INTROSPECTIVE INTERACTIONS: IMPLICATIONS FROM AN INTERNATIONAL COLLABORATION

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ABSTRACT

Research has found that online student-peer interactions enrich pedagogy so that students deliberate introspectively and coproduce meaningful content. This research evaluates student peer reflective interactions through an online collaboration in an identical course among students across international boundaries. Significant evidence reveals that students deliberate with academic reflectivity by clarifying and debating the questions asked of them while being inquisitive and tolerant of differing ideas. This study concludes that online collaborations are a viable means to engage students with academic content regardless of international boundaries.

Keywords: online learning, international pedagogy, online collaboration

INTRODUCTION

Considerable empirical research finds that deliberation is a process to voice perspectives freely, to be open-minded to the perspectives of others, and to understand and respect differences that include an element of self-reflectiveness (Chadha, 2020; Gutmann & Thompson, 1996; Myers & Mendelberg, 2013). Therefore, at its core, genuine deliberation involves carefully listening to others, reflecting on their ideas and arguments, and adding information to further the dialogue while seeking clarification of (dis)similar viewpoints (Bozanta & Mardikyan, 2017; Chadha, 2019b; Chadha, 2020; Chu et al., 2017; Dixon, 2010; Elder & Paul, 2020; Pukdesree, 2017; Rowntree, 1995; Saunders, 1992).

This is not to say that a peer agrees only with other peer perspectives, but as they reflect on knotty issues they ask each other questions to clarify varied perspectives (Ashby et al., 2011; Chadha, 2020; Hsiao, 2012; Rogerson-Revell, 2015) while being tolerant and respectful of differing viewpoints (Chadha, 2019a; Wiecha et al., 2003). With the reciprocal process of asking questions and answering it themselves, revisiting previous ideas if necessary, and clarifying their perspectives, students “expand their knowledge base together” (Angelino et al., 2007, p. 10).

Much research finds that deliberative interactions, which naturally occurs in face-to-face classes, are nurtured online in part due to the asynchronous design of online spaces. Asynchrony provides students with the time to think and then respond at their convenience and in a manner of their choosing, allowing for greater time to reflect, synthesize, and communicate content after reflecting and searching for information (Anderson, 2003; Boud et al., 2014; Chadha, 2019d; Elder & Paul, 2020). Students report their appreciation for the delay in response, which affords them time to reflect before they write (Hill et al., 2009). Moreover, with asynchrony narrowing the dialogue between just those students who are present, the exchange becomes a continuous conversation (Rudestam & Schoenholtz-Reed, 2009) in which they engage deeply with ideas, take the time to formulate a response, and respond with reflectiveness (Chadha, 2019c; Skylar, 2009; Van Deursen & Helsper, 2015). What is more, as students deliberate with peers who are not in a position of authority, they challenge each other to think more deeply and to share their unreserved experiences. These benefits have led to talkative and inquisitive interactions over varied perspectives, cultural nuances, and more (Boud et al., 2014; Chadha, 2019c; Chadha, 2020).

In addition, online environments provide for
the anonymity of the participants (i.e., their race, ethnicity, religion, gender, geographic location, cultural nuances, and course level), and shifts the focus to the content rather than the identity of the sender (Herring, 1993). With this focus on the content in a culture of students who are “always-on,” talkative, inquisitive, and deliberative communities have ballooned that facilitate the sharing and exploring of information as if they were across the room from each other without having to be friends first (Bozanta & Mardikyan, 2017; Chadha, 2019a; Chadha, 2020; Dixson, 2010; Pukdesree, 2017).

These multiple benefits of online interactive media have transformed the “ecology of learning” among students no matter where they live. Research consistently demonstrates that courses that involve students interacting with other students online at differing universities across geographical boundaries reported high levels of satisfaction and deeper critical learning than courses without interaction (Chadha, 2019d; Chadha, 2020). A twelve-year study on collaborations across varied universities across the United States found that, in fact, online collaborations have led to academic reflectivity among participants as they deliberated across the entire semester (Chadha, 2019b; Chadha, 2019c; Chadha, 2019d; Chadha, 2020). A study of over ten countries found that those involved in peer collaborative learning were more successful in enhancing students’ critical thought as they formulate, state their opinions, listen to opposing viewpoints, and appreciate multiple perspectives versus those not involved in peer deliberative learning strategies (Stephan & Vogt, 2004).

Unsurprisingly, there is an abundance of research on deliberative collaborations among students across universities on the same continent, yet little to no research exists on international collaborations (Rogers et al., 2007; Stephan & Vogt, 2004; Tapanes et al., 2009). With the growth in educational technology and a cross-cultural market, a call has been issued for research with statistically significant findings on international collaborations (Chadha, 2019a; Myers & Mendelberg, 2013; Rogers et al., 2007; Tapanes et al., 2009). This research is long overdue as differences across culture and/or language do not imply a difficulty of expression or that there is little desire to share, express, and deliberate effectively (Hofstede et al., 2005; Myers & Mendelberg, 2013). Moreover, with web access readily available and an “always on” culture that encourages deliberations, research has been negligent in addressing international collaborations (Anderson, 2003; Chadha, 2019c; Chadha, 2019d; Power & St-Jacques, 2014).

