Developing an International Cultural Learning Project: An Effort Towards Introducing Internationalization in the Classroom

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Abstract

In an increasingly diverse and global society, allied health professionals must be ready to meet the needs of clients with different cultural values, habits, and attitudes. Understanding how culture impacts decision making in healthcare is a fundamental skill. However, education and experiences to help prepare future practitioners to meet this need are often lacking in allied health. This paper highlights a call to develop methods to identify and overcome barriers in providing students with culturally diverse and immersive experiences both feasibly and efficiently. A pilot cross-cultural experience was created utilizing the technique of Internationalization at Home (IaH) and integrating technology to improve the fidelity of the interactions. The focus of this project was to evaluate the feasibility of bringing students from two countries (one United States and one European program) together in a structured learning session related to culture and occupational therapy. The outcome of this pilot project was overwhelmingly positive. While there were some limitations in connectivity and organization, the students reported they benefitted from both exposures to a different culture, as well as from the discussions related to their future roles within the profession of occupational therapy.

Keywords

Internationalization, culture, education

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An Effort Towards Introducing Internationalization in The Classroom

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ABSTRACT

In an increasingly diverse and global society, allied health professionals must be ready to meet the needs of clients with different cultural values, habits, and attitudes. Understanding how culture impacts decision making in healthcare is a fundamental skill. However, education and experiences to help prepare future practitioners to meet this need are often lacking in allied health. This paper highlights a call to develop methods to identify and overcome barriers in providing students with culturally diverse and immersive experiences both feasibly and efficiently. A pilot cross-cultural experience was created utilizing the technique of Internationalization at Home (IaH) and integrating technology to improve the fidelity of the interactions. The focus of this project was to evaluate the feasibility of bringing students from two countries (one United States and one European program) together in a structured learning session related to culture and occupational therapy. The outcome of this pilot project was overwhelmingly positive. While there were some limitations in connectivity and organization, the students reported they benefitted from both exposures to a different culture, as well as from the discussions related to their future roles within the profession of occupational therapy.

INTRODUCTION

In an increasingly multicultural society, healthcare workers will be exposed to different values, habits, and attitudes that impact healthcare decision making and approaches to practice (Napier et al., 2017). With this expanding dynamic, programs of higher education need to find new ways to introduce and apply an understanding of culture

throughout their curriculums to adequately prepare the next generation of clinicians (Horvat et al., 2011; Repo, Vahlber, Salminen, Papadopolous, & Leino-Kilpi, 2017). For occupational therapists, there is a need to understand how culture influences occupational choice and participation (American Occupational Therapy Association [AOTA], n.d.). The Occupational Therapy Practice Framework directly describes the importance of occupational therapists understanding the cultural context of clients and its influence on "the client's identity and activity choices" (AOTA, 2014, p. s9). The World Health Organization (WHO; 2013) also recognizes the importance of the socio-cultural influence of a person's environment on their functioning. Within the International Classification of Functioning, Disability, and Health (ICF), practitioners are directed to take the socio-cultural context of a person into account, which "may require making a judgment about what is reasonable to expect" (WHO, 2013, p. 25). Before occupational therapists can make judgments about the impact of culture on a person's ability to function, they must understand and appreciate the other cultures' beliefs, attitudes, and values associated with occupations, health, and disability. The term cultural competence, in relationship to ethically and culturally appropriate occupational therapy treatment, requires a self-awareness of a person's own culture, while also having knowledge about another's culture (Crabtree, Royeen, & Benton, 2006). Exposing students to other cultures early in their curriculum and frequently throughout their educational experience may help move them towards a mastery level of understanding how culture influences practice (Noble, Nuszen, Rom, & Noble, 2014; Repo et al., 2017).

