GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP AND CROSS-CULTURAL COMMUNICATION: EXAMINING STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES FROM THE GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP AND SUSTAINABILITY PROGRAMME

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Introduction

Flooding is a natural disaster that impacts people more than any other worldwide. The focus of this programme is on community flood resilience and how best to select and implement adaptation strategies for the future. A resilient community has the capacity to better withstand a disaster and its social, economic, and environmental consequences. The ultimate goal of this approach is to provide insights and guidance to stakeholders to effectively address the urban flood challenges through action research and capacity building.

In the Global Citizenship and Sustainability (GCS) programme, Cornell students work collaboratively and cross-culturally with students at Mahidol University in Salaya and research mentors (community partners) to conduct an applied community-based research project. These teams of Cornell and Mahidol students conduct community-based research with the intention of gaining a broader understanding of the complexities of water resource management, flooding, and broader issues of sustainability and climate change facing our world (Allred and Somchanhmavong 2014).

This paper provides an analysis of student learning outcomes related to global citizenship, intercultural communication, and community-based research. We begin with an overview of the literature in these three domains followed by a methodology section that includes a description of the programme and learning strategies, followed by results and then conclusions and future research. The research questions are provided below.

Research Questions

1. What are the critical design elements of an international education programme that focuses on Global Citizenship and Sustainability beyond traditional study abroad and global service learning programmes?
2. What impact did the Global Citizenship and Sustainability Programme have on
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3. How did student perspectives on global citizenship change after travelling to Thailand to work on the community-based research project?

Global Citizenship

Cornell University as a “Land-Grant to the world”, creates and co-creates knowledge with public purpose, and is part of the university’s fabric. The internationalisation call by President David Skorton at Cornell University encouraged various departments such as Natural Resources to continue, strengthen and build new capacities with current and new international partners. One of the aims of Cornell’s internationalisation initiative is to develop impactful community-based research with community partners to co-generate knowledge in solving the societal problems that we are facing today such as climate change. President Skorton challenged “Cornell and other universities to develop a new type of Marshall Plan that would reduce global inequalities through capacity-building partnerships with universities in developing countries…” (Bringing Cornell to the World and the World to Cornell. A Presidential White Paper, David Skorton, President of Cornell University, March 2, 2012.)

With this challenge, the university sought to educate students for global citizenship by “... [offering] them language study, an understanding of history and of cultures beyond their own, and [providing a] meaningful international experience.” (Bringing Cornell to the World and the World to Cornell. A Presidential White Paper, David Skorton, President of Cornell University, March 2, 2012). President Skorton’s challenge provided the basic curricular framework for Global Citizenship and Sustainability programme. This allowed us to enter into conversation and scholarship around the topic of “global citizenship”. We also recognise that the concept of global citizenship has a strong historical connotation to western colonial and imperialist history (Pashby 2011). So, we encourage students in the GSC programme to not only be familiar with the scholarship around “global citizenship” but also most importantly to critically analyze their subject positions in relations to others. In addition, students in the GCS programme analyse how the U.S. engages with local, national and international communities to critically analyse the historical aspects of the nations we are working in, stepping away from a strictly US centered approach (Pashby 2011). Pashby (2011) “encourages students to adopt a critical understanding of globalisation and the world history, to reflect on how they and their nations are implicated in local and global problems and to engage in intercultural perspectives”.

The concept of citizenship in this context comes from Robert Rhoads and Katalin Szelenyi: “our view of global citizenship, incorporates both local/national awareness with a growing sense of interconnectedness of all nation-states and the importance of forging common ties and connections in terms of global rights and responsibilities” (Rhoads and Szelenyi 2011). While the term citizenship is generally tied with one’s
nation and infers certain political and legal rights (Noddings 2005), adding the term “global” to “citizenship” goes beyond political and legal dimensions of citizenship to include social, cultural, and economic aspects (Rhoads and Szélényi 2011).

Global citizenship or being a citizen of the world dates back to the Greek and Roman period in the Western world. “They [Greek and Roman philosophers] were considered to be global citizens because they understood themselves as existing meaningfully only within this ordered, reasoned whole. (Dower & Williams 2002, p. 2).

