Co-leading an International Collaborative Team: Relationships Matter

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9.1 Background

UFV is a mid-sized Canadian university in British Columbia that is partnered with HSLU-W in Lucerne, Switzerland. The School of Business (SoB) at UFV and the Lucerne School of Business (HSLU-W) both value the importance of international experiences for participants as meaningful and important in contemporary higher education. Formally, the relationship between these two institutions has existed for over a decade, and one of the learning events associated with internationalising is titled *International Leadership—Vancouver as the Asian-Pacific Gateway* (VILW). During this event, executive-education participants from HSLU-W travel to Vancouver and attend a series of visits to government, industry, and academic engagements for the period of 1 week. Canadian participants from the SoB at UFV also attend all of these events with participants from HSLU-W.

As educational leaders, both researchers involved in this study are passionate about international experiences and learning in higher education: We agree that "individual intercultural educators can make a significant difference in the intercultural learning of education abroad students (both incoming and outgoing), and the impact may not be fully

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realised until well after they have left the classroom" (Jackson 2015, p. 98). Moreover, we strive to connect practice and theory throughout the week because we believe that "simply providing cultural information can seem shallow, but focusing on more abstract goals such as awareness can seem vague and detached from real life" (Shaules 2019, p. 205). Ultimately, we want participants to experience cultural information through real-life, immersive involvement in an international experience.

In 2018, Mary Gene Saudelli was promoted to Associate Dean in the Faculty of Professional Studies, which houses the SoB at UFV. In February 2019, Mary contacted Jillaine Farrar, Co-Head CAS International Leadership at HSLU-W and vice-president at SIETAR Switzerland (Society for Intercultural Education, Training and Research). Later, we connected to discuss the planning for the upcoming VILW scheduled for October 2019. What began as two educational leaders in two different countries planning an international event became a relationship of camaraderie, trust, and appreciation of mutual beliefs in relation to leadership and international reciprocity in learning. Through our collaboration, we discovered a mutual appreciation for the complexities of relationships in higher education, as well as across geographical and cultural collaborations.

This qualitative research study explores the following research question: What can be learned about international leadership through an exploration of collaborative co-leadership of the VILW for 2019, 2020, and 2021? Our purpose with this research is to consider how our relationship has formed and evolved, what this means for our continued partnership with our institutions, and how reciprocity and appreciation in international higher education can be mutually rewarding institutionally, professionally, and personally across borders in this boundaryless world. Our purposes are to edify the following:

(a) How sharing life histories with each other and reflecting on how our international competencies have shifted over time have contributed to co-leading our international team.
(b) How our aspirations and expectations regarding international experiences impacted our collaboration and our relationship as international citizens and leaders.
(c) How we were able to maintain our relationship and our collaboration across geographical contexts.

Using the intercultural citizenship theory (Byram 2008, 2014), this study contributes to the knowledge base regarding resilient and relational teams as well as international collaborative co-leadership. Readers will learn the following: the value of deep analysis of life histories as a background for relational dynamics that emerge in collaborative and international teams; the value of individual and dialogical reflection for collaborative co-leadership; and the value of using a duoethnographic methodology to explore international and collaborative co-leadership.

9.2 Theoretical Framework and Literature Review

Leadership as a construct has been well researched and theorised. Important leadership theories have been presented, such as: distributed leadership (e.g. Gronn 2011; Uhl-Bien 2006), invitational leadership (e.g. Novak 2002; Purkey and Novak 1996), authoritative leadership (e.g. Dinham 2007), and so forth. Leadership competencies have also been thoroughly researched and categorised in terms of skills, such as: ethics, nurturing growth, communication, self-organising, and efficiency (e.g. Giles 2016). However, leadership has been underexplored in relation to international and cross-national collaborative co-leadership, particularly in the context of higher and executive education. We believe this is a substantial gap in both theory and leadership. The theoretical framework guiding this study is the intercultural citizenship theory (Byram 2008, 2014; Deardorff 2015, 2020; Killick 2013), which is:

> . . . viewed as the extension of citizenship beyond national borders, through recognition of the global scale of social relations, the need to respect and value diversity, and participation in and responsibility to communities at multiple levels from the local to the global. (Baker and Fang 2020, p. 3)

Intercultural citizenship theory involves conflating two central theoretical concepts: interculturalisation, due to the rapid flow of global movement, and global citizenship, which involves the recognition that we are all part of a global community and belong to that community as citizens (Saudelli 2015). Global citizenship is not about neglecting national citizenship but rather expanding it to recognise that our world is interconnected. As we work together to resolve global issues, engaging in the difficult questions of today requires effective intercultural communication, appreciation of differences (Saudelli 2015), and effective international leadership skills.

As leaders and employees continue to seek ways of learning to live and work together successfully across borders, understanding intercultural awareness, international leadership, and trust within international partnerships have become essential to successfully navigate the waters of international business and international educational leadership. The goal of this literature review is to illustrate the interrelations of these topics and to provide a basis for the authors' reflections on their international collaborative co-leadership. Fundamental to this is the underlying concept that culture learning changes us and helps build bridges of intercultural understanding (Shaules 2019, p. 4)—and thus intercultural competence, which is increasingly raised by educational institutions, corporate entities, and governments as "a central capability for the 21st century" (Hammer 2011, p. 474). Surprisingly, as noted by House et al. (2014), "although there are compelling reasons for understanding the influence of societal culture on leadership and organizational processes, only during the past two decades has there been an increased interest in studying leadership in multiple cultures (including non-Western cultures)" (p. 2). We rely on these and the other views presented in this literature review to frame *educational leadership*

competencies and *intercultural competencies* as integral to the nature of the international collaboration between HSLU-W in Switzerland and UFV in Canada in the area of executive education. To this end, as global educational leaders in their respective institutions, the authors Farrar and Saudelli posit that leadership is crucial to ensuring positive, global engagements across boundaries, which involves intercultural and global citizenship competencies in order to facilitate impactful global learning for participants. We believe international and cross-national collaborative co-leadership involves communication beyond one's personal lenses (intercultural competence) as well as trust and flexibility in the relationship.