Expanding cultural viewpoints early on can, in turn, expand a student's ability to be flexible in response, yet responsive to the specific needs of their client. To date, there is a higher level of awareness for the need to address culture in the curriculum but a lack of information on how to go about doing this (Jeffreys, 2016; Nagarajan & McAllister, 2015; Repo et al., 2017). One potential solution is Internationalization at Home (IaH). According to Agnew and Kahn (2014), IaH is an intentional approach to providing intercultural experiences to all students within a higher education institution through aligning formal and informal cultural experiences with university and programmatic goals. It includes diverse activities, purposefully designed to introduce inter-cultural dimensions into the curriculum; for example, facilitating communication among students from different cultures. IaH is usually implemented through communication technologies available on the internet; thus, is accessible by all students on the home campus. IaH may be a practical and effective alternative to internationalization abroad if developed in response to needs and addressing the challenges that accompany this educational method (Cabatan & Grajo, 2017). The focus of this project was to develop methods for supplementing study abroad experiences. If the goal of higher education institutions is to provide increased opportunities for exposure to other cultures and improve student cultural appreciation or competence, then there should be a focus on creating experiences beyond traditional study abroad experiences, which allow greater access and increased sustainability for both students and institutions.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Internationalization is a concept drawing increasing focus and is described by several authors as a means through which faculty can add aspects of international service learning and research in the classroom. It can add both depth and breadth in student experience by providing an early networking opportunity for students. Internationalization includes integrating international dimensions to teaching, research, and service endeavors as an essential function of the higher education institution (Gao, 2015; Horton, 2009; Van Damme, 2001; Wachter, 1999).

Recent surveys and publications indicate a trend towards universities providing more opportunities for internationalization through study abroad programs and international service learning (Gao, 2015; Humbert, Burket, Deveney, & Kennedy, 2012; Ilott et al., 2013; Nagarajan & Mc Allister, 2015; Rubin & Matthews, 2013). Study abroad experiences are typically associated with formal classes where disciplinary knowledge is sought within the international context (Rubin & Matthews, 2013). Similarly, international service learning is a structured academic experience, though the focus includes addressing another community's needs, learning through interaction with another culture, and gaining a deeper appreciation for the new culture, discipline, and their civic responsibilities (Rubin & Matthews, 2013). Both opportunities have clear objectives, benefits, and barriers that at times overlap but they are two different types of student learning experiences.

Study Abroad Programs

Study abroad programs have been shown to have many positive benefits in relation to students' cultural competencies, though these opportunities are also noted to be both time and cost prohibitive for many students (Shaftel, Shaftel, & Ahluwalia, 2007; Soria & Troisi, 2013). Additionally, previous studies have demonstrated that there are barriers to study abroad programs for various student populations (Dessoff, 2006; Lincoln Commission, 2005; Simon & Ainsworth, 2012). White students are more likely than non-white students to participate in these programs, which researchers have attributed to student concerns of experiencing racism, lack of resources for minority students, and a lack of minority faculty participating in study abroad programs (Dessoff, 2006; Lincoln Commission, 2005; Simon & Ainsworth, 2012). Females are also more likely than males to participate in study abroad even when controlling for the gender dominance of the program of study (Dessoff, 2006; Lincoln Commission, 2005; Soria & Troisi, 2013). Finally, humanity and social science students are overrepresented in the study abroad student population (Dessoff, 2006; Lincoln Commission, 2005; Soria & Troisi, 2013).

Within occupational therapy education, Shimmell et al. (2016) explored why despite the many purported benefits of study abroad experiences so few students were engaging in these experiences. The researchers found securing placements, finances, language barriers, challenges with accommodations and travel, and a lack of clear expectations as significant barriers to student participation in study abroad experiences (Shimmell et al., 2016). While study abroad opportunities are valuable and warrant further exploration to improve the implementation of these experiences, additional methods for preparing students to work in a culturally diverse field are essential to develop as well.

Finding ways to reduce cost, increase access, and eliminate barriers to participation for all student populations could be the first step for institutions who hope to increase intercultural opportunities for their students. One solution may be to employ video conferencing technology to increase students' opportunities for high fidelity socialization interactions with other cultures. Building interactions and exposure towards collaborative discussions and assignments could enhance the overall experience as students progress through their curriculum (Agnew & Kahn, 2014; Sood & Cepa, 2014).

