including that of an educational and entertainment resource center. Librarians often have advanced degrees in Library Sciences and have unparalleled education training that is necessary to reach their audiences. They also have a feeling for communities' needs and interests.

University students were able to harness the expertise of the small-town library staff and work with them to create content that correlated with other ongoing projects. Students could do this by exploring the geography, people, and problems we investigated in our course. The learning objective for each library impact project lesson was primarily to deepen students' perspective of the people they study. While the class addressed global problems, we also wanted to recognize the humanity of the people struggling with that adversity. In short, one objective was for students to recognize that while Ugandan culture is unique and different, those differences were not the source of the problems we studied. Anyone, anywhere – indeed everyone, everywhere – faces these problems. The problems might appear exotic, and the people facing them are far away; however, learning about their culture and daily lives helps us empathize and relate to them.

Culture-Specific Games

Working in a group, students were tasked with studying games commonly played by people (especially children) in Uganda. In our internet age, this was not an especially difficult task. To complete the assignment, students needed to report on the rules of the game and the materials used to play the game. Was the game played nationally or regionally? Were there regional differences? Did men and women (boys and girls) play the game, or was it limited to single-gender play? What was it called in the different languages across the country? Students were able to generate a list of four games (and one craft) that people commonly participated in across Uganda (Kudodu, Mancala, Sonko, and Finger Pool – the craft is the creation of paper beads). Reading about and reporting on these games asked students to understand the people of Uganda from a cultural perspective - games. Students then had to share these activities with the library and the library's guests. To that end, we were able to supply local materials (from big box retailers and craft stores) to fill six backpacks for library guests to check out. There were also plenty of replacement supplies should the beads, paper, glue, scissors, or other principal parts go missing.

Learning about games lightened a course with content that dealt with grim (if true) topics, but that was not the primary learning objective for course students. Students can readily relate to games, and learning about the childhood games of people from another continent and culture humanizes them. The global problems are real, and it is necessary for students to learn about their causes and consequences, but it is also necessary to combat popular understandings of Africa. Adichie, in her Ted Talk, describes this popular understanding as “a place of beautiful landscapes, beautiful animals, and incomprehensible people, fighting senseless wars, dying of poverty and AIDS, unable to speak for themselves, and waiting to be saved by a kind, white foreigner” (Adichie, 2009, 6:22). Exploring these childhood games helps to restore the dignity of people who may face more extreme challenges, but who are no less human or brilliant.

KiSwahili Proverb Tree

Working in groups, students designed and crafted cards for the library’s indoor permanent tree exhibit. The tree is a painted branch, anchored and decorated in a pot, not a living tree. Prior to the students ‘library takeover’ with Uganda content, the tree featured motivational quotes, aphorisms, and quotations from famous books, among other things. It was not a constant display but a feature the library coordinator suggested for our contribution.

Successful completion of the project asked students to find and produce 18 meaningful KiSwahili proverbs. KiSwahili is a complicated language with many regional dialects. However, I told students I would not mandate that their research focus exclusively on Swahili as spoken in Uganda. Swahili has a complicated history in Uganda but is set to be one of the official languages (as of July 5th, 2022, Ugandan cabinet decision) and was appropriate for this project. To aid students in their project, I directed them to the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign KiSwahili resource page. Students then chose proverbs that they deemed inspirational. Students reproduced the KiSwahili words on one side of the card and the English translation on the other. In class, our discussion revolved around the cultural role of proverbs, the usefulness of these specific proverbs, and why students chose them in general.

Like cultural games, these proverbs educate students about relationships and ideals. Optimally, students will compare idioms, proverbs, and phrases they know from their cultural backgrounds with those they find in KiSwahili. Proverbs can unite people by illustrating that people have similar values regardless of their linguistic or ethnic background. Proverbs can replace the romanticized exoticism accompanying ignorance with wisdom traditional authorities have sought to impart to communities through generations.

Ugandan Novels Project

Though Uganda’s contribution to literary circles does not rival those of Kenya, Nigeria, Tanzania, or South Africa, it does have a proud tradition of thoughtful authors producing complex stories. The novels typically implant stories of relationships within historical events of the country, thereby educating the reader while creating shared emotions between the characters and the reader. Students recognize Ugandan stories as accessible, and this moves them further

away from seeing Africa (and Uganda specifically) as a broken place without rich, original, creative arts to share. In this project, students could read words written and edited from thousands of miles away. These masterful works commanded students to respect the messages that these authors intended to convey.