9.2.1 Intercultural Competencies

Intercultural competencies have been well researched, particularly in higher education studies. Alred et al. (2006) emphasise that being intercultural involves:

> Questioning the conventions and values we have unquestioningly acquired as if they were natural; experiencing the Otherness of Others of different social groups, moving from one of the many in-groups to which we belong to one of the many out-groups that contrast with them; reflecting on the relationships among groups and the experience of those relationships; and analysing our intercultural experience and acting upon the analysis. (p. 1)

Thus, the focus of intercultural competencies should be to facilitate the increase in skills, the acquisition of knowledge, and the honing of attitudes that will engender individuals to become intercultural speakers. Alred et al. (2006) further assert the urgency for people to build these attributes due to global developments which "necessitate a thoughtful and systematic approach to intercultural citizenship education" (p. 3).

If "there are no obvious a priori grounds for claiming that a particular behavioral phenomenon is universal based on sampling from a single subpopulation" (Henrich et al. 2010, p. 61), there are also no grounds for assuming that the perspectives of one's own culture can be applied to other cultures, as supported by Deardorff's (2015) editorial on the future of intercultural research. She notes, "if a key element of intercultural competence is in seeing from others' perspectives, it becomes imperative that scholars indeed examine this concept from a wide variety of perspectives" (Deardorff 2015, p. 3)—particularly those that embody critical reflection as a methodology (Deardorff 2020, p. 9).

In their seminal work on intercultural sensitivity, Hammer et al. (2003) state that Bennett's developmental model of intercultural sensitivity (DMIS) "constitutes a progression of worldview 'orientations toward cultural difference' that comprise the potential for increasingly more sophisticated intercultural experiences" (p. 421). They go on to explain that "three ethnocentric orientations, where one's culture is experienced as central to reality (Denial, Defense, Minimization), and three ethnorelative orientations, where one's culture is experienced in the context of other cultures (Acceptance, Adaptation, Integration), are

identified in the DMIS" (Hammer et al. 2003, p. 421). The theoretical framework of the "Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI) was constructed to measure the orientations toward cultural differences" (Hammer et al. 2003, p. 421) explained in the DMIS, albeit with "Adaptation" being the final orientation in the "Intercultural Mindset" of the "Intercultural Development Continuum" (Hammer 2011, p. 475).

Browaeys and Price (2019) suggest identifying cultural values by plotting them on a cultural profile (p. 169). Although this does not offer the check-and-balance questions of the IDI, when overlapped with the country profile of one's business partner, it does provide an initial awareness of where issues may arise when working together. In a country-level analysis, this is similar to Meyer's (2014) culture mapping and Hofstede's (1998) view that "managing multinationals means accepting national culture differences and managing organizational culture differences" (p. 7) on which his county comparison tool is based. Where Browaey and Price's (2019) cultural profile differs from the country-level analysis, the possibility rises to identify individual nuances, such as in one's own relationship with time or hierarchy, which could, for example, have been influenced by having lived in multiple countries. In addition, it does not allow for cultural plurality within an individual, community, or country, thus creating space for generalisations or misattributions to occur.

In his influential work of analysing language, culture, and the embodied mind, Shaules (2019) states that "intercultural experiences provide us with an intuitive understanding of cultural difference, and allow us to recognize previously undiscovered cultural patterns in others and within ourselves" (p. 24). He further explains that "intuitive knowledge is developed through experience and pattern recognition—a process that can be both helped or hindered by conscious analysis and conceptual thinking" (Shaules 2019, p. 24). For deep learning to occur, there needs to be a "combination of analytic and intuitive processes" (Shaules 2019, p. 24). In a closer analysis of deeper learning and related experiential opportunities, he emphasises that "foreign travel and intercultural experiences are more deeply meaningful when they go beyond intellectual understanding or superficial cultural contact" (Shaules 2019, p. 25). Thus, it is not just the intercultural contact that is important but the meaning and deep learning about culture that can be a focus with international experiences.

What participants actually take along from their intercultural and international experiences may only surface in their consciousness when faced with real-life business decisions. This is supported by Jackson (2015) who states that education-abroad students have significant intercultural encounters, which may not be fully recognised until later in their careers (p. 98). Furthermore, the actual development of intercultural citizenship, although positively perceived by participants, has been found to be uneven during study abroad (Baker and Fang 2020, p. 1). Indeed, this is not surprising, as activating newfound intercultural and international leadership knowledge requires a context in which to use it, the flexibility to be able to employ it within organisational constraints, the trust and social capital to try things out, and the willingness as well as the ability to consciously adapt to situations and cultures.

The willingness to learn about other cultures and to be open to new information is key in international business. In order to maximize cross-cultural learning, Chwialkowska (2020) purports the "importance of getting out of one's comfort zone" (p. 1). Looking at the importance of intercultural knowledge and leadership skills for SMEs in both Switzerland and Canada aiming to expand their businesses globally, Farrar (2020) states that "a big part of making progress in the business world is making the best decisions possible with the information available" (p. 18). The complexity of making such decisions is underscored by Crossman and Clarke's (2010) findings which suggest that stakeholders highlight the connection between international experiences and career-oriented outcomes, such as "the forging of networks, opportunities for experiential learning, language acquisition and the development of soft skills related to cultural understandings, personal characteristics and ways of thinking" (p. 599). International study-abroad experiences as part of executive and higher education can provide opportunities for individuals to forge networks, engage in cross-cultural communication, and encounter intercultural knowledge through direct exposure to and immersion in lived experiences 'out of the comfort zone'.

9.2.2 Impact of Short-Term Intercultural Experiences

Going abroad for longer periods does not necessarily equate with an increase in intercultural competence and international leadership skills. Making a genuine effort to learn about a culture for however short a period can lead to an increase in intercultural awareness, including the understanding of commonalities and differences. Looking at short-term programmes abroad versus full single-semester study abroad, Potts (2020) confirms participants' perceptions of the positive impact of several short-term study-abroad programmes in terms of their employability skills. For some, this perception was reported as being higher than for those who participated in a single long-term programme. However, in her research on the impact of study-abroad programmes on participants' lives, Dwyer (2004) found that "more is better" in relation to "the duration of a study abroad experience" (p. 161).