International Service Learning
Service-learning projects have multiple goals beyond developing cultural competence, including the development of a mutually beneficial relationship between students and the community they serve, and the civic development of students alongside their academic goals (Lim & Bloomquist, 2015). Several studies have focused on the application of international service learning in occupational therapy education including Short and St. Peters (2017), and St. Peters and Short (2018). In these two studies, the authors focused on the impact of international service learning on the development of occupational therapy student's professional virtue, and the application of the AOTA ethical principles. With confidence, the authors reported a significant change in the students' professional virtue and ability to apply ethical principles in real-world situations, while being increasingly responsible for clinical care (St. Peters & Short, 2018).

A study conducted by Lawson and Olson (2017) indicated that occupational therapy practitioners who had previously engaged in international service learning had long term benefits that impacted their professional lives. These benefits included increased cultural acceptance, improved resourcefulness, and higher personal gratitude for their own lives. As in most international service-learning literature, the experience of these students included hands-on therapeutic treatment such as splinting, and wheelchair seating and positioning. International service learning inherently includes the application of skills to provide a service to the community, in which the students are immersed. While beneficial for student development, a foundation of skills, and the ability to apply those skills in novel situations, must first be developed. This includes a foundation for cultural competence, which may best be initiated through controlled exposure to other cultures early in the student's curriculum (Noble, Nuszen, Rom, & Noble, 2014)

International service learning is not without barriers to implementation. Sustainability, the investment of resources on behalf of the institution and students, and the necessity of making international service learning an integral aspect of the curriculum, creates challenges that may be more than an institution can easily overcome (Jacoby & Brown, 2009; Kahn, 2011; McKee, 2016). International service learning goes beyond a short trip to another country to provide a skill or service. It includes civic engagement that is predicated on the learning objectives of a class or program and embedded within a transformational learning process that includes application and reflection (McKee, 2016). Due to the complexity of the learning experience, international service learning needs to be embedded within the larger curriculum and requires a long-term investment from the institution and faculty to ensure success (Jacoby & Brown, 2009). Similar to

study abroad, financial resources and barriers to different student groups accessing international service-learning opportunities, remains a problem for programs looking to implement these types of experiences (Kahn, 2011; Soria & Troisi, 2014). Methods for increasing access to cultural experiences, and especially those that may lay a foundation to support further cultural emersions such as international service learning, are important to investigate.

Internationalization at Home (IaH)
As institutions have attempted to overcome barriers to providing students with culturally diverse and immersive experiences feasibly and efficiently, the technique of IaH has developed (Agnew & Kahn, 2014). While IaH can be accomplished in many ways, one approach is to provide more formal and structured opportunities for students from different cultures to have the opportunity to socialize with each other in a supported environment (Agnew & Kahn, 2014; Soria & Troisi, 2014). Soria and Troisi (2014) surveyed 213,160 students across nine large public universities with a 38% response rate. Through their investigation, they concluded that IaH might provide undergraduate students, across many disciplines, more occasions for intercultural interactions than study abroad opportunities.

Additionally, it was suggested that in some cases IaH might be even more effective in developing students' global, international and intercultural competencies than traditional study abroad opportunities. Some of this might be due to the potential for an increase in the frequency of interactions through extended programming and with ease of access for all parties involved, an increase in student rate of engagement and participation (Soria & Troisi, 2014). These findings, among others, are encouraging as universities look to continuously provide cultural opportunities while the cost of higher education is rising, and students may be able to afford less costly educational opportunities than traditional study abroad and exchange programs provide.

Recently, IaH has been employed in occupational therapy education as a means of impacting student intercultural learning and deepening an appreciation for occupation in occupational therapy students studying in the United States and Philippines (Cabatan & Grajo, 2017). This study included multiple points of contact between the two programs, including faculty-led guest lectures, asynchronous virtual student interactions, and synchronous virtual student interactions. Based on survey responses and qualitative analysis, the researchers found three themes: "Global nature of occupations, personal nature of occupations, and the power of culture in understanding occupations" (Cabatan & Grajo, 2017, p.5), demonstrating the potential learning benefit of IaH for occupational therapy students. Additionally, the researchers investigated the teaching-learning aspects that supported the IaH experience. The realistic socialization of the virtual experiences, the preparation, and organization of the interactions, and the subsequent student reflection following the experience were all positive aspects of the IaH design. One of the suggestions for implications in occupational therapy education as a result of this study is that IaH opportunities provided with virtual technologies may improve intercultural competence in occupational therapy students, while reducing the cost and safety risks associated with other study abroad opportunities (Cabatan & Grajo, 2017).