Though there is a rich literary tradition in Uganda, I offered students a select variety of novels. At first, I sought the help of a local bookstore to order these novels, but they were unable to source them. Unfortunately, I had to rely on a popular e-commerce company that promised to deliver new books to me within the week. The e-commerce company completed the transaction quickly, reliably, and inexpensively. Students then read books by authors they had never encountered before, including Doreen Baingana, Okot n'Bitek, Jennifer Nansubuga Makumbi, Goretti Kyomuhendo, and Moses Isegawa. With their own voices, these Ugandan authors transported Baker University students to different times and places, and they made these students care about fictional characters from countries they would never visit. The power of these indomitable authors' works overcame students' bias and (often) indifference to coursework. The texts provided students with the inspiration and the opportunity to review the work and 'be the expert' further incentivized student commitment to their portion of the assignment.

To successfully complete this project, students had to read a book by a Ugandan author (author and book provided by the course professor) and write a short review for library patrons. They included an image of the book cover and their own image in order to imitate reviews from movie rental store employees might offer in a bygone era. In their reviews, students were to provide a short summary and a recommendation, avoiding literary commentary or research outside the book itself. For one thing, it would be unfair to ask these students to read a book, conduct research about the book, and produce a paper when some of their peers were only responsible for creating and explaining proverb cards.

Manipulatives: Geography Magnets

In this project, students were responsible for finding images to create magnet puzzles for the library's magnet boards. The magnet boards allow young learners to manipulate content, creating active learning while piecing together familiar shapes. To complete the shapes of these countries, however, the patrons must be familiar with the final outcome of the object (the shape of the country). Students in this class thought that library goers, young or old, might struggle to piece together a map of Africa, let alone a map of Uganda. For this reason, the class provided a map of these less-than-familiar places along with the magnet pieces themselves.

Students found the images that they wanted to make into magnets. The magnetized element is easily found online, and in this instance, students used an 8 1/2 x 11-inch sheet of magnet paper with adhesive on one side. It was then easy to align and stick the printed image onto the magnet. Students cut sensible pieces (instructed to create no more than a dozen for these young learners) out of the unified sheet to create the magnetic puzzles. Students used either an X-acto knife or some similar sheaved blade.

For this project, as for the previous projects, students could see the existing library content for reference. Having seen the manipulatives at the library, students could visualize and understand the utility of creating puzzles for the continent of Africa, the geographic region of East Africa, and different regions in Uganda. These nested geographies would help the young learners who would be the primary beneficiaries of the project, but they would also obviously inform parents who would help the kids out.

Like the other projects, this part of the class ‘library takeover’ would potentially ripple through the community and create a buzz. Public libraries nationwide have become critical cultural nexuses, especially in small towns. For university programs seeking to create a community impact, there are few other ready-made spaces and public venues where collaboration is intuitive and welcomed. Library staff are often among the most well-trained and passionate community members, potential partners in raising awareness, and clandestinely sparking interrogative curiosity through their projects and recommendations.

The Library Was Only the Beginning

The Uganda Impact project increased students’ understanding of their coursework by deepening their understanding of the culture and history of the people they were learning about. While each project was different, I assessed student learning with three objectives: students’ research content, students’ aesthetic delivery, and their execution of the project. Each of the projects required students to conduct some research and planning. For instance, students creating map magnets needed to learn new skills (including adhering images to magnets and cutting them into shapes), and students writing KiSwahili proverbs on cards needed to research the phrases for the library’s tree. Since the projects were to be available to library patrons, I also insisted that they be of a high quality. I did not want this to reflect poorly on Baker University or reduce the library’s image. The aesthetics were essential to the projects’ success. Finally, I assessed students’ execution of the project because teams executed each project. I wanted to be sure that everyone participated. So, I included an anonymous survey of the participants to verify that the majority of the work did not rest on one or two responsible members. These three objectives helped me to evaluate student learning and engagement with the Uganda Impact project.

While the library element of the Uganda Impact project was the most hands-on and impactful in terms of students’ grades and their interaction with the local community, there were two other parts to this ‘Uganda Takeover’ project, which brought the Baker students into consultation with the global community. First, invited speakers provided an opportunity for students to learn from someone besides their instructor and the assigned readings. The first invited speaker who spoke to the class was an alumna who currently conducts research in Uganda and is completing her Doctor of Philosophy at Oxford University. This alumna spoke about the history of colonialism in Uganda. In addition to the content she delivered, which supported the content we discussed as a class, her presentation helped to make Uganda more real for students since someone who had been in their seats five years prior is currently working in Uganda and Kenya. The second speaker, Professor Jimmy Spire Ssentongo from Makerere

University, teleconferenced from Uganda. His talk on political satire was offered to more than just students at my university – it was an international teleconference offered to African studies centers in the United States – but my students were able to join and hear from a Ugandan scholar in Uganda about Uganda. Like the first speaker, students learned specific content regarding the philosophy of humor in Ugandan politics, but they also received a glimpse of a Ugandan professor discussing his research.