In their research on "linguistic exchange activities and their impact on intercultural competence and the motivation to learn languages", Heinzmann et al. (2015) reported that "findings regarding duration suggest that a stay of 1–2 weeks is not particularly useful for the development of intercultural competence or motivation" (p. 40). Although these findings are specifically relevant for the language stays evaluated by the authors, they cannot be juxtaposed to the learning events associated with internationalising the VILW. While English is the language of communication during the preparation period prior to this week, during the actual week and throughout the post-week assignment, this language exposure can be considered an added benefit to the intercultural and international leadership content.

Studying participants reaping the benefits of well-structured short-term study-abroad programmes, Donnelly-Smith (2009) shares that faculty, administrators, and directors

generally "agree that students get the most out of short-term programs that are highly structured, require ongoing reflection, and include in-depth experience working or studying with host country participants" (p. 3). This is concurrent with Vertesi (2015), who states that "significant changes in attitudes, openness and intercultural perspective can occur even with a short period away" (para. 10).

9.2.3 Global Citizenship Competencies: Trust, Flexibility, and Dedicated Boundary Spanners

Schreier et al. (2020) studied international partnerships emergence and form in the context of Swiss and Thai small and mid-sized enterprises (SMEs). They remarked on the importance of trust in international partnerships, and how it can be developed ex ante, i.e. given in the early stages of a relationship—and/or ex post, i.e. developed over time. Although there is still a "relative absence of research exploring how cultural differences influence the formation and development of international trustworthy partnerships" (Schreier et al. 2020, p. 5), the gap has been identified (Mainela et al. 2014, p. 121). Trust is essential in successful network relationships because it can help secure insider positions in foreign networks (Johanson and Vahlne 2009). Potentially, numerous individuals could span the boundaries between organisations and forge trust; but, as Vanneste (2016) suggests, "dedicated boundary spanners" play a key role in this as they are "more closely involved in the interorganisational relationships" and "interact more frequently than other employees" (pp. 13–14).

Flexibility and open-mindedness towards other cultures are important for international leadership and citizenship. Equally important is having trustful relationships in which you can broach sensitive topics and difficult conversations in addition to considerations of viable alternative solutions to projects potentially affected by unknown factors, such as the pandemic in 2020 and 2021. Reflecting on how education systems have been disrupted as a result of COVID-19, MacIntyre et al. (2020) speak of the uncertainty that currently exists in global and local educational contexts. They further indicate that "responses to COVID-19 may be rewarding those teachers who show greater flexibility" (p. 23). Hence, for those who engage in global networking and create global opportunities, a mindset is required that is adaptable, flexible, and open-minded. Further, Levin and Kurtzberg (2020) advocate for sustaining networks while working virtually and using tools such as video-conferencing, because one's "undivided attention is a gift to others and will bolster relationships when you aren't able to interact in person" (section 5, para. 1). Thus, trust, flexibility, and engaging personally by using available tools can make a difference in international, collaborative co-leadership.

Current literature identifies many benefits of creating international experiences in higher and executive education. What is less clear is what is involved in collaboration and co-leadership across geographic boundaries for these international experiences. This study addresses this gap in the literature. Farrar and Saudelli use their own biographies

as sites for learning in this duoethnographic research study. While as scholars and educational leaders, we recognise that narrative forms of qualitative research remain, as Pinnegar and Daynes (2007) note, on the "margins of academic work" (p. 28), we also argue that "it offers sound methodological tools to the researcher who seeks to pay closer attention to the diversity of human experience" (McAlpine 2016, p. 16). In their research on managing relations across cultures, Spencer-Oatey and Kádár (2021) emphasize the need to acknowledge "personal histories" (p. 5) while exploring "how cultural identities and cultural patterning can affect the dynamics of interaction" (p. 6). In this duoethnography, we explore multiple perspectives related to our collaborative leadership and planning of the learning event, as we dialogue and question ourselves as well as our processes in relation to intercultural citizenship theory, study abroad, leadership, and internationalisation.

9.3   Research Methodology

This duoethnography explores the following research question: What can be learned about international leadership through an exploration of a 2-year time frame of collaborative co-leadership of the VILW for 2019, 2020, and 2021? Given this research question, a duoethnographic, qualitative methodology (Sawyer and Norris 2013) is appropriate. Duoethnography is a somewhat new qualitative research methodology that emanates from two narrative research approaches: Pinar's (1975, 2003) landmark concept of "currere", which is the framework for studying autobiographical reflections on educational experiences, engages in a storytelling approach to the research methodology. According to Norris et al. (2012), duoethnography is a collaborative, dialogical, rigorous methodology. Duoethnographers centre themselves as both researchers and participants in their studies (Sawyer and Norris 2013), thus interpreting meaning and "seeking critical tension, insights, and new perspectives" (p. 4) through their dialogue of their stories. This research method honours dialogic meaning-making with the researchers often transformed and empowered through research studies (e.g. Krammer and Mangiardi 2012; Lund and Veinotte 2010; Sawyer and Liggett 2012; Seidel and Hill 2015).

A duoethnographic approach is most appropriate for this study for multiple reasons. In a duoethnographic study, as collaborators share their stories, life histories, beliefs, and values, a key concept of "narrative unity" (Sawyer and Norris 2013, p. 10) emerges through dialogue focused on inquiry themes and questions. Duoethnography draws from traditions such as: ethnography with "thick descriptions" (Gertz 1973) of the sites of study; autoethnography with the emphasis on self-evaluation, description, and interpretive analysis (Chang 2008); and narrative inquiry with an emphasis on understanding storied experiences (Clandinin and Connelly 2000). The difference between duoethnography and these other methods of study is that duoethnography inquires about the ways in which individuals build and construct both narrative unity and disunity. As researchers dialogue and make their stories explicit, thus constructing, deconstructing, and reconstructing their storied experiences within the dialectic, critical conversations progress

and a growth in perspectives emerges. Imagination, new ways of perceiving the stories, beliefs, and values, as well as new stories emerge. In duoethnography, the aim is "to seek not categorical conclusions but rather exposure, transformation, and uncertainty" (Sawyer and Norris 2013, p. 11) by "critically juxtaposing their stories" (Roth 2005, p. 3). As such, the stories, life histories, beliefs, and dialogues of the researchers as participants frame the analyses.