This study answers that call. This is an online collaboration across two countries that are considered the world’s most wired countries due to their pervasive web culture, that of the United States and South Korea (Han, 2002; Kim, 2002). An online collaboration was thus created, one that was designed for interactivity in a format that would be familiar and comfortable for students in an identical course with identical course requirements taught at a university in the United States and at a university in South Korea over an overlapping semester.

Four research questions were examined:

1. Would students respond to peers across the countries, not just in their own country or class, with academic reflectivity?
2. Would students respond to each current event or controversial question asked of them with academic reflectivity?
3. Would students interact by challenging, arguing, and teaching each other with academic reflectivity?
4. Would students be inquisitive and talkative about the issues by interacting with academic reflectivity?

Using past research, academic reflectivity encompassed six variables meaning that students had reflected, deliberated, or reconsidered their own views and others’ views when they responded to questions or commented on peer posts (Chadha, 2019a; Chadha, 2019d; Englund, 2006).

This research is significant for several reasons. First, it expands upon this growth of online deliberative collaborations. Second, it responds to a large number of calls for research on international online collaborations (Chadha, 2019b; Myers & Mendelberg, 2013; Rogers et al., 2007; Tapanes et al., 2009). Third, as little to no research exists on collaborations in an identical educational class across two different countries, this research is not only unique, it is significant.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Deliberation, a process of engaging
constructively yet critically with each other’s ideas while treating everyone’s ideas as worthy of consideration, has evolved considerably over time. For instance, there was “thinking together” research, which was a means to build and develop student knowledge (Mercer, 2010; Mercer & Hodgkinson, 2008; Rojas-Drummond et al., 2010). Then there was “exploratory talk” where students talked and articulated their knowledge and sought out information mediated by reasoned discussions (Knight & Mercer, 2015; Littleton & Howe, 2010; Mercer & Hodgkinson, 2008).

The wide-ranging benefits of online spaces allows for anyone anywhere to participate in an equal and open-minded dialogue about an issue (Cohen, 1989; Gutmann & Thompson, 1996; Myers & Mendelberg, 2013). With thoughtful evaluation of the evidence, reflection, consideration of ideas, and clarification of their own thoughts by students while responding meaningfully in online spaces, deliberative research has ballooned over the years (Chadha, 2019d; Fischer & Hänze, 2019; Garrison et al., 2003; Gurin et al., 2004; Herring, 1993; Kiesler et al., 1984; Stitzlein, & West, 2014; Zuniga & Berger, 2005).

**Mode of Instruction**

Researchers find that when comparing online courses to traditional face-to-face courses, online interactive deliberative forums perform similar duties as face-to-face deliberations (Chadha, 2019a; Delli & Keeter, 1996; Ellis et al., 2006; Keramidas, 2012; Pollock & Wilson, 2002). Also, the online learning format leads to deeper understanding, stronger motivation, and greater development of competencies, in comparison to traditional teaching formats. Numerous studies confirm that retention rates in online courses are on par with face-to-face modes, with no significant differences in their course outcomes (Baek et al., 2012; Chung & Han, 2013; Ellis et al., 2006; Eom & Ashill, 2016; Jaggers, 2014; Pape, 2010; Wladis et al., 2015). And high levels of student satisfaction, improved knowledge scores, and greater understanding of concepts in online courses have been reported (Chadha, 2019a; Chadha, 2020; Wiecha et al., 2003).

**Online Benefits**

In fact, with the unfettered growth of online technologies across the world, alongside the benefits online spaces offer such as time to think, reflect, and process, students are more talkative, expressive, and curious when sharing and discussing issues (Chadha, 2019d; Chadha, 2020; Mercer et al., 2019; Knight & Mercer, 2015; Mercer & Littleton, 2019; Pamental, 1998; Stitzlein & West, 2014). They take time to listen to others and explain ideas while treating each idea as worthy of consideration and explicitly examining their assumptions and perspectives before responding (Chadha, 2019a; Chadha, 2019c; Myers & Mendelberg, 2013).

In doing so, theorists believe that deliberation increases tolerance for opposing views by increasing awareness of the reasons underlying these views (Gutmann & Thompson, 1996; Myers & Mendelberg, 2013). Moreover, as students are afforded anonymity online without regard to their race, class, age, or geographic and or cultural differences, they are more comfortable asking and responding to questions of any kind—current or controversial—while sharing their viewpoints (Chadha, 2019c).

**Peer-to-peer Asset**

Besides, as students deliberate with peers without being in a position of authority, they identify with each other, which allows for candid and often talkative deliberations (Boud et al., 2014; Chadha, 2019c; Garrison et al., 2003). Their relationships are further strengthened as they use personal experiences in conversations, such as serving in the military or being a single mom, and motivate each other to visit and revisit deliberations, strengthening not only interpersonal bonds but deliberative and frank discussions (Boud et al., 2014; Chadha, 2020).