BACKGROUND

In order to provide students with an opportunity for intercultural competence, which includes some combination of openness, curiosity, and reverence for another culture (Cabatan, & Graco, 2017; Deardorff, 2006; Knight, 2004), two universities from two different cultures were brought in contact. The universities were institutional partners at the time. One university was in the United States (US) and one was in Europe (EU), and both had occupational therapy programs. For several months, the authors met using video conferencing to discuss and exchange information on courses they taught, university policies, and learning objectives, and to brainstorm ways to develop a cross-cultural learning experience for their occupational therapy students. To increase students' exposure to another culture, while still housed in their home institution, an effort was made to apply the concept of IaH. The intent was to have the students develop an understanding, appreciation, and curiosity of the other culture that would provide an additional lens through which they might be able to understand the roles and lives of future clients (Aldrich & Grajo, 2017; Cabatan & Graco, 2017; Knight, 2006; Nagarajan & McAllister, 2015). The focus of this pilot project was to explore the feasibility of this cross-cultural experience in an occupational therapy curriculum as well as to determine the viability of developing a research protocol to explore the outcomes of cross-cultural collaborations for students. Further, this paper aims to provide a rich description of the process of developing and implementing IaH opportunities, including a reflection of the barriers and benefits to implementing this type of project, and directions for future development and research.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PILOT PROJECT

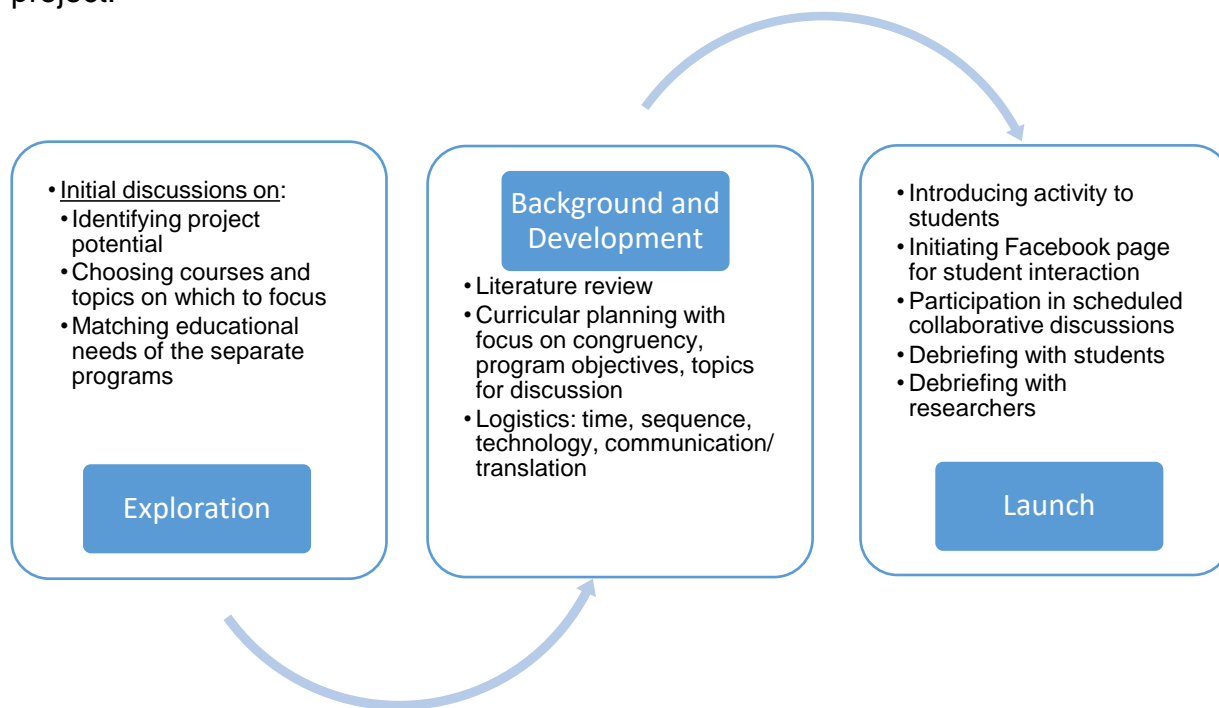Figure 1 provides an overview of the development and implementation of the pilot project.