In this duoethnography, the authors as researchers will "juxtapose their life histories in order to provide multiple understandings of a social phenomenon" (Norris et al. 2012, p. 1). These life histories are in essence stories of experiences the researchers use to reflect and reconceptualise their life history as well as their shared experiences and collaborations. According to the prominent scholars Higgins et al. (2018), the result is an awareness and potentially a "reformation of researcher/educator beliefs, values and ways of knowing as a result of thinking and writing about research in participatory ways" (p. 75). To achieve this, in this duoethnography, the researchers' ethnographies present their stories as texts "side by side, creating a hybrid text of alternating alliances promoting rigorous study as partners jointly reflect on, and (re) conceptualize, their life stories" (p. 75).

In this duoethnography, the authors present their stories by integrating significant aspects of their life histories as they engage in the joint planning of an international event involving their two respective universities and faculties. They then dialogue with each other about their stories, in essence using the dialogue to function "as a mediating device that assists researchers in examining the frames that they use to situate meaning" (Sawyer and Norris 2013, p. 4). First, the researchers engaged in a personal reflection and created vignettes of their experiences as academics who have crossed international borders to live, teach, and research in one or more settings different from those they lived in previously. In the case of Mary, over a 14-year period, she left her Canadian teaching career to live and teach in Turkey, Hong Kong, the United Arab Emirates, and Qatar. In 2016, she returned to Canada and accepted a position at UFV in British Columbia. Jillaine was born and raised in British Columbia, Canada, but left in 1989 for Switzerland, where she still lives, teaches, and researches. Both authors are highly involved in creating international educational experiences for participants at their respective universities. One of those experiences involves their collaborative co-leadership of the VILW for the Lucerne University of Applied Sciences and Arts executive-education participants at the School of Business, Institute of Business and Regional Economics.

Mary and Jillaine did not know each other prior to co-leading the planning of the VILW. After they will have documented their stories, they will engage in several critical dialogues to nuance each other's life-history experiences and shared experiences with planning the VILW events for 2019, 2020, and 2021. Thus, data collection and analysis in this qualitative study are storied, comparative, and reflective (Saldaňa 2012). Themes are analyzed by using axial and interpretive coding procedures of engaging and reviewing each other's stories, as well as their responses to the reflective inquiry for overlapping themes and principles. Then, themes and principles will be further codified, looking for values, beliefs, and changes in relation to conceptions of collaboration and leadership. These themes are

further analysed through a dialogue that elicits and explores the core of these ideals for these two international educational leaders. Thus, this research study presents emergent and reflective theorizing about collaborations in international higher-education leadership.

9.3.1 The Process of Reflection: Appreciative Inquiry Framework

Research that involves reflection needs a framework to guide systematic analysis. Appreciative Inquiry (AI) is a strengths-based framework for reflective inquiry (Stavros et al. 2015). AI can be used by individuals, teams, organisations, or at the societal level. In each case, it helps people move towards a shared vision for the future by engaging others in strategic innovation and reflective thought. AI represents a "fundamental shift in the overall perspective taken throughout the entire change process to 'see' the wholeness of the human system and to 'inquire' into that system's strengths, possibilities, and successes" (Stavros et al. 2015, p. 97). In his research on building social capital by using an AI mindset, Calabrese (2006) explains that "mutuality moves beyond the quid pro quo of transactional relationships into the context of transformational relationships where actions occur in each party's best interest without the demand for reciprocation" (p. 174). As educational leaders and collaborators, we naturally gravitated to an AI framework as it aligns with our views and experiences of internationalisation.

   AI is not a research method but a mindset and model of reflective inquiry. According to Cooperrider and Whitney (1999), the core principles of AI are: Constructionist, Simultaneity, Anticipatory, Poetic, and Positive. This means that educators and scholars who examine their work in internationalisation, leadership and collaboration must consider, reflect, and dialogue using these principles. Accordingly, the first principle is constructivist, which is described as representations of reality that are socially created through dialogue and language (Cooperrider and Whitney 1999). The second principle is simultaneity, or inquiry that creates change through meaningful and probing questions. The third principle is poetic: the choices we make regarding what we study. "Teams and organizations, like open books, are endless sources of study and learning. What we choose to study makes a difference. It describes—even creates—the world as we know it" (Perrakis & Scientific Partners n.d.). The fourth principle is anticipatory, or the images of the future that inspire action. "The more positive and hopeful the image of the future, the more positive the present-day action" (Cooperrider and Whitney 1999, p. 24). The fifth principle is positive: Positive questions lead to positive change. "Momentum for [small- or] large-scale change requires large amounts of positive affect and social bonding" (p. 25). As the researchers shared each other's life histories and engaged in their collaborative co-leadership of the VILW event (and further throughout this duoethnographic study), they followed these five principles of AI as they engaged in dialogical reflection into their international and collaborative approaches to co-leadership.

9.3.2   Limitations

Limitations of this study involve the typical limitations of any qualitative study. While illuminating, they are not intended to be generalizable. They represent the stories and meaning making of these two researchers, who came together in a collaboration, a shared co-leadership experience, and a duoethnographic research study. This research generates the proposition of theory, as opposed to positivistic assertions or cause-and-effect predictions. The purpose is to nuance the meaning of their shared experience to them, which may have resonance with others going through similar experiences, if not replication.

9.4   Our Stories

Given the nature of this study as a duoethnography, this section will use a storied approach to present Jillaine's Story, sharing some of her beliefs and values learned from crossing geographic borders, and then present Mary's Story by detailing some of her beliefs and values learned from crossing geographic borders. We will then proceed to share our story of collaboration and co-leadership in the planning of VILW for 2019, 2020, and 2021.

9.4.1   Jillaine's Story

The intercultural is an important part of my life, both privately and professionally. I have been teaching intercultural communication and English for Business to adults in Switzerland and internationally, in both higher education and corporate settings, for over two decades. My experiences as a qualified Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI) administrator have contributed to my belief in the importance of facilitating cooperative actions aimed towards intercultural growth and leadership development.

As vice president of SIETAR Switzerland, I am proud to have been involved in the strategising and planning of the successful 2020 congress on inclusion and intercultural topics, which had to be shifted to the online mode in autumn 2020 in a dispersed format due to the pandemic. The congress was suddenly accessible by the world and scholarships, made possible by congress sponsors, and evened the playing field for everyone who wanted to attend, regardless of their financial means. This is personally and professionally relevant for me as it is my way of giving my experience back to international and local communities. I have had the opportunity to learn from so many experts over the years who willingly shared their knowledge with me. Volunteering as a SIETAR Switzerland mentor and taking on the elected role of vice president has meant that I can help those newer to the field. My hope is that when they are well-established in their careers, they will consider doing the same, but this is just a hope and not an obligation.