Cross-Cultural Communication

Intercultural competence is becoming an increasingly valued and necessary skill for students to have as our world becomes more multicultural and globalised. Intercultural competency is defined as the ability to effectively and appropriately interact in an intercultural situation or context (Perry and South well 2011; J.M.Bennett 2008; Deardorff 2006; Lustig and Koester 2006). Those with effective cross-cultural communication skills have the ability to effectively interact with people of different cultures or socio-economic backgrounds. There are four dimensions to cultural competence, including awareness of one’s own cultural worldview, the attitude one holds towards cultural differences, one’s knowledge of different cultural practices and worldviews, and cross-cultural skills. Developing cultural competence results in an ability to understand, communicate with, and effectively interact with people across cultures (Martin and Vaughn 2007). Abroad experiences for university students have been shown to enhance intercultural understanding (Kitsantas and Meyers 2001; Medina-Lopez-Portillo 2004; Olson and Kroeger 2001; Perry and South well 2011). The degree of student intercultural competence increases with the length of stay abroad with longer programmes or repeat visits to the same location over a period of time resulting in a higher levels of competence (Medina-Lopez-Portillo 2004; Olson and Kroeger 2001). Interaction with locals while abroad has also been shown to increase the level of intercultural competence and sensitivity, even in short-term study abroad programmes (those less than one semester)(Williams 2005).

Complex environmental issues, such as water resource management, often affect people of different nationalities and cultures. International and cross-cultural collaboration is vital in tackling these problems (Metzger and Zare 1999). International cross-disciplinary research teams face additional challenges compared to single nationality or disciplinary teams due to the differing culturally-based assumptions, values, and norms represented within the group (Bachmann 2006).

This raises the question of how international education programmes should be designed to enhance cultural competence. Immersion in another culture does not, on its own, result in intercultural competence or learning (Trede et al. 2013). However, in a study examining how universities are preparing students for international education experiences, researchers found that most academic staff members were not
intentional with regard to cultural and global citizenship learning outcomes (Trede et al. 2013). While academic staff leading international education experiences for students had sound procedural planning in place, study results showed that they did not include intercultural pedagogies in their programmes, “nor did they purposefully seek to develop intercultural competence and global citizenship in their students” (Trede et al. 2013). In designing instructional content and analysing students’ experience in the GCS programme, we utilise an intercultural competence framework to help us better understand student experiences and learning related to cross-cultural communication.

Community-Based Research

Strand et al. (2003) defines community-based research (CBR) as a “partnership of students, faculty, and community members who collaboratively engage in research with the purpose of solving a pressing community problem or effecting social change.” Community-engaged research is a framework or approach for conducting research. CBR encourages recognition of strengths of community, institutions, and individuals. What characterises community-based research are not the methods used, but rather the principles that guide the research and the relationships between researchers and the community. Thus CBR requires a partnership, cooperation, negotiation, collaboration with community partners and a commitment to addressing an issue of mutual concern. Stocker (2012) raises the important point that community-based research is not only about how it is done but also whether or not the research matters, and if so, to whom.

Research Methods

Here we first describe the curricular context in which the GSC programme took place. Next we will explain how we collected data to examine student learning outcomes related to global citizenship, cross cultural communication, and community-based research.

About the Global Citizenship and Sustainability Programme

The GCS programme is offered by the Dept. of Natural Resources and Public Service Center at Cornell University in partnership with Mahidol University and the Thailand-United States Sufficiency Education Foundation (TUSEF). At Cornell, the programme sponsors and funders are the Public Service Center, the Center for Engaged Learning and Research, the Southeast Asia Programme, the Einaudi Center for International Studies, and International Programmes in the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, and the Cornell Institute for Food, Agriculture, and Development (CIFAD’s SMART Programme.
The principles (Gonzales 2009) upon which this programme is built are below:

**Interdisciplinary** – This programme provides the opportunity for students to learn from faculty from a variety of disciplines, sharing alternative perspectives with those in the programme. Additionally, students in the programme come from majors across the university from natural resources to engineering to humanities.