Figure 1. Overview of the project.

Exploration

The first steps to plan the project were to identify the potential of the project. Discussions took place between two faculty members who were the program instructors at each university, respectively, and a third partner, who was not part of either course but would later act as the 'facilitator' of the sessions. Logistics of the discussions had to be managed to be successful. The faculty were in three different time zones: Eastern European Time Zone, Eastern US time zone, and Central US time zone. Given the time differences, it was necessary to identify a morning time in the eastern US and a late afternoon time at the EU, which proved to be effective. A mix of technology was employed for communication from basic email to Skype and Zoom Applications for initial contact and planning meetings.

Time was then spent discussing the curriculum and student dynamics. The US program was a two-year Master of Occupational Therapy program, and the EU program was a four-year Bachelor of Occupational Therapy program. First term courses in both programs' curricula focused on history and philosophy of occupational therapy and occupational science. The course selected for the EU was ERG123- Occupational Science. For the US program, the course chosen was OCT5140 Domain of Occupational Therapy. The rationale for this was to include students, who would have enough understanding of some basic tenets of occupational therapy so that their discussion could be focused on the influential cultural dynamics related to health, and not purely a social interaction between students. As such, it was determined that the topics and discussion would focus on this first term coursework for the US students and second semester coursework for students at the EU. The interaction was hosted during the latter part of the term so that students would be most familiar with the content for discussion.

Occupational justice was identified as an underlying curricular thread within each institution programmatic design that was partially met within the identified courses. The researchers decided that occupational justice discussions would provide students with vast opportunities to learn about cultural factors impacting occupational justice in the opposing culture, while also meeting the course goals of understanding this concept along with the socio-political climate, ethical considerations, and the impact on occupational therapy practice.

Background and Development

The next step after identifying the importance and potential of this project, was for all investigators to examine the literature on similar cross-cultural experiences. Initially, the focus of the literature review was on the feasibility and barriers to virtual interactions between cultures. This focus allowed the researchers to begin planning the logistics of the sessions and determine how they could improve upon previous attempts at virtual cross-cultural collaborations. A cloud-based system was used to share research articles between all investigators and weekly discussions were held through email and virtual meetings. It was determined that the project would focus on creating the highest fidelity interactions possible through technology by utilizing synchronous, video conferencing technology. Once the research on the logistical issues related to cross-cultural

collaborations was explored, the researchers turned to investigating potential occupational justice issues that could be relevant to both cultures but allow for lively discussion and interaction. Further literature review was conducted on the pedagogy and outcomes of cross-cultural collaborations specific to occupational therapy education.

It was determined that the synchronous discussions would be focused on topics related to what the students were studying in each of their courses and based on current literature on occupational justice issues relevant to each culture. Each student group was assigned a different topic. These topics included the elderly, those who identify as LBGTQ, people with mental health disabilities, people with disabilities, people of low socioeconomic status, women, and immigrants and refugees. Topics were selected by all three investigators and compared for overlap. In addition, they were chosen based on a review of current literature, professional organization documentation, and each investigator's expert opinion as occupational therapy clinicians in their perspective country. A finalized list was compiled and share with students so that they could review and prepare for the discussion, allowing for more familiarity with the content area and enhance their ability to relate to it on an intracultural level. Consideration for the students' level of prior knowledge was also accounted for in the decision of which topics to discuss. The goal of the sessions was to allow for lively communication about the cultural issues faced by each group in relationship to occupational justice issues. The researchers felt it was important for the students to have a basic understanding of the topic being discussed, so any highly complex topic that would not translate well across the cultures or among new occupational therapy students was removed.

Several conversations occurred to discuss how the two groups of students could be brought together, how to navigate the time difference, and how to manage the potential language barrier. It was recognized that while all three faculty members spoke English, many of the students from the EU spoke only Greek. A balance was sought by including English-speaking students within each student group to encourage fluid conversation.