My first experience with teaching was in Vancouver, Canada, where I grew up. While I was taking my initial Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) programme, I was a volunteer tutor for college participants who needed to prepare for their academic studies in English. Freshly married to a Swiss man who had been offered his dream job, I then moved to Switzerland. We had agreed to try living in Switzerland for 3 years. That was 31 October 1989. I am still living in Switzerland now and consider this my home. Earning my master's degree from the University of Manchester in the United Kingdom, the only geographically close (by Canadian thinking) degree programme of interest to me that I could access at that time in English added another layer of cultural experiences to my educational pathway. Crossing geographic borders in order to learn, live, and work has provided me with many opportunities to embody lived experiences interculturally. I have certainly made a considerable number of faux pas, but have turned these into learning experiences important for my growth mindset. These are what Joseph Shaules repeatedly referred to as "Oz Moments" in the Brain, Mind and Culture Masterclass I attended in autumn 2020 through the Japan Intercultural Institute. These situations may initially appear to lack any particular importance, but they are vivid memories. The name originates from The Wizard of Oz film, when Dorothy unexpectedly finds herself in a new place with new ways of doing things. Analysing these experiences highlighted for me how theory and practice go hand in hand to trigger deep cultural learning.

In addition to the Canadian and Swiss cultures, I have had the privilege to interact with many other cultures thanks to my position as Head of the Exchange Program, lecturer in the taught-in-English degree programmes, and Co-Head CAS International Leadership at the Institute of Business and Regional Economics, a part of HSLU-W. It is with the latter that I have the honour of working on the VILW with Mary Gene Saudelli. Interestingly, prior to my first contact with Mary, I had been told by a very dear, now retired colleague at UFV, John Potts, that he trusted her completely and therefore I should, too. This was a real-life ex-ante trust situation, where one 'gives' trust right at the beginning of a relationship because of the trust a common contact has explicitly stated, and I often refer to this in my lessons. Mary and I have now established ex-post trust, which is a natural outcome of working together well and, in our case, has facilitated further international activities, such as co-authoring this research study, and developed into a true friendship. This illustrates a fundamental value for me with regards to successful international collaboration. Not only is there potential for the relationship built on trust to evolve and become a reciprocal friendship, there is also an excellent scaffolding for future collaborations in business, within the universities and in research. Relationships matter.

9.4.2   Mary's Story

I spent most of my life dreaming of multiple worlds far away, people I could meet, lessons I could learn. Through my years as an undergraduate, I took courses in culture, geography, religion, and linguistics, always thinking about a chance to visit the incredible people and

places I studied. When I began my career as an educator, I felt like the whole world was now mine to experience, and I did. Every vacation began with a question: "Where do I want to go now?" I spent months backpacking through Europe, bartered in the souks (markets) in North Africa, snorkelled in the Caribbean, climbed the Great Wall of China, and appreciated museums, restaurants, and local people in every location along the way. But the time came when travelling as a tourist was not enough anymore. I needed to live as a participating member of society in places different from what I had known. I took a sabbatical from my position in Canada for a year-long teaching position in Istanbul, Turkey. One year later, I resigned from my position in Canada and continued in Istanbul for another year. Then I accepted a position in Hong Kong, embarked on a master's degree, and lived in another new environment. A few years later, I was offered and accepted a position at a governmental college in Abu Dhabi in the United Arab Emirates (UAE), and after another few years, transferred to Dubai (UAE). I simultaneously began a PhD, and by the time I was in Dubai, I was in the data collection and comprehensive examination period of my studies.

At my faculty position in Dubai, I was also in the role of curriculum team lead. Looking back, I often point to this period of time as one of the greatest professional experiences in my life for a number of reasons. First, Dubai as an Emirate and a city was undergoing significant and rapid change. It was an incredible mix of diverse people (i.e. Emiratis who are the citizens of the Emirates and the Indigenous peoples of the UAE, expatriates, tourists to Dubai) and a rapidly changing social, political, and economic context. The UAE is also an Islamic and Arab region, and all aspects of a learning life must embrace this as a norm. Thus, the focus of curricula across the institution was on women, leadership, change, culture, Emiratisation (emphasis on Emiratis in leadership positions), Islam, interculturality and internationalisation, all of which became the subject of my PhD.

At the Higher Colleges of Technology (HCT) with a particularly diverse international team of faculty, I realised the salient learning that comes from leaving your comfort zone to experience real change. I realised how building relationships and learning about each other in this context were the starting points to any and all endeavours. At HCT, the curriculum redesign involved collaboration from faculty as well as from the private and public sectors, as the programme was trans-disciplinary, experiential, and transformative. The curriculum involved team-teaching, task- and project-based learning, as well as the integration of themes of empowerment, feminism, global civic mindedness, and leadership. The faculty with whom I worked were both Emirati nationals and people from across the globe, many holding citizenships in multiple countries. The diversity of perspectives as we designed and delivered the curriculum was captivating. The approach among all of us, and with participants, was premised on relationships and building trust, and time spent learning about each other was central to beginning any endeavour. To me, this is the power of international education, the power of diversity, and the power of relational collaboration across cultures, disciplines, geographies, nationalities, networks, ways of being, ways of doing, and ways of knowing—it all came together during this phase of my life.

Now I am Associate Dean in the Faculty of Professional Studies (FPS) at UFV in Canada, a role I assumed on October 1, 2018. The FPS consists of the Schools of Business, Social Work, and Computing, as well as the Departments of Teacher Education, Adult Education, Child Youth and Family Studies, and Information Studies. Across these Schools and Departments, my portfolio has three main areas: faculty development, internationalisation, and Indigenisation. This involves working across the faculty to support new programme development, curriculum reviews, international opportunities and learning, as well as Indigenisation across curriculum and learning. For me, this means the integration across disciplines of opportunities for diverse and empowering learning experiences, in addition to embodying an agenda conducive to valuing multiple worldviews, diverse ideas, reciprocity of learning, and approaches, as well as ultimately, in my view, building lasting relationships among people who value global civic-mindedness. Relationships matter.