**Cross-cultural communication and learning** (history, politics, environment) – the pre-departure course is essential in preparing students to encounter learning in a new cultural environment. The course focuses on culture, politics, history and socio-economic reality. We utilise faculty and staff from the Southeast Asia programme at Cornell and also hosted two guest speakers from Thailand (Kassetsart Economics faculty member to discuss political history and economy, District Attorney from Bangkok to discuss Thai legal system and how issues of corruption might impact flooding infrastructure projects) that were visiting Cornell campus.

**Community Engagement and Collaboration** – The programme fosters interactions between and among students (Cornell and Mahidol), community members, and faculty (Cornell and Mahidol). These interactions are mutually beneficial and provide the basis for the student projects. Students work closely with community partners as their “research mentors” during the winter session travel to Thailand and also during the post-departure course.

**Reflection/analysis** – In this programme, we assist students in learning to critically reflect on their experiences before, during, and after the abroad experience. Taking time to understand what happened and why and how we feel about it is critical for learning to be lasting. We understand that students are not always equipped to deal with certain feelings they may experience – whether it be homesickness, culture clash, or dissonance between their home reality and travelling abroad.

The Global Citizenship and Sustainability programme at Cornell University has 4 primary components:

**Pre-departure course** (Fall semester 2013) for Cornell students that focuses on flooding and climate change, cultural learning, team-building, and reflection. Students explored various theoretical frameworks for global citizenship as relevant to questions of ethics, power, democracy, diversity, and environment. They applied these theories to the community resilience to flooding in the U.S. and Thailand (3 credits).

**Winter session** (January 2014, 3 weeks) community-based research project in Thailand with Mahidol students and Thai research mentors from provincial government and NGO’s. After getting to know each other, students pair up with one “research buddy” to work closely with on the research project. This helps to facilitate cross-cultural learning. Student teams also work closely with “research mentors” from provincial and village government and NGO’s.

**Post-departure** course (Spring semester 2014) for Cornell students where students write up results of the research and prepare community product. Drafts are provided to community partners in Thailand and students continue to work with
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their “research buddies” from Mahidol University in Bangkok. (2 credits).

Summer exchange (June 2014, 3 weeks) where Mahidol students from Bangkok travel to Cornell to conduct a community-based research project in NYS with Cornell students and research mentors from local government and NGO’s.

The GCS programme is sequenced such that the same group of students participates in components #1-#3 above, whereas the summer exchange programme (#4 above) involved a new group of students.

Student selection process for the GCS programme

Students were selected through a rigorous application and interview process. Each applicant was required to provide academic transcripts showing grades, complete an application, and respond to four essay questions.\footnote{a) Please tell us about your motivations for applying for this programme. What do you hope to bring to the programme? What do you hope to gain from this and how will it enhance your education? b) Have you been on an Alternative Break, service-learning trip, or international educational experience before? If so, how have your past experience influenced your desire to become involved in this programme? If not, what is important to you about this kind of educational experience? c) Select one of your past group experiences and write about what made that group work well, and what challenges you faced as a group and how you overcame them. d) You will be expected to enroll in a preparatory and post-trip course, in addition to the January 2014 trip and various tasks you are assigned related to organising the trip. Are you willing to accept this time commitment?}

Upon reviewing applications students were interviewed and then selected based on academic

| Table 1: Profile of students in pilot year (2013-2014) of the Global Citizenship and Sustainability Programme |
|---------------------------------------------------------------|------------------|---------------|
| Class (at time of participation) | Major | Gender | Ethnicity |
| Master’s | Natural Resources | Male | Caucasian |
| Senior | Natural Resources | Female | Caucasian |
| Senior | Interdisciplinary Studies, minor in City and Regional Planning | Male | Caucasian |
| Senior | Africana Studies and International Agricultural and Rural Development | Male | Caucasian |
| Senior | Natural Resources | Female | Chinese-American |
| Junior | Biology and Society | Female | African-American |
| Sophomore | Chemical Engineering | Female | Singaporean |
| Sophomore | International Agriculture and Rural Development | Female | Bolivian-American |
| Sophomore | (Double Major) International Agriculture and Rural Development and Natural Resources | Female | Caucasian |
| Junior | Computer Science | Male | Caucasian |
| Junior | Government | Male | African-American |
| Freshman | Policy Analysis and Management | Male | African-American |
| Junior | Natural Resources | Female | Canadian |
| Freshman | Policy Analysis and Management | Female | African-American |
qualifications, commitment to the programme, and interest in global citizenship and sustainability. The profile of the students in the programme is below. In total, we had 14 students in the programme from the pilot year and they came from a variety of academic and ethnic backgrounds. Nearly half of the students (n=6) in the programme were the first generation in their family to go to college.