**Location/Cultural Nuances Irrelevant**

Researchers note that online benefits, as well as peer connectedness, allow for lengthy and chatty deliberations among peers from diverse backgrounds and experiences no matter their identity, where they live, their cultural/ethnic nuances, and more (Chadha, 2019c; Gurin et al., 2004; Thakur, 2012). Further, neither language nor cultural differences influence participation patterns online (Rogers et al., 2007; Tapanes et al., 2009).

In this regard, there is greater acceptance of differences among the students, including tolerance of diverse viewpoints and cultural or language nuances as they deliberate over the content no matter the identity of the sender nor
their geographic location (Hardy & Scheufele, 2005; Zuniga & Berger, 2005). Actually, in cases where cultural, ethnic, racial, or gender differences or experiential backgrounds differ, peer-to-peer deliberations online have been strongly related to positive educational outcomes (Andriessen et al., 2013; Astin, 1997; Barr & Tagg, 1995; Bender, 2012; Chadha, 2019a; Chadha, 2020; Jankowski & Van Os, R., 2004; Karlsson, 2010; Milem, 1994; Terenzini & Pascarella, 1991; Wright, 2006).

Site Familiarity Allowing for Expression

Furthermore, deliberative interactions are further strengthened by supportive instructional presence and structured educational expectations (Chadha, 2019a; Cho et al., 2018; Evans et al., 2017; Garrison et al., 2003; Lorenzo & Ittelson, 2005). In addition, the design of an online site that is familiar and conducive to deliberation allows for a sense of comfort for students to deliberate over divergent issues (Chadha, 2019d; Chadha, 2020; Garrison et al., 2003).

Limits

While online academic collaborations are distinctive and sound in their offerings, they are not without limits. One of the limits in online collaborations is the physical and temporal separation of instructor and student and between the students themselves, which can lead to feelings of isolation (Croft et al., 2010). Researchers suggest a range of possibilities to address isolation such as creating online activities that translate virtually into an impression of a “real” person, e.g., peer discussions (Dixson, 2010; Kehrwald, 2008). Anderson (2003) suggested that in interacting with peers online communities of learning are created that lessen learner isolation. Croft et al. (2010) suggested using “staging points” to encourage, motivate, and humanize the material.

Another limit to online collaboration is that of access to technology. Increasingly, research finds that the access issue does not exist as the global community is familiar with accessing the technologies, which is especially true with the digitally attuned Americans and South Koreans (Rogers et al., 2007; Tapanes et al., 2009). A third limit is that of cultural nuances as expressed in online spaces, but cultural nuances do not pose a limit between these two countries except for the celebration of varied holidays and events; therefore, this does not pose a limit for online deliberations (Han, 2002; Kim, 2002).

Calls for Research

Deliberative research has grown in its abundance alongside the growth of technology across the world. Furthermore, there is a wealth of research in support of online collaborations across universities in different time zones that involve student interactive collaborations (Chadha, 2019a; Chadha, 2020). However, there is little to no research on international collaborations, despite the physical, social, or political location being irrelevant when online, that allows for content centered deliberative dialogue (Chadha, 2019c; Duesbery et al., 2019; Myers & Mendelberg, 2013).

A call was issued to expand the research in the field of online deliberations (Chadha, 2020; Hamann, et al., 2009; Jaggars, 2014; Lou et al., 2001; Russell, 1999). There is an additional call that research is long overdue on international collaborations because differences across culture and/or language do not affect the desire to share, express, and deliberate ideas (Chadha, 2019c; Hofstede et al., 2005; Rogers et al., 2007; Tapanes et al., 2009).

PURPOSE OF THE CURRENT STUDY

This study contributes to and answers this double call, one to the scarcity of research on student deliberations internationally and the second for research with statistically significant results to the field of online deliberative research. Moreover, this research is critical to those interested in providing educationally rigorous multidisciplinary courses, such as policymakers and university administrators’ desire to globalize their university mission.

Therefore, the central aim of this research was to analyze one semester of student peer discussions in an online collaborative web space offered in an identical class across a large, public U.S. urban university in Texas and a large, public U.S. urban university in Seoul, South Korea. Four research questions guided this study. (1) Would students respond to peers across the countries, not just their own country or class, with academic reflectivity? (2) Would students respond to each current event or controversial question asked of them with academic reflectivity? (3) Would students interact by challenging, arguing, and teaching each other with academic reflectivity? And (4) Would students...
The goals for the collaboration are (a) increasing student interaction and participation; (b) reinforcing lessons; (c) developing a better understanding of points of view; (d) improving communication and analytical skills; (e) articulating points; (f) building civility, tolerance, and critical thinking; (g) deepening a sense of identity; and (h) expanding a sense of community.