Secondly, in terms of time, conversations with Uganda students brought this project home for many students. In teleconference sessions, students at Baker University spoke with students at a vocational school in Uganda, St. Dennis Vocational Academy. Overcoming technical problems (delays in video and audio echoes) and time-zone differences (a conversation in Uganda at 4 PM is 8 AM in Kansas), it was evident that discussing education was important to both American and Ugandan students. Based on our readings, I offered a set of questions and let students supplement that list. I began with eight questions from experiences discussed in our course text, *Half the Sky*, and specifically the supplemental reading regarding Uganda. I read my questions in class before our talks with Ugandan students, and students chimed in with their thoughts following mine. I recorded their questions and sent them to my colleague in Uganda to prepare his students. Because of our logistical problems, the conversations turned into monologues from Ugandan students with questions from me (the instructor), but aside from these challenges, the learning outcome on the Kansas side remained the same. I checked in with my Ugandan colleague to make sure his students would be able to gain from the experience, and he assured me that the students' experience drafting and delivering their stories to an American audience was an equal transaction for American students' experience learning from Uganda. While the Kansas students were mostly quiet in the teleconference, their questions ahead of time and their appearance in the teleconference helped out. In a survey that I conducted following the class, my students reported that speaking with students in Uganda was among the most exciting and interesting elements for students.

Conclusion

Impactful course design remains a mainstay on college campuses. Whereas high-impact journal publications and attracting grants are the barometer for much of the discipline, small liberal arts colleges continue to educate roughly half of America's university students (IIE 2022). Students choose small liberal arts colleges for personal attention, small class sizes, and the promise of brilliant course content and opportunities.

Though this was one of many classes, students explored it for a variety of reasons. Of course, students needed this class as part of their major or minor. It became part of an impactful course (substituting for study abroad courses, when necessary) for intercultural understanding in several disciplines. Utilization of Internationalization at Home benefited this class. As well, students in each of the three communities (Uganda, Baldwin City, and Baker) benefitted from the additional care involved with integrating learners in their global, municipal, and campus communities. This kind of engaged learning has the direct benefit of impacting students enrolled

in the class. However, it also draws together each of the three aforementioned communities by making each visible to and relating to the other. While enrolling students who want to fulfill a major requirement is one thing, students are also drawn to classes with a ‘buzz’ around them. Impact projects such as those discussed above can help to create this buzz.

Without sacrificing academic rigor, creating an integrated, impactful project as part of a holistic approach to course content creation is possible. While there is no substitute for time spent studying abroad or traveling for education, it is still essential to introduce international education in courses to meet the needs of students unable to travel and to recruit future travelers. Deeply immersive cultural studies help students to jettison prejudice and can help to peak student interest in future opportunities. One way to draw students into such an interest is through immersive studies in people, especially letting the people themselves tell their own stories. From this example, weaving together stories of facing challenges with cultural proverbs, conceptions of time with simple childhood gameplay, and recognizing individual resilience within the context of global health catastrophes brings students’ understanding of the global communities’ everyday struggles in a way that eludes studying textbooks, journal articles, and documentaries. This content is essential for university study because of its exceptional quality. However, Internationalization at Home can be more impactful and encourage student interest with engaged learning and hands-on content.

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Journal Description

International Research and Review is the official journal of the Phi Beta Delta Honor Society for International Scholars. It is a multidisciplinary journal whose primary objectives are to (1) recognize, disseminate, and share the scholarship of our members with the global academic community; (2) provide a forum for the advancement of academic inquiry and dialogue among all members and stakeholders; and (3) cultivate support for international education among campus leadership by working with university administrators to expand the support for international education among campus leaders.

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3. All URL addresses in the text are activated and ready to click.
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3. Citations from an online source must cite the paragraph (author, date, para. #).
4. Use *italics* when you want to emphasize concepts or words.
5. Use the *automatic* hyphenation function to keep the character and word spacing at a minimum. In Microsoft Word, users can automatically hyphenate documents by altering the options within the program. The location of the automatic hyphenation option varies depending on the version of Word you are using. In Microsoft Word versions 2007 and 2010, it is found by clicking on Page Layout, Page Setup box, and hyphenation. In Microsoft Word 2003, it is located in the "Tools" menu under "Language." Automatic hyphenation is also available in earlier versions of Microsoft Word. Reference the Help menu in the program you're using if you need help with either automatic or manual hyphenation.

Phi (philomatheia) -love of knowledge

Beta (biotremmonia) -valuing of human life

Delta (diapheren) -achieving excellence