**Community-based research project in Thailand and United States**

Taking an inter-disciplinary and cross-cultural approach, students worked in pairs (Mahidol and Cornell) drawing on their combined ability to research the environmental, economic, and social aspects of water management on local communities. Students collected data through a variety of sources including government documents, in-depth interviews with community members, farmers, and business owners, interviews with government officials and resource professionals, and community meetings. The questions that students researched were driven by the needs of the local community leaders and their need to understand the impacts of the 2011 floods and how they could collectively learn from that experience to be better prepared in the future.

As part of the post-departure class, Cornell students worked with their Mahidol University counterparts and community partners (research mentors) to obtain feedback on the draft community products. There were two student research teams that worked in each of two sites (Bang Luang and Mahasawad), working collaboratively with research mentors from the community. The Bang Luang team wrote an archival case study documenting the experience of this community in the 2011 floods. In collaboration with government, business owners in this area were able to protect a central business district that served as a center of relief for the community as well as allowing them to sustain their livelihood. Students documented, through interviews, the participatory process and decision-making surrounding this success story of community flood resilience. Community partners stressed the importance of this case study as a way to produce a historical record of their strategy and to also help other communities learn from these strategies. The case study helped to promote this approach to community flood resilience within other areas of Thailand where this could benefit others. For the second research site, the Mahasawad Canal, students worked on a brochure that documents the successful flood mitigation strategies used by the community during the flood as well as adaptation strategies following the flood to prepare for the future. This region is a hub of agro-tourism where subsistence farmers also earn income from bringing tourists to see their farms, which include a Lotus farm, an orchid farm, a fruit orchard, and an OTOP market that specialises in producing and training others to produce locally made rice crackers.

For the summer exchange programme that took place at Cornell University in the summer of 2014, Cornell and Mahidol University students came together to work with the City of Ithaca in developing a communication plan to better support the residents in the Fall Creek neighborhood that suffered flood damage in the previous
winter (January 2014) due to an ice jam. Students were engaged with City officials in researching and developing strategies to better support the residents, if flooding occurs in the future. A brochure for residents on how to better prepare and take action and recover from the flood, and its distribution plan for the pamphlets were developed, along with a communication plan that was developed to better share and disseminate critical information at the appropriate time. Students also conducted a quantitative survey of Ithaca area residents to document their experience of flooding and flood preparation, assessment of communication about flooding, and interest in information about flooding.

**Data Collection and Analysis**

In order to examine learning outcomes related to cross-cultural communication, global citizenship, and community-based research we assigned journal reflections on this topic (Figure 1). The students were required to complete readings that

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**Figure 1: Pre-and-post trip assignment on Global Citizenship**

**ASSIGNMENT #2, Good Intentions and Global Citizens (Due 9/30):** Read the Illich paper first, followed by Zemach-Bersin and Schlabach. What is the first word that comes to mind that captures your emotional response to these articles? Do you agree with Illich? Why or why not? What do you think Schlabach and Zemach-Bersin contribute to the discussion of international service and education? Think about the motivations for why you are in this course and what you want to accomplish both for yourself and for our host community. How have these articles informed (if at all) how you will approach this learning experience?

**Global Citizens:** Summarise Appiah’s perspective on globalisation. Compare this to Illich’s view. Which perspective do you agree with more? Why? Appiah suggests that it is possible to balance universal global ethics with people’s freedom to make choices. From reading Revkin and McKibben, global thinking has become almost impossible without environmental thinking. What are the implications of this for what makes a person a “good global citizen”?