The collaboration in this study was the result of an agreement between two professors who met at an international conference in Japan and decided to collaborate on an identical course, an introductory American politics course. As the course was taught frequently at the U.S. university, the Korean counterpart used the U.S. professor’s syllabus to develop and obtain approval for the identical version of the course for the Korean university. The fall of 2018 was chosen for the collaboration as the semester of instruction overlapped between the American and Korean universities.

Comparability across Countries
The collaboration between the U.S. and Korean university was designed to be similar to the collaborations used in the past iterations among U.S. universities. There was comparability across the Korean and U.S. collaboration in several regards. For one, both are comparable in their political ideology and moral attitudes (Kim et al., 2003; Kim et al., 2012). Second, deliberation over politics on online sites such as social media is the norm in both countries (Kim et al., 2003; Kim et al., 2012). While political deliberation in the United States exploded after recent elections, such as the Obama campaign with the unfettered sharing of and discussion of politics (Dryzek, 2002; Jacobs et al., 2009; Myers, 2017; Thompson, 2008), political deliberation has been central to South Korean discourse. In point of fact, during the South Korean election season(s) millions of online discussions are consistently generated showcasing the countries’ talkative and undeterred challenge for each of the varied and controversial political perspectives (Han, 2002; Kelly et al., 2003; Kim et al., 2012). Third, as stated earlier, the political- and social-deliberation culture in both countries is similar (Han, 2002; Kelly et al., 2003; Kim et al., 2012).

Fourth, as noted earlier, while there are varied political, geographic, and cultural differences, these do not pose a limit for effective deliberations. These very differences are a strength as students be inquisitive and talkative about the issues by interacting with academic reflectivity?

METHOD
The purpose behind the collaborative website was to provide a space for interactive deliberation among students in an identical course across a U.S. and Korean university. Thus, a website was designed with student peer interactivity in mind. In particular, this research studied the reflective peer interactions of the U.S. and Korean students on this collaborative web space.

Participants
The participants in the collaboration were selected based on their enrollment in two identical introductory courses across the United States and South Korea. Therefore, a total of 38 students participated in the collaboration, which was the entirety of both classes. Of these participants, 17 students participated from the United States while 21 students were from the Korean university.

The participants in the United States and Korean universities were located in a major city with the student body reflecting such diversity across ethnic origin, race, gender, age, and that of domestic and international enrollments. As postsemester self-reports indicated, the collaboration reflected this diversity with 29% of the students identifying as Korean, 63% of students as American, and 8% of the population as international. In total, these participants represented seven countries: the United States, the Peoples Republic of China, Iran, South Korea, Belgium, and Morocco. In addition, the students self-identified as 6% white, 16% African American, and 34% Hispanic/Latino, while 45% of the participants self-identified as female and 55% as male.

CONTEXT AND INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS
Collaboration Use across the Years
The collaboration used in this study had been used for the past twelve years in collaborative projects where various universities participated each time. For instance, seven years ago the collaboration included a six-campus collaboration (students were from Texas, California, Wisconsin, Maryland, New York, and New Jersey) participating in a semester-long project (Chadha, 2020). Other collaborations had two or three universities participating in the collaboration (Chadha, 2019a, 2019d).
anywhere are diverse in far more ways than their countries of origin, the languages they speak, the prior knowledge they bring to the classroom, their age, and their reasons for enrolling in the course no matter where they live (Breslow et al., 2013; Dryzek, 2002; Kim & Kang, 2012; Kim & Lee, 2003; Myers, 2017). Thus, any perceived differences are in fact the strength behind the collaboration as the purpose of the collaboration was to measure their academic reflective interactions on an online site that allows for equal access and anonymity for all participants. Aside from the comparability across the countries both universities were comparable in several regards as well.

**Comparability across Institutions**

Both universities were comparable in that they both are four-year institutions located in a major city (Houston and Seoul) and both offer graduate and undergraduate degrees. At both universities, political science was offered within a department of social science. Also, both universities have a similarly diverse student body with the same projected growth in their Hispanic and older, first-generation students. Likewise, both have similar student-to-faculty ratios in the classroom, the ages of the students are equally distributed, and female student outnumber male students. Moreover, English is the dominant language of instruction at both institutions.

**Instructional Materials**

Analogous to past collaborations, the course itself and the collaboration were identical and therefore comparable across both the U.S. and Korean universities for a number of reasons. First, to minimize differences across the course both professors agreed to an identical course that had duplicate goals, objectives, outcomes, and text as well as timelines for the entire semester. The courses were identically aligned as well with regard to their course content, which was typical for a survey to American government class, including the U.S. Constitution, Civil liberties and civil rights, federalism, voting and elections, Congress, the Presidency, and the Judiciary.

**Comparability of Class and Subject**

The collaboration was the only major requirement in the course and the collaboration itself had three requirements along with common instructions, course schedule, and course grade. Of the three identical collaboration requirements, the first (was that students had to respond to a minimum of eight weekly discussion questions (the post) posed on a rotating basis by the instructors and to eight students’ posts (the response) to build and maintain a discussion-oriented online community. Therefore, both classes were asked an identical question every week that did not follow any particular order by text or circumstance, nor were the questions discussed in class. As students from both institutions could access the same site, posting and responding to the same question at any time allowed for student participation on an equal basis across the two courses, with each question creating a separate discussion forum.