The structure of the interaction was then decided upon, which included the following: an introduction to the concept of the cultural exchange by the faculty during class lectures in the aforementioned courses, creation of a Facebook page for students to introduce themselves and begin some preliminary social interaction, assignment of students to groups with a focused topic for discussion, preparation within their groups including researching their topic related to their own culture and the occupational therapy profession, participation in the cross-cultural collaboration, and lastly a group debrief discussion to gather some reactions and quality improvement suggestions for the project.

Groups were designed with the following considerations: group size, media capabilities, and communication. The intent was to provide students with synchronous interaction both visual and verbal. As a result, rooms that had some level of media capacity were required on each campus. With further exploration of facilities on each campus, it appeared that a smaller group of five to six would work best so that students on each

campus could reasonably see each other. Also, microphone capacities were evaluated, and again, given the level of interaction sought, the authors found that the smaller groups would function best with the media at hand. Lastly, in consideration for potential language barriers, the students from the EU university were challenged to work together with their most adept English speaker who would act as the reporter for the group when sharing in discussion. Sessions were initially designed to last 30 minutes each, due to the class sizes and time constraints that existed based on the time difference between the countries. The group size was intentionally kept smaller to allow for more communication and in an attempt to mitigate language barriers by having fewer students for which to manage translation needs. This organization, in turn, required more sessions to be held in a designated period that fit the needs of the courses and did not place an undue burden on the students to attend sessions outside of regular operating hours.

Launch

With prior planning in place, the faculty members were able to include the cross-cultural collaboration in their respective courses before the terms began. Students were introduced to the concept and told they would be participating in the cross-cultural collaboration from the beginning of the course. Times and days were scheduled from the start of the term to allow students to adequately prepare and plan their time accordingly. Each instructor provided a verbal introduction to the project in class at the beginning of the term.

One instructor created a closed-group Facebook page and invited only the students enrolled in the US and EU classes to join the page. All three faculty were administrators of the page and had to approve any requests for joining the group. Very specific permissions and careful examination of the group membership by faculty, allowed students to engage with each other in a relatively private environment. Given the privacy concerns and student preferences associated with using social media in academic courses, students were not required to participate in the Facebook page. All instructors participated in introducing themselves and encouraging students to engage with each other prior to the sessions. Students shared their backgrounds, professional goals, and interests in learning from each other. The Facebook group was introduced to students one month prior to the first cross-cultural session.

On the day of the cross-cultural collaboration, student groups arrived 10-minutes prior to their schedule interaction time and entered the location where the technology was set up for collaboration. Each instructor provided a brief overview of the session plan and allowed students to ask questions. When the sessions began, the facilitator engaged the students in conversation while the instructors assisted with technology, language translation, and elaborating on any higher-level topics that may have been brought up such as reimbursement issues. The facilitator began each session by asking students and their program instructors to introduce themselves, they then identified the issue for each session, provided some questions for the students to consider, and then opened the floor for students to discuss. For consistency the following discussion points were used with each group: a. "Provide an overview of the topic in relation to your cultural

group", b. "Identify the impact on your community", c. "Identify the impact on health and access to resources in your community," and d. "Explore the potential role of occupational therapy with that population."

As this was an initial pilot exploration to investigate the feasibility and opportunity for using video conferencing to provide a cross-cultural learning opportunity between two occupational therapy programs, no formal post-experience data was collected. The instructors of each program did hold a large group debriefing session separately on each campus after the small group sessions were completed. The instructors used the same debriefing questions to gather feedback about the experience and identify suggestions for improvement according to the students. These questions included: "What worked well during this collaboration?", "What barriers did you experience during this collaboration?", "What suggestions do you have for future cross-cultural collaborations?", and "What were the benefits of this experience?". The debriefing sessions were recorded by the course instructors for future review. After the sessions, each instructor reviewed the debriefing recordings and summarized the key concepts and themes noted by the students. The two instructors and the facilitator reviewed the summaries, as well as providing their observations about the experience, to determine the feasibility of the cross-cultural opportunity for future academic experiences and to note any areas for improvement to enhance the student experience. The instructors and facilitator compared similar and differing attitudes and opinions from the students in each academic program to develop key themes that should be further explored in future, formalized studies.