**Readings**

Schlabach, G.W. 2013. Lest Best Intentions Become the Enemy of the Good.
allowed them to learn about and explore these topics in Fall 2013 before they travelled to Thailand. We also asked them to re-read the literature and complete the assignment again upon returning from the GCS programme trip to Thailand in Winter 2014. The literature was selected to provide balanced views of global citizenship (both pro and con) and to help spark the conversation with the students participating in this programme. The goal of the assignment was for students to analyse and reflect on their experiences within the current world system. We present a comparison of the pre-and post global citizenship reflections as part of this paper. The assignment and readings are as in Figure 1. These articles provided multiple viewpoints about traveling abroad for service learning and community-based work. Additionally, while in the programme, students completed weekly reflections (at the conclusions of each of the three weeks in the programme in Thailand and the United States). Thematic coding was used to extract key categories related to cross-cultural communication and global citizenship (Boyatzis 1988).

**Results: Global Citizenship**

In analysing the vocabulary students used in the reflection journals (pre and post trip), we observed shifts in the ways in which they discussed global citizenship. Pre-trip the results show that the prominent words were cultures, people, think, and service (Figure 2). Additionally, several of the authors of the readings on global citizenship were prominent in students reflections, most notably Appiah and to a lesser extent Zemach-Bersin and McKibben. After the trip, student writing in the reflection journal changed and their writing focused on concepts of global,
community, people, and citizen (Figure 2). Overall, results show a higher usage in some terms such as community, global, and people, in the post trip reflection papers as compared with their pre-trip reflection journals.

The pre assignment was completed by students in September 2013 and the post assignment was completed March 2014.

By further analysing student reflections thematically, we found that experiences in the GSC programme created dissonance that students could not yet fully comprehend, just as was discussed in one of the assigned articles (Zemach-Bersin 2008). “I came home confused and unable to respond to the flood of questions such as “How was your time abroad?” For others, they were still developing their own self-awareness and self-identity before they went to the trip. One of the students reflected in her journal before the trip about her desire to work with others, people that are different from her, so that she can experience and learn. She states:

“The personal dissonance I face stems from my attempt to balance my desire to work with [others] and my strictly selfish yearn to experience and learn. In this context, I say that learning and experiencing are primarily self-centered because their ends lead to personal-development.”

After the trip, she started to rethink about the cultural dynamics that were happening during the trip and the focus on the community-based research process, which is about building relationships, and allowing time for the trust to develop and unfold.

“Being raised within the American education system, I have been taught to think in a goal-setting fashion; there were always clearly defined goals with labeled steps, and barricades to prevent you from deviating. Thus, if the end-goal in sight is abstract, or not quite clear, or if it changes, it made me feel uneasy and to a certain extent unaccomplished. Currently I am working on stopping this goal-driven mentality; I am trying to internalise that there is validity and worth in engaging in activities that do not necessarily produce a product.”

For her, she also realised and accepted the limitation of being an American. Just as Zemach-Bersin stated: “American students who travel abroad cannot be expected to transcend historical, political, social, and global systems of power in order to become cross-culturally immersed “global citizens.” We can, however, be asked to become internationally conscious and self-aware American citizens who are responsible for thinking about those critical issues.”

A Cornell student in the summer exchange programme shared that “the three weeks that we have spent with the Thai students brought a lot to me. These weeks have allowed me to travel across the world, while staying in Ithaca. I learned so much about the Thai culture and beliefs.” Thus, becoming a global citizen is more about a frame of mind gained from shared cultural experiences and does not necessarily entail travel abroad.
Results: Cross-Cultural Communication

Language played a critical role in students’ ability to communicate with their team, research partners, and community partners. Many students recognised the importance in having knowledge and command of the Thai language to build stronger relationship with their Mahidol research students and partners, and to further their community-based research project. Besides the simple act of words being transmitted, part of the communication process is the need to share one’s own personality, one’s own feeling, one’s own thoughts, and one’s own experience to build relationship and trust.

“Spending so much time with the Thai students has been one of the most fruitful experiences as well as one of the most challenging. I love to joke around and laugh, so I have had a blast getting to know the students. They (Mahidol University students) are incredibly generous and helpful and they like to have a good time.”