A second requirement was a minimum length of 75 words in their posts and responses, which was approximately four fully typed lines. Other than the minimum word guidance and the requirement to respond and reply to the same minimum number of discussion questions, no other guidance was provided to the students about how to interact or construct a post or response, except to emphasize that the students should participate consistently and to remind students of these ground rules when necessary. This exchange between instructor and student, and student and student, furthered personal interaction, student investment in the site, and a sense of an online community. The third requirement was a course grade that was assigned to the collaborative activity. A summary of these collaborative requirements is provided in Table 1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>United States</th>
<th>South Korea</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Course Level</td>
<td>Lower</td>
<td>Lower</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institution Type</td>
<td>4-Year University</td>
<td>4-Year University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Course Name</td>
<td>Introduction to American Government</td>
<td>Introduction to American Government</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class Delivery</td>
<td>Face-to-Face</td>
<td>Face-to-Face</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Predominant language</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Grade</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No of students</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Common collaborative requirements</td>
<td>1) 8 posts and 8 responses</td>
<td>1) 8 posts and 8 responses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2) 75-word minimum length</td>
<td>2) 75-word minimum length</td>
<td>2) 75-word minimum length</td>
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<tr>
<td>3) 10%-15% of the grade</td>
<td>3) 10%-15% of the grade</td>
<td>3) 10%-15% of the grade</td>
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Students in both classes were explicitly told that they were posting and responding with peers across the two countries. They were told about the differences in culture and language nuances. The
professors monitored conversations for signs that the students were abiding by the general rules of respect, decency, and civility, but the professors generally refrained from participating other than to encourage students as a part of the instructional presence in the discussion forums. Throughout the semester, the instructors talked to each other about any issues or concerns having to do with the online collaborative activities.

Both professors had filed for human subjects consent and received consent at their respective institutions before the semester start. Therefore, with IRB approvals at both universities, an online site was designed for the collaboration using the same site, ning.com, that had been used in the past twelve years of collaboration. The site was similar to Facebook where participants respond to the initial poster and each other. This provided the students with familiarity and comfort in their use of the site. With consent forms signed, data collection began with the data anonymized to protect the students’ privacy.

PROCEDURES AND DATA COLLECTION
The data were the discussion board posts and responses among the U.S. and Korean students and was collected during the semester long collaboration. The data were then analyzed using a mixed-methods approach that involved content analysis of the discussion board postings, which totaled 516 student posts and responses among the 38 students, followed by statistical testing through ANOVAs.

Content analysis was chosen due to its frequent use by researchers to code qualitative discussion boards that constitute a part of online instruction (Chadha, 2020; Hamann et al., 2009; Topping, 1996; Van Vechten et al., 2013; Wilson et al., 2007). In finding a coding scheme that would be both comprehensive and one that would enable reliability in analyzing the material, a published index that related to student reflectivity among peers online, measured student reflectivity, and gauged the deliberative exchange of ideas among students using academic works within these discussions was used to analyze their interactive responses among the students (Chadha, 2019c; Chadha, 2019d).

The content analysis was then statistically tested using ANOVAs to determine whether there are any statistically significant differences between the means of independent unrelated groups. As only one professor coded the content analysis, intercoder reliability checks were not needed. Pretest and posttest surveys about the nature of student online interactions from the semester added the student perspective.

With collaboration as a means for interactivity among students, the dependent variable would measure for evidence of academic reflectivity in student interactions. An academic reflectivity index using published research measured the thoughtful academic deliberation that took place in these online interactive discussions (Chadha, 2019a; Chadha, 2019d; Chadha, 2020). The index measured how reflective and/or deliberate the students were by reading each student’s contribution and responses to other students’ posts and coding them for academic reflectivity as operationalized here with each variable’s minimum and maximum, standard error of means, and standard deviation (see Table 2).

Operationalizing the Dependent Composite Variable: Academic Reflectivity

1. To be reflective/deliberative means that students had reflected, deliberated, or reconsidered their views when they responded to questions or when they commented on other students’ posts. Did they think through problems or issues, question others, challenge others, or hold them accountable for their views in a positive way? Did they think about the question and responded with reflective, deliberate comments? A score of 1 or 0 was assigned.

2. Civic roles. Did students think about the questions posed and respond in ways that reflected a theoretical or practical application of American politics in a manner that was thoughtful? Did they think about and discuss civic issues such as the First Amendment or voting issues rather than just mention them? Did they engage each other and not just agree or disagree with each other but challenge or push one another to think in a civil way? A score of 1 or 0 was assigned.

3. Classroom ideas or texts. In their responses did the students think about and refer to ideas that they had read about in class or mention their professor’s material or in-class discussions? A score of 1 or 0 was assigned.
4. References or outside links. Did the students think to post or cite links to external websites when responding to questions, or did they refer to court cases that one might look up? Did they cite current events or media-related stories that might be looked up or located by another student? Did they post real links to other related sources? A score of 1 or 0 was assigned.