OUTCOMES
The outcomes of this project were positive. The students were engaged and expressed that the experience was beneficial both personally and professionally. The implementation of this pilot project illuminated the personal and professional benefits students perceived by participating in synchronous cross-cultural interactions with other occupational therapy students. Through analysis of the debriefing meetings that occurred independently on each campus, the researchers identified the following themes discussed below that support the continued implementation of these types of learning activities.

Motivation
Cross-cultural collaborations provided motivating learning opportunities. Students commented on their desire to spend more class time participating in these types of learning experiences and their willingness to participate in them beyond the required class time if they would be able to go into more depth in the discussion.

Perspective
Cross-cultural collaborations allowed students to think about occupational therapy issues through a new lens. The US students made comments such as "I had never thought about it from that perspective before" and "I would not have considered how it could be different in another country." US students indicated that they had never considered what occupational therapy would look like in another country and that this

experience made them aware of the similarities and differences within the profession internationally.

Time
Within the theme of time, there were two distinct sub-themes. Students desired to spend more time learning about the opposite campus' culture beyond the professional issues discussed during the collaborations. For example, students requested time to address social and historical issues associated with each culture and to question each other about broader healthcare and societal issues they may experience in their country. The second sub-theme was the desire to have more time to prepare before the collaboration experiences and more time to discuss the topics designated because technology and translation issues slowed the rate of communication in each group.

DISCUSSION
With a focus on creating an opportunity to increase cultural exposure for two groups of occupational therapy students, this cultural exchange project, even with its limitations, appeared to provide an authentic IaH experience. Students on both campuses expressed their positive attitudes and their appreciation for the exposure to different cultural backgrounds while at the same time allowing the opportunity to discuss their own experiences and knowledge of healthcare issues in their countries. Students from both universities requested the repetition of a similar experience, in which they would have more time available to explore further and interact. US students expressed an increased desire to investigate international fieldwork opportunities as a direct result of their increased comfort and interest in working with other cultures after this interaction. Some of the US students also stated that they would participate in these types of experiences outside of class if that were necessary because they found it enjoyable and worthwhile for their learning and growth. These findings appear to be in line with other IaH research, in which the educational opportunities of students were enhanced through cultural exchange at home (Agnew & Kahn, 2014; Sood & Cepa, 2014). Additionally, Aldrich and Johansson (2015) determined that students were motivated and positive about their cross-cultural experiences, but that technology and language barriers were issues for students across the two institutions they studied, which is directly reflective of our findings as well.

This experience highlighted that this is not only a feasible method of cultural exchange but one that both engaged the students and offered them an additional learning opportunity that may contribute to the development of their cultural competence related to occupational therapy practice (Agnew & Kahn, 2014; Soria & Troisi, 2014). Though our study confirmed much of what previous studies have asserted, the continued development of these types of projects is nevertheless essential for the occupational therapy profession. With each attempt at IaH new knowledge is generated that helps inform and improve practices so that one day the barriers to implementation may be lessened.

While study abroad and international service learning experiences continue to provide highly valuable cultural emersions, the increased pressure to reduce student financial

burdens, and the call to increase healthcare student cultural competence, conflict with the continued use of these educational methods as the primary means for engaging students in high-fidelity cultural interactions. Study abroad and international service learning experiences are expensive, require a significant investment of resources, and present barriers to many different student populations (Kahn, 2011; Shimmell et al., 2016; Soria & Troisi, 2014). A well-developed IaH experience that is embedded within the occupational therapy curriculum may allow more students to develop enhanced cultural competence with reduced burden on both students, faculty, and institutions.