For some of these students, this programme has pushed them out of their comfort zone and allowed them to learn more about both themselves and others. Given the intensity of the programme, students were constantly interacting, working and eating together. This definitely challenged their comfort level related to their own needs for personal time and space. A student commented after the trip, “I realised how much I miss my own personal time...the only time I was alone was when I went to the bathroom or when I went to the track to workout and even at the track I didn’t always go alone. Towards the end I really started to realise how much I valued my alone time and how much I missed it.” This particular student also was not comfortable with sharing the meals together “family style” as she was accustomed and preferred to have her own dish (as is typical in the United States), rather than taking part in the sharing and passing of dishes around the table with others (as is customary in Thailand). Students were continually expanding the bounds of their own cultural framework and how that relates to what they were experiencing in Thailand.

Another student described the manner in which the GSC programme experiences helped him to learn cross-culturally and to place those experiences in the context of Thailand and his own country.

“The cultural exchange happening between us is amazing. It is interesting being in Thailand for a second time, because I do not romanticise about Thai culture as much as I did the first time. I am able to bring a bit more of a critical lens to the way people behave now that I have seen it and reflected on it back in the U.S. I tend to look at the world through the lens of what conditions are optimal for humans to be able to recognise their full potential. In examining Thai culture through this lens, I become confused very quickly. On the one hand, it is incredibly hospitable and everyone looks out for each other in groups. I don’t think ego is very important to Thai people, and these are all great qualities. On the other hand, I’ve found people generally aren’t willing to deviate so much
from the rest of their group, they aren’t so willing to be the one to speak out and voice their opinion, there is definitely some embarrassment brought on people when they are in the spotlight, people seem to act very similarly across Thailand, people I’ve met don’t seem to know how to handle others’ disturbing emotions, and I guess I just question how free people really are to realise their full potential. It makes me very grateful for the ability for many of us in the U.S. to think, act, and speak however we wish, even though many of us don’t have some of the great qualities Thai people have. The key for me is that in the U.S., the potential is there for somebody to become whoever he or she wishes to become. In Thailand and many parts of Asia, that doesn’t seem to be the case. I have much more to think about on this subject, but I would really like to better understand how free people are in Thailand, even though it feels great to be around Thai people.”

One aspect of cross-cultural communication is language. Communicating effectively can be challenging when both sides do not speak each other’s language fluently. Students used various ways to better communicate with each other through hand gestures, pointing at objects, talking slowly and repeatedly, drawing pictures and other ways to ensure understanding of what is being communicated. Mahidol University students shared their frustration about their English fluency. A Mahidol student discussed the group meetings with community partners: “Sometimes I understand what they are talking about but I can’t express my real opinion because I don’t know the specific vocabularies to explain it.” The student went on to recommend that the next group of MU students be more prepared with regard to the English language. A Mahidol University student noted, “To everyone who will join this programme next year you should prepare more about English skills and open mind to new culture. I like this kind of programme because not only to practice and improve English skill and learning by talking with friends but also new culture and culture crossing are important too.” A Cornell student expressed, “I have a knack for understanding what people really mean. I can tell when people don’t understand something. And I can usually explain things in a way that makes sense to them.”

As students were getting to know one another, they were also getting to know different cultures and beliefs, which allowed them to learn more about their own. One of the students commented about her experience: “One thing I appreciate is that while I am learning Thai culture I am becoming more conscious of what American culture truly is. One example, is the American way of wishing someone ‘bless you’ after they sneeze. On numerous occasions, many of the Thai students sneezed and I instinctively told them ‘bless you’ but they did not respond...I [did not] realise that it may be an American cultural practice and eventually towards the middle of the [programme we] discussed sneezing in our respective countries. I learned that there is a [Thai] cultural belief that if one sneezes once, someone is gossiping about you, twice someone
misses you, three times someone blames you; fourth, you're getting sick. Also, I learned that the ‘bless you’ saying dates back to the bubonic plague and alternatively exchangeable term “gesundheit” comes from Germany and was added to the English language sometime during the 20th century.”

Also, the students learned that developing relationships in a cross-cultural setting takes time and that investing the time has benefit in terms of developing and nurturing and relationships. “At Cornell, its common culture to take charge and pick up the slack for who ever was not pulling their weight, but this programme has showed me by doing so I would be lessening the learning experience for all parties involved.”