5. Poses honest questions. Did the students think about and ask one or more questions that enlarged the scopes of the discussions, ones that expanded discussions, not rhetorical ones that assumed answers? A score of 1 or 0 was assigned.

6. Length. A scale of 1–3 was used: 1 = a short response of usually 75 words or fewer or up to 4 full lines of text; 2 = a medium response, 5–9 lines of text; and 3 = a long response, longer than 10 lines of text.

One point was assigned to the first five variables. The sixth variable, length, had a range of points. The lowest possible score was one, while the most a student scored was eight. The total number of postings per student (e.g., student X posted six times a day, five days in a row) was not used as a measure toward increased learning as it was not the total number of posts and responses that were reflective, but rather the reflective score measures thoughtful understanding and contribution to a post or response.

Operationalizing the Independent Variables

1. DQ. The discussion question was operationalized as either a current event question or a controversial question. For example, a question on gay marriage would be considered a controversial question while a question about ongoing elections would be considered a current event question. The current event question was coded as 0 and controversial question as 1.

2. Across class: As this collaboration was across countries, this variable was to test if students deliberated across the countries/classes or just within their own country/class. The university in the United States was coded as 1 and the university in South Korea as 0.

3. Teach. Similarly, this variable referred to students facilitating learning, or the acquisition of knowledge, skills, values, beliefs, and habits as they discussed issues across the countries. For instance, a student is teaching when they thought about supplying a student with new information and explaining it in detail so that other students may understand and learn from them. Teaching was coded as 1 while not teaching was coded as 0.

4. Inquisitive. Did students think with genuine inquisitiveness or curiosity about student comments across the countries? Did they ask insightful questions about a post or response? Sometimes a student could demonstrate this attitude with or without asking a direct question. Being inquisitive was coded as 1 while not being inquisitive was coded as 0.

5. Tolerance. Did students listen, reflect, and respond to a post or response in a nonargumentative or defensive manner across the countries, even if their peers disagreed with them? In coding for

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Length</th>
<th>Text References</th>
<th>Media Sites</th>
<th>Reflective</th>
<th>Ask Honest Questions</th>
<th>Civic Ideas</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>N Valid</td>
<td>796</td>
<td>796</td>
<td>796</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>2.10</td>
<td>.14</td>
<td>.25</td>
<td>.66</td>
<td>.27</td>
<td>.14</td>
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<tr>
<td>Std. Error of Mean</td>
<td>.030</td>
<td>.012</td>
<td>.015</td>
<td>.017</td>
<td>.016</td>
<td>.012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Std. Deviation</td>
<td>.851</td>
<td>.348</td>
<td>.433</td>
<td>.475</td>
<td>.442</td>
<td>.349</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minimum</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maximum</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
toleration, it was the student’s ability to allow, permit, or accept the post or to respond, although they disagreed with it, in a way that furthered the deliberation. Tolerance was coded as 1 while no tolerance was coded as 0.

6. Clarification. Did the students clarify their statements or positions to each other as they explained or illustrated their points to be clear and unambiguous? Clarifying was coded as 1 while no clarification was coded as 0.

7. Argue. Did the students argue with each other using academic materials or citing evidence in support of an idea, action, or theory when offering a concurring or dissenting stance? The aim of this interaction was not to persuade others to share their view but to provide their own. The presence of an argument was coded as 1 while the absence of an argument was coded as 0.

8. Adding information. Did the students add knowledge to the discussion via class texts or outside media references such as court cases? Adding information was coded as 1 while not adding information was coded as 0.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION
The intent and aim of this study was to test for student interaction across an identical course on a collaborative website given the benefit that online spaces provide students with the time, space, and equal access. Therefore, each of the four research questions tested for the dependent variable, academic reflective deliberation. Table 3 provides the mean and standard deviation scores for each of the four research questions: (1) whether students would respond to peers across the countries, and not just their own country/class, with academic reflectivity; (2) whether students would respond across each current event or controversial question with academic reflectivity; (3) whether students would interact by challenging, arguing, and teaching each other with academic reflectivity; and (4) whether students were inquisitive and talkative about the issues by interacting with academic reflectivity.