Limitations
Through the course of this pilot project, several issues arose during the live interactions and others came to light through students' comments during debriefing meetings. The following components of the project were determined to be challenges that were experienced which contribute to the overall project limitations:

- Technology: Multiple issues with technology prevented the sessions from occurring in a timely and efficient manner. Internet bandwidth issues created a challenge with being able to hear and visualize the opposite group members consistently. Additionally, challenges with audio hardware made it difficult for the EU students to hear all of the US students adequately. Throughout the sessions, the internet connection was lost on both campuses at various times. These issues with communication were a barrier to full participation as indicated by the student comments including a US student who noted: "despite the multiple technology issues I still really enjoyed the experience." The EU students specifically felt the technology issues were the most significant barriers to participation in this collaboration.
- Language: Like the technology issues, language and translation issues that were experienced during the session impacted the timeliness and efficient communication. The US students mainly felt this was the biggest barrier to engaging effectively in this type of collaboration. Several students commented about delays caused by having to individually translate and repeat statements to allow for the other side to understand the sentiment behind the comments. Combined with the audiovisual issues experienced during the collaboration, the researchers had to provide more assistance in translating and rephrasing comments than was initially intended. In general, the fluidity of the conversation was challenged.
- Time: Time was both a perceived benefit and barrier to the collaboration. In terms of a barrier, the allotted time for this interaction prevented full engagement by all students in the collaboration. Connectivity issues resulted in frequent pauses in the time allotted for student interaction. Despite the time issues, students discussed their assigned topics but did not have time for open discussion. Attempts to adjust equipment to provide for better connection resulted in further delays. Also, as identified above, time was also impacted by the need to break into small groups to come to consensus in response to questions before returning to the group. Additional time was spent in translating and interpreting both questions and responses for the students. Being new to this experience and with a short window for interaction, students had to adjust to the

situation quickly, become comfortable in the intercultural communication, and be open about discussing occupational justice issues. The novelty of the situation and adjustment time to fully participate in the session was not accounted for and delayed engagement of some students.

Future Directions

After a thorough review of this pilot project, it was determined that the lessons learned here could be overcome; changes could be incorporated, and further research should be planned to focus on evaluating the cultural experiences of the students. Both the researchers and the students reflected that the pilot project resulted in a high level of enjoyment and perceived benefit from the sessions despite the multiple barriers to participation. The knowledge gained from this experience would help design a process for instituting this project that would mitigate some of the obstacles experienced and enhance the potential impact of the intercultural experience. Therefore, the research team has planned an additional research project and has applied for grant funding for necessary technology and translator services. It will be essential to incorporate formalized data collection and analysis methodology in future studies to empirically illustrate any difference in student attitudes, beliefs, and values related to culture after participation in this type of experience.

Once logistical barriers are managed, the IaH experience will be embedded within the curriculum to address student clinical reasoning which incorporates cultural considerations for care related to client case studies. According to the 2018 Accreditation Council for Occupational Therapy Education (ACOTE) standards, students should be able to plan screening, evaluation, and intervention that is culturally relevant. Additionally, the cultural context of service delivery is essential for students to understand in clinical decision-making processes (AOTA, 2018). The researchers plan to include students who are in later terms of their programs and have small groups create evaluation and intervention plans for clients based on a case study, then discuss with the other program how the cultural context impacted their choices in care planning. The continued use of IaH across the programs will allow for reinforcement of cultural competence across foundational, application, and mastery levels of learning.

Implications for Occupational Therapy Education

The implementation of this pilot project provided the researchers with an opportunity to identify and modify barriers to participation in IaH as well as to determine the perceived benefits the students received through participation. This project provides an initial framework for other occupational therapy programs who may be interested in increasing the cultural opportunities available within their institutions while also keeping in mind the time and monetary constraints most students and institutions face.

The IaH learning opportunity allowed occupational therapy students to examine the impact of the cultural context on the experience of occupational injustice and general occupational therapy issues between two profoundly different countries. IaH opportunities within occupational therapy education are not limited to discussions on occupational injustice but could incorporate various topics that allow students the

opportunity to appreciate unique cultural points of view. Current research on implementation IaH provides support for integration of these types of cross-cultural opportunities in occupational therapy curricula and supports the World Federation of Occupational Therapy's (WFOT) position that "global health should be central to occupational therapy practice, research, and education" (WFOT, 2014, p.2). Further, WFOT (2014) stated: "education about global health challenges and the potential occupational therapy role(s) is an area of increasing curricular importance for all occupational therapy programs" (p. 2). While continued refinement of IaH opportunities is necessary to ensure consistent, effective delivery of these types of learning activities, the benefits of their use in occupational therapy education is evident.

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