9.4.3 Our Story, Mary's and Jillaine's Collaboration in the VILW

We, Jillaine and Mary, already knew of each other before we first met in person or interacted through digital tools. Just after Mary had begun her role at UFV, a colleague, John Potts, requested a meeting to discuss the VILW partnership with HSLU-W in Lucerne, Switzerland. Jillaine was a friend of his and his contact in Switzerland. The upcoming VILW was scheduled for September 29 to October 4, 2019. As Mary was new in the role, she felt it was a good time to look at the plans and organisation of VILW with a vision to refresh and consider new ideas. John suggested that he could connect Mary with Jillaine in Switzerland. During our collaboration, and throughout our research study, three themes evolved: aspirations and expectations through relationship-building; honesty, openness, and listening as co-leaders of an international collaboration; and maintaining the relationship and planning over time.

9.4.3.1 Aspirations and Expectations Through Relationship-Building

After John had introduced us to each other via e-mail, we scheduled the first of many digital synchronous video chats. The first few digital interactions focussed on getting to know each other and discovering that we had both experienced leaving all we knew to embrace life in a different social, cultural, political, and geographical context—not as tourists, but as participating members of society. We shared stories of our experiences, the kind of stories we could both fully appreciate given the nature of our lived experiences.

For example, Mary shared the story of the Emirati graciousness in the UAE and how she once had to navigate the complexity of refusing the gift of a Lamborghini car from a student's family in an Arab culture. Gift-giving is an important part of Arab graciousness, which is welcoming and sincere. As an educator, Mary has been given tokens of appreciation, such as flowers or chocolates in the past, feeling pleasantly grateful. She had never lived in a wealthy country like the UAE, nor had she ever encountered the great respect for

teachers that is a part of Arab culture. Thus, when her appreciative student attempted to give her the generous gift of a luxury car, she was utterly overwhelmed, uncertain, and worried about the extravagance of the gift. Mary was also aware that refusing a gift in this culture was considered offensive, so she did not know how to handle the situation. Mary went to the Emirati leadership in the institution and asked for advice and intervention. She was shocked when asked: "And you do not wish to accept?" That was when Mary realised that in this gracious culture, the gift was truly intended to be just that: a gift. Ultimately, the Emirati leadership managed the situation in a manner that was culturally appropriate, explaining to the student and her powerful father that Mary could not accept the generous gift but that she was humbled and appreciative of their thoughtfulness.

Jillaine shared an anecdote from the beginning of her career in Switzerland. She was proudly lecturing in her first full-time bachelor's degree class 20 years ago as a part-time lecturer when, as was the norm, she received an unannounced visit from her superior. He, now retired, is someone she considers a friend as well as a very respected professional colleague, but at that time he was clearly a superior, whom she hardly knew. After he had monitored her lesson for the entire session from the back of the room, they met in his office for debriefing and feedback. He said something to the effect of: "Ms Farrar, your lesson was very well prepared, you had very good rapport with the students, everyone was there and clearly learning, there were no problems, except" (here her heart stood still) "we do not use first names with the bachelor students." In her cultural naivety back then, she argued that she was teaching English for Business and that the culture in the classroom was a part of this. It was made clear to her that this was Switzerland, not Canada. She had a learning experience about fitting into institutional cultures while still trying to integrate the essential intercultural aspects with the English-for-Business teaching she was doing at the time. They compromised, which turned out to be a communality with the Swiss and Canadian cultures, with Jillaine using first names for that full semester and surnames with future bachelor students.

Through our sharing of these stories and our corresponding dialogue of the cultural implications, we realised that we share values and beliefs that impact our co-leadership of the VILW. We now realise that we are both continuing our own intercultural learning. We cherish our experiences living international lives, where uncertainty, worry, and mistakes are part of the value of these lived experiences. This has led to a dialogue of how both of us appreciate the value of a growth mindset from exploring beyond individual comfort zones of life, and how we both believe that higher education students need these kinds of international educational experiences as part of their learning. Although aspirational, this was a shared commitment to what we could achieve when managing the design of our VILW, how we would work together with our respective teams, and what we wanted this experience to look like. We consider ourselves international citizens, international educators, and international leaders. We share aspirations and expectations related to learning from our international experiences.

As we continued to engage, our interactions shifted to discussions of our upcoming Vancouver Week. Jillaine spoke of the history of the programme (9 years in running at that

time), and Mary shared her thoughts on her review of the previous 2 years of the programme as well as her desire to give it a refresh with a contemporary vision. The theme throughout the previous years had been *Vancouver as the Asian-Pacific Gateway*, which was to be maintained due to stakeholder expectations, but Mary felt that sustainability and environmentalism could be woven throughout this main theme. During our discussion, it was decided to bring into the international experience aspects of government, education, and industry as being interconnected and integral to the concept of sustainability: a facet of education where the UFV School of Business has specific expertise.

As brainstorming continued, we realised we were generating a new story for our VILW—one that reflected the aspirations and expectations we value as international higher-education leaders. Moving forward, Mary indicated that she would bring together the planning team at UFV to engage in the further brainstorming and planning of the refreshed approach to the VILW. Both of us agreed that Mary would be the primary point of contact with the planning team, in order to avoid confusion and to streamline collaboration. Possibly we also just wanted to continue speaking to each other regularly as we collaborated on this exciting annual event.

9.4.3.2 Honesty, Openness and Listening as Co-leaders of an International Collaboration

The planning of an event such as the VILW involves many people, many meetings, and many details. Mary held frequent meetings with the planning team (which included John Potts who graciously volunteered his time and energy) which presented ideas, possibilities, and connections. During the brainstorming sessions with the planning committee at UFV, various options and network connections were explored, from an industry visit to the Vancouver Port Authority to attendance of a session at the Cultural Centre in Whistler, British Columbia. The planning committee had a vast network of connections throughout BC, and we wanted to bring a new angle to the event. The planning committee welcomed the integration of industry, government, academics, and culture. On a monthly basis, Mary openly shared all of the team's ideas with Jillaine for her thoughts. Jillaine shared her opinions on these ideas honestly with a nuanced awareness of the circumstances of the participants attending this event, their industry experiences, and their engagement with their graduate learning. Interestingly, almost all of our communications were via scheduled, synchronous digital video chat, rather than e-mail. Jillaine's feedback was discussed with Mary, who took note of the distinctive lens Jillaine shared as a Canadian and Swiss national.