Table 3. Mean and Std. Deviation Scores of Each Research Question with Academic Reflectivity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Across class</th>
<th>Discussion question</th>
<th>Teach</th>
<th>Challenge</th>
<th>Argue</th>
<th>Inquisitive</th>
<th>Talkative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>796</td>
<td>796</td>
<td>796</td>
<td>796</td>
<td>796</td>
<td>796</td>
<td>796</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>.43</td>
<td>4.59</td>
<td>.56</td>
<td>.39</td>
<td>.55</td>
<td>.24</td>
<td>.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Deviation</td>
<td>.496</td>
<td>3.524</td>
<td>.497</td>
<td>.488</td>
<td>.498</td>
<td>.426</td>
<td>.487</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4. ANOVA Academic Deliberation Scores by Peers Across Classes, Interaction with Each Other, Across Posts and Responses and Across Each of the Questions (DQ)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Type III Sum of Squares</th>
<th>Df</th>
<th>Mean Square</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
<th>Partial Eta Squared</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Corrected Model</td>
<td>1711.179a</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>81.485</td>
<td>99.372</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.729</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intercept</td>
<td>67.001</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>67.001</td>
<td>81.709</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.095</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DQ</td>
<td>21.528</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>1.794</td>
<td>2.188</td>
<td>.001</td>
<td>.033</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class</td>
<td>102.861</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>102.861</td>
<td>125.441</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.139</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Express concern</td>
<td>22.129</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>22.129</td>
<td>26.987</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.034</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tolerance</td>
<td>4.401</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4.401</td>
<td>5.367</td>
<td>.021</td>
<td>.007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clarify</td>
<td>8.488</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8.488</td>
<td>10.352</td>
<td>.001</td>
<td>.013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Argue</td>
<td>76.745</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>76.745</td>
<td>93.593</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post responses</td>
<td>94.204</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>47.102</td>
<td>57.442</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.129</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Add Information</td>
<td>48.449</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>48.449</td>
<td>58.085</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.071</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discuss culture</td>
<td>16.889</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>16.889</td>
<td>20.597</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.026</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Error</td>
<td>634.675</td>
<td>774</td>
<td>.820</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>11654.000</td>
<td>796</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corrected Total</td>
<td>2345.854</td>
<td>795</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Based on the hypotheses, ANOVAs were performed to compare the two courses’ academic reflectivity scores. The ANOVAS revealed the statistical significance of reflectivity scores across the countries and the four hypotheses as shown in Table 4. Students responded with academic reflectivity across the counties (p < .001) and across each of the discussion questions asked of them (p < .001). In addition, they clarified perspectives (p < .067), argued with each other (p < .001), and taught each other with academic reflectivity (p < .001). Moreover, they were inquisitive (p < .001) and talkative with academic reflectivity across the countries (p < .001).

These significant ANOVA findings of peer interactions are illustrated in a student exchange on a question about the U.S. midterm elections that shows the academic reflective deliberations among Korean and U.S. students as provided in Appendix A. With significant ANOVAs, LSD post hoc tests were performed that ensured statistical significance for each of the hypotheses (p < .000) as shown in Table 5.

Table 5. LSD post hoc Significance of Test Differences in Mean Scores by Reflectivity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(I) DQ</th>
<th>(J) DQ</th>
<th>Mean Difference (I-J)</th>
<th>Std. Error</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
<th>95% Confidence Interval</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Lower Bound</td>
<td>Upper Bound</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>-1.0522*</td>
<td>.10359</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>-1.3965 - .7080</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>-0.6276*</td>
<td>.11174</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>-0.9990 - .2563</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>-0.4878*</td>
<td>.11645</td>
<td>.002</td>
<td>-0.8748 - .1007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>-0.4716*</td>
<td>.11416</td>
<td>.003</td>
<td>-0.8510 - .0922</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>-0.7171*</td>
<td>.11550</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>-1.1010 - .3333</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Relatedly, semester-end surveys provided support for the collaboration from the student perspective. In response to an open-ended question about what it felt like to discuss issues or what it accomplished for them to dialogue with others outside their country, one remarked, “Good, to see your opinion and others,” while another wrote, “I think it’s a rare experience, and I think it’s great that we get a chance to do so in class.” A third said, “I think knowledge and a sense of community—I guess unlike Facebook or other social media platforms, this was a safer environment to respond and express my political opinions.” One other student wrote,

The collaboration allows for a better sense of the student body today, especially on whether fellow students share the thoughts I hold, or how our generation is different from older generations. The discussions, while there were contrasting arguments, were with good intentions and built respect for others.

In response to another open-ended question asking the students what they liked or disliked about the collaboration, they wrote that they “liked the various opinions that were exchanged due to the anonymity and directness of the online platform,” and “they were able to better express themselves through constructive written arguments rather than they would have been able to in-person.” As a whole the Korean students disliked that students in the United States were not as participatory as they were, while the students in the United States did not indicate any dislikes (see Table 6).

Table 6. What Did You Like and Dislike About the Collaboration?

- I liked the various opinions that were able to be exchanged due to the anonymity and indirectness of the online platform. Some thoughts that may have been difficult to express in person were better able to be expressed online through constructive written arguments.
- The forum also allowed for convenience, where arguments could be uploaded and checked at the convenience of anyplace, anytime.
- I disliked the lack of participation from certain members, especially the relatively less constructive arguments from the U.S. side.
- I liked how I could discuss/exchange political views freely with others.
- What I disliked about the collaboration was that many Texas students didn’t engage with the discussion that much and would only reply to easy/short comments. I wanted feedback to my response but I couldn’t get any.
- I liked the collaboration in general—but it seemed like the U.S. students were commenting mostly in shorter posts and were writing very brief posts to begin with, with not a lot of points for discussion.
- Like—can share ideas with American students / Dislike—none
- Some responses were short and broad.