**Results: Community-Based Research**

From the students, the initial thinking of the community-based research project was that it was going to be easy to accomplish. When we challenged students’ research methodology and data gathering process, they soon realised that this is not as easy as they initially thought. There are protocols that need to be followed when research is conducted and this was challenging, particularly to the Mahidol University students. One of the Mahidol university students commented “Because our interview group has many steps to do that I don’t understand about the reason for each step much but I understand that your country is different from ours, so maybe I’ll never understand. It’s okay. So then we have to wait and have nothing else to do much.” Before conducting interviews, students were asked to review the Institutional Review Board (IRB) protocols and receive certification before they begin. While the research protocols were challenging for the Mahidol students to comprehend, some students appreciated knowing that the research was being conducted with rigorous standards. A Cornell student commented, “This programme has allowed me to learn more about community-based research, but it has also taught me that Cornell is a very rigorous research institute. I feel like the standards that we hold each other accountable for are very high, which I think that down the road will be very valuable.” By the end of the programme, students seemed to gain an understanding and appreciation of the time element that is necessary in the conduct of community-based research.

“When discussing the possible options for assignments that [GCS] could do for the city, I was offended that we were only allowed to accomplish one task. I thought that we would easily be able to complete 3 or 4. What I failed to understand is that completing the task isn’t the only objective. An extensive amount of effort must be put into understanding the project from researching every possible point of view available to us.”

Another community-based research theme in the reflections that students learned the importance of listening to the community as a starting point, versus imposing your objectives on the community.
“As a researcher I have questioned a panel of people on the Ithaca ice jam, in order to better understand it. After gathering data on the ice jam from primary sources I began working a communication plan to make Ithacans more aware of potential flooding. This entire programme is built around the idea of community-based research. The thing that was different is that I didn’t become a conventional researcher with my own objective. I had to sit down and listen to city officials and figure out what they wanted and how best to deliver it to them.” (Reflection #2)

A Cornell student described the community-based research process and the student role in his final reflection:

“If I were talking to a prospective participant in a future [GCS programme] participant, of course I would stress initiative to go above and beyond in the research work and in hanging out with team members. Members should expect the freedom to design something meaningful both for the community based research project and the cultural exchange aspects of the programme. With this freedom comes responsibility to be a good steward of the time and responsibilities they are given. It is an opportunity to enjoy a summer in Ithaca (or a winter in Thailand) with a group of diverse people but all who have a vested interest in doing work that is useful not just pretty on a resume. It is an opportunity to take the vague, distant nature of academia and even many occupations in “helpful” fields and do real, tangible good. Just be ready to work hard for that end.” (Reflection #3)

Conclusions

In 2014, Global Citizenship and Sustainability completed its first year with Mahidol University, as the partnering higher education institution. There were many lessons learned from this model. One lesson learned is the importance of reflection in helping students make sense of the international education experience. Having students reflect on global citizenship before, during, and after the trip was an important part of the learning process. Initially, the reflections were just completed by the Cornell students, but we quickly realised that the Mahidol students would benefit from this practice as well (even with the challenge of writing in English); thus we incorporated reflections for all students (CU and MU) into the summer programme and this was very valuable—for both students and the programme directors.

Also, critical was the need to be intentional about cross-cultural learning and giving students space to develop friendships and have fun. This aided in their cross-cultural communication experiences and also strengthened the ability of the teams to work together on the community-based research. The friendships that developed benefited the team research process and helped students move from the “storming” phase of group development to the “performing” stage. They learned to come
together as a team for a common purpose, while also forming what they deemed as “lifelong friends.”

**Future Plans**

One aspect that we found challenging in this programme was the language barrier as was elucidated in the results from the perspective of both Cornell and Mahidol students. We are exploring ways to address this challenge in the upcoming programme year. Cornell recently allocated resources to offer a 1-credit language course as a supplement to the pre-departure course to help prepare Cornell students in the GSC programme gain familiarity with the Thai language. Also, in selecting the Mahidol University students for participation in the GSC programme, English language proficiency will be paramount.

In future iterations of the programme, we will collect data from community-partners (survey or interview) to assess their experiences with the GSC programme. In the pilot year of the programme, community partners and GSC faculty provided oral and written feedback to students on their community products. Future research will include an assessment from the community members on the utility and efficacy of the research and outreach materials produced by students. Also, feedback will be elicited from community partners about the experience working with students.

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**References**


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