Listening carefully to Jillaine's contributions, and sharing these openly with the working group, allowed for a revision process of reciprocity and intercultural learning across the international team. Jillaine shared her embodiment of Swiss cross-cultural aspects such as time management, professionalism, structure, and discourse. Moreover, she shared nuanced understandings regarding cultures: Swiss, Swiss-German, and Canadian. We shared our cross-cultural thoughts regarding feminism as well as trends about women in

graduate schools and industry, cultural blunders, and the ease with which these may happen, as well as micro-aggressions that can occur.

Mary also travelled to Lucerne, Switzerland, and spent some time immersed in Swiss culture, which was integral for her to thinking through the planning of the VILW. This was the first time we met in person, although we felt we already knew each other well. Jillaine had made arrangements for scheduled events while Mary was on campus at HSLU-W. Mary delivered presentations about full-semester exchange opportunities at UFV, about British Columbia, and the executive programme, VILW. Furthermore, she met with the primary leaders involved in the institutional partnership with UFV. Mary felt honoured to have met the principles and to have been received graciously by them, even though she knew some discussions could directly address issues of non-reciprocal agreements, especially at the executive level. Specifically, while HSLU-W had paid to send executive participants to UFV in Canada, UFV had not reciprocated equally by sending participants to Lucerne. This was raised, and Mary openly acknowledged and expressed her desire to change this inequity, sharing ideas to encourage Canadian students to go to Lucerne—and receiving feedback on those ideas. At the bachelor's level, exchanges had already become reciprocal, which was considered a positive achievement.

In discussions, Jillaine, with her nuanced awareness of Swiss culture, shared and deconstructed the interactions for which Mary had engaged. This was integral as Mary not only learned important cultural considerations impacting their collaboration from a Swiss cultural perspective, but she began establishing relationships with the leaders at HSLU-W. This led to Mary's idea to include in the VILW programme a lunch event with the President of UFV and to invite the Mayor of Abbotsford, BC to attend, thus extending the relationship of our two universities, our communities, our collaboration, and our co-leadership of collaborative teams.

Ultimately, the revision and refresh of our VILW was a success due to the brainstorming, honesty, openness, and efforts of the collaborative international team, including the planning team at UFV. As usual at the end of the week, we debriefed immediately with members of the planning team, this time including Prof. Dr. Ingo Stolz, who attended the VILW for the first time in 2019. This debrief explored each event, each speaker, the schedule, the timetable, and all of the interactions, including anonymous participant feedback. Our debriefings were an exercise in honesty, openness, and listening from all who are committed to the reciprocity of learning through international experiences. Feedback was specific, operational, and did not stray from difficult conversations, but we all approached these talks with honesty, integrity, and goodwill due to the relationship that had been established. Relationships matter.

9.4.3.3 The Relationship Continues as Co-leaders and Collaborators

Following the success of the VILW 2019, we maintained our relationship across the digital space. When 2020 planning began, the world correspondingly became more complicated with reports of an emerging pandemic. Would participants be able to travel across geographical boundaries in September 2020? How about 2021? Suddenly, a limitless

world was rife with boundaries, restrictions, and confusion across every aspect of daily life. In March 2020, We scheduled a video conference call to catch up with each other and to discuss the ramifications of COVID-19. In a brainstorming session with the planning team, we discussed options for the VILW and whether a quality experience could be arranged digitally to fulfil the needs of the participants and the universities within such a short planning time. Ultimately, the Vancouver Week 2020 was postponed for 1 year due to federal quarantine and travel restrictions.

The two of us embarked on this duoethnographic study of our lived experiences with planning the VILW, an effort mired with complex decisions of how to create a profound learning experience in a boundaryless world, while dealing with a pandemic. Throughout the summer of 2020, synchronous chats continued as we shared our stories, interrogated our perceptions, explored values and beliefs, and engaged in this research. We soon realised that we shared many commonalities beyond being international citizens and educators, both personally and professionally. While leadership and culture were important mutual interests, as are the ways we continually strive to support others in their intercultural and international leadership journeys. In fact, dealing with a pandemic heightened those beliefs and values significantly. Indeed, relationships do matter.

9.5   Implications and Discussion

The findings of this duoethnography highlight several important implications for international collaborations and leadership. Readers have learned the following: the value to be derived from the deep analysis of life histories as a background for relational dynamics that emerge in collaborative teams; the value of individual and dialogical reflection for collaborative co-leadership; and the value of using a duoethnographic methodology to explore international and collaborative co-leadership.

9.5.1   Life Histories and Relational Dynamics in Collaborative Leadership: Trust in a Boundaryless World

In our collaboration, planning began early in February 2019 and started with our relationship, intuitively rather than as an expressed agenda. While it started with an introduction by John Potts via e-mail, almost all of our conversations took place via video chat, though not for any reason we determined at the time; and they began with stories of introduction, which meant primarily sharing life histories right from the beginning of the collaboration. We agree with Levin and Kurtzberg (2020) who stress the importance of sustaining networks while working virtually and specifically state: "Keeping your own and your organization's ties positive and productive through periods of sustained virtual work will allow these valuable interpersonal networks to survive and even thrive" (section 5, para. 2). In our findings, we determined that there are two important considerations: First, while

e-mail is a valuable tool, for collaborative relationships to form and build across a boundaryless world, personal interactions via synchronous video chat were crucial to share personal life histories as we did. It is unlikely that interaction via e-mail would have resulted in the same personal and deep communication. Second, building and maintaining trust in the interaction opens up space for complicated and difficult conversations to occur.

When crossing cultural and geographic borders, trust can enable an insider position in a foreign network (Johanson and Vahlne 2009, p. 1417). Trusting each other meant that we had this insider position in both of our university contexts. As Schreier et al. (2020) point out in the context of SME international network development, "trust in new partners needs to emerge and develop" (p. 91). They further found that "network relationships are based on mutual trust, knowledge as well as knowledge exchange, and commitment towards each other" (p. 102). We found this to be present due to the planning of the VILW, the planning as a result of the pandemic, and through this research study, which allowed space of our cultural lens to contribute to our planning processes.