In response to a question asking if they identified with each other, end of semester survey results indicate that 63% of the students said they
identified with their peers while 38% indicated they did not. In response to a question on what the collaboration accomplished for them, a vast majority of students (70%) responded that the collaboration led to a self-assessment of their own positions, and another majority (50%) of students said it helped them with critical inquiry.

With significant support for the four hypotheses, the results of the post hoc tests, and the student perspective through semester-end surveys, the dynamic viability of online collaboration is unveiled as student after student noted the benefits of learning from differing student perspectives despite living across international boundaries. Students deliberated across each current event or controversial question asked of them, challenging and arguing with each other while being inquisitive and tolerant about varied perspectives and being academically reflective.

CONCLUSIONS

The significant results of this study provide evidence that a carefully designed collaboration can promote various forms of student peer engagement with academic content across two countries. These are important findings as online discussions link students across diverse characteristics such as citizenship, race, gender, religion, and ethnic profile. The highly varied membership in the two courses challenged various viewpoints among themselves, and students developed an awareness of alternative points of view, a more reflective understanding of collective problems, and an appreciation of majority and minority rights (Chadha, 2019c; Chadha, 2020; Guttman, 2000).

The findings presented in this research yield three major results. First, in tune with much of the pedagogical literature, this study finds that academically reflective peer discussions can take place not just domestically but internationally. Second, the collaboration provided students with the opportunity to exercise reflective critical thinking strategies. In doing so it provided them with a space to be inquisitive and ask each other questions while offering them an opportunity to give and receive feedback, which exposed them to differing points of view and challenged them to think more deeply. Third, online peer deliberative strategies can be applied across a variety of comparable courses, such as English, math, social science, medicine, or engineering, creating a highly effective and robust extended global classroom.

As the need to engage students in meaningful academic interactions in online courses grows in departments and at universities across the globe, this study is significant for several reasons. First, it contributes to the research on the pedagogical viability of online collaborations. Second, since empirical research on international deliberation is considered to be in its infancy (Myers & Mendelberg, 2013) with various calls for research on international educational collaborations (Boud et al., 2014; Chadha, 2019e; Elder & Paul, 2020), this research not only answers that call but adds to the scarce research on international collaborations.

Third, this research is especially significant and innovative because students were enrolled in identical classes having the same topics and requirements during the same semester. Fourth, and most importantly, the implications of this international collaboration are fruitful for researchers, educators, universities, policymakers, and others outside academia who seek to design successful international ecollaborations for academic or nonacademic purposes.

IMPLICATIONS

The research presented in this study has implications for both education and for practitioners, especially due to COVID 19. For instance, with greater recognition that online education is on par with traditional education, a myriad of possibilities exist in educational contexts. Collaborations among graduate students and programs are possible both domestically and internationally, as well as for employees in public or private education who need to pursue continuing education. Ultimately, educational credentials in any mode of education would become indistinguishable from any other mode. Likewise, various implications exist for organizations, as collaborations are applicable in various fields from sociology, psychology, and education to engineering. For instance, engineers developing chips for cars in the United States would benefit from working with manufacturers in Japan and Germany. Or surgeons working on procedures for conjoined twins in Indonesia could collaborate with surgeons in Germany.

The future is bright with possibilities. With the current dearth of online international
educational collaborations, further research on this is anticipated. Future researchers could include a longitudinal study to investigate students over the course of a year or over various comparable subjects such as psychology, sociology, engineering, and math. In addition, international collaborations among graduate students that would heighten partnerships, conference preparation, presentations, and research, are each worth pursuing in future research. Online collaborations shrink our global community in the virtual world by providing for effective online academic collaborations and practitioner collaborations.
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The question asked: The “midterm” elections are next week. As you know members of the U.S. house serve two-year terms, and U.S. senate members serve six-year terms, as they run for (re) election. Do you know who your incumbents and challengers running for election next week are in these races? If not, one possible place to find this information is to go to Project Vote Smart (votesmart.org) to learn about these candidates. In addition C-SPAN Classroom has a section devoted to campaigns and elections and PBS NewsHour Extra has an Election 2018 section. Both sites are updated with new content regularly. You can also check out the Voting Information Project and Vote411.org to learn more about elections that are specific to your area.

Historically, turnout in midterm elections tends to be low. And historically one of the issues that can affect voters is how popular the president is. A wildly popular president can motivate a lot of people, particularly people of the president’s party, to turn out to vote. Also, typically, during good economic times, the party of the president would do better than they would during periods of economic decline. The simple history of midterm elections suggests that the party of the president almost always loses IF the turnout is high. If Democrats end up taking back control of the House during the midterms, you could see changes in the American political landscape ahead of the next general election in 2020.

Based on this what you know about midterm elections, what do you think these midterm elections can achieve in our democracy? Is turnout a concern? Are the political campaigns ahead of these elections different than in the past? How so? Many people feel that the negativity around campaigning continues to get worse each year