In the first few interactions, we endeavoured to learn about the aspirations and expectations we each have in our partnerships, collaborations, and relationships as international citizens and educators. The effort we engaged contributed to the trust we had for and with each other. While the relationship may have begun with an ante-trust situation, it evolved to become a relationship of post-trust, professional trust, and friendship trust. The trusting, collaborative relationship created the space for a level of honesty and open dialogue that contributed to the brainstorming, planning, and feedback process of leading international teams for the VILW 2019. As we had both traversed the globe living and learning along the way, we openly discussed the various lenses we bring to our international collaborations: a Canadian lens, a Swiss lens, and an international lens. This perspective is supported by Spencer-Oatey and Kádár (2021) who note that cultural encounters are considered co-constructed but highlight that their approach takes this a step further as it "combines acknowledgment of personal histories with the dynamics of interaction" (pp. 5–6).

In these moments, we ensured time zone differences were accommodated: Some conversations occurred early in the morning and some in the evening, but we treasured these times as opportunities for like-minded global leaders to build a mutually respectful relationship with each other, valuing time, effort, stories, and ideas. This is noteworthy as it ties in with Shaules's (2019) work on how cultural understanding, from the neurocognitive perspective, includes reading patterns and interpreting situations (p. 30). Interestingly, while interculturalists can be insightful about culture without having studied cultural concepts, it is also possible for them to study cultural concepts and "have only shallow intercultural insights" (Shaules 2019, p. 30). Empathy and trust are a part of this. Although empathy, i.e. sharing and feeling for others, is universal in human psychology, it is not necessarily automatic in all situations (Zaki 2014, p. 1608; Shaules 2019, p. 37), or across all cultural interactions and situations (Saudelli 2015). We find this relevant because while it is not realistic to think we can erase our cultural biases, we can seek to understand how

we function, how others function, and how we can function together. We concur with Shaules (2019) that understanding cultures can be conceptual or deep (p. 30). Moreover, we believe that a judicious mix of both conceptual and deep learning are essential, and therefore, educators collaboratively co-leading international experiences need to integrate this into intercultural learning opportunities and international leadership programmes.

9.5.2   Individual and Dialogical Reflection in Collaborative Co-leadership

The need for open communication, active listening, valuing the various cultural lenses brought to the collaborative process, and engaging in constructive debriefing and feedback cannot be underscored enough. As leadership continues to encounter difficult decisions and circumstances in a boundaryless world, there will be increasingly complex times when difficult conversations must happen. While we refer to them as "difficult conversations", they, in fact, do not need to be difficult at all if the leaders embrace them as with a mindset of AI (Stavros et al. 2015).

In this study, we have naturally gravitated to an appreciative approach in relation to the collaboration and our knowledge, skills, and international cultural competencies, which helped guide us through any moments when difficult conversations occurred. As we engaged in our co-leadership over the last 3-plus years, our dialogues, even the difficult ones, embodied all principles of AI (Gohain 2020; Srivastva and Cooperrider 1999; Stavros et al. 2015). The result was our professional relationship, initially based on collaboration, trust and respect, ultimately an international friendship. Further, through our stories, we discovered our mutual beliefs in the necessity of international collaboration, intercultural competencies, and leadership. Thus, we assert that an AI framework is a means to approach the complexity of international, intercultural citizenship efforts (Byram 2008, 2014; Deardorff 2015, 2020).

This study highlights the value of reflection in international leadership: individually and dialogically. We began as two like-minded educational leaders who live international lives and value the learning that comes with a boundaryless world. We recognize the importance of how our relationship formed, evolved, and strengthened through our analysis of our reflections. Reflecting on our lived leadership experiences, including our collaborative co-leadership, provided new insights to both of us. We discovered more about each other personally, in terms of our beliefs in relation to intercultural competencies, our leadership, and commonalities beyond our professions as scholars and leaders in internationalisation.

9.5.3   Duoethnographic Research Methodology and International Collaborative Co-leadership

This study demonstrates the importance of duoethnographic studies (Norris et al. 2012) in leadership and international education particularly as we move forward as a global

community to unite and resolve issues that have a global scope and which requires a mindset of global citizenship. There is a demonstrable gap in the literature of leadership and internationalisation as explored through duoethnography or other forms of reflective research. These co-researchers, co-leaders, and collaborators shared their life histories and systematically analysed their stories to come to a deep and meaningful vision of their relationship. Duoethnography goes beyond reflection as a form of research methodology (Norris et al. 2012); it offers a systematic means of studying life histories, relationships, co-leadership, and collaborations in a boundaryless world. As global citizens and global leaders, duoethnography offers a method for deep awareness—not only for the individuals involved in the study but from the communication of different ways of being, different ways of knowing, and different ways of leading, all of which contributes to a global mindset (Saudelli 2015). Education for intercultural citizenship postulates that learners can, in addition to learning active citizenship in their own country, acquire the knowledge and skills necessary to act in a community which is multicultural as well as international and comprises more than one set of cultural values, beliefs, and behaviours (Alred et al. 2006).

It is because relationships matter in a boundaryless world that we specifically identify the importance of intercultural training. We agree with Vouillemin (2020) who states that "cultural training is an aspect of management training, not an extension of language training, although understanding something about the language and even speaking it is important in avoiding misunderstandings and communication breakdown" (p. 10). There were many moments when a communication breakdown or a misunderstanding could have negatively impacted our collaboration and planning for the VILW, but both of us are interculturally open-minded due to having lived international experiences, making mistakes along the way, and consciously learning from them. Ultimately, we have thrived from living, learning, and leading in a boundaryless world.

9.6   Conclusions

This study uses a duoethnographic methodology to edify the collaboration of two international educational leaders over a 3-year period of time, encompassing the planning of an international event, the VILW, as well as both institutional and national responses to a global pandemic. They discovered that ultimately, relationships matter in collaboration and co-leadership—with trust, honesty, intercultural awareness, and personal interactions framing how their relationship developed. Both authors believe even more fervently in the need for global collaboration, global leadership, and embracing cross-cultural competencies in order to be effective global citizens and leaders. In a boundaryless world, relationships matter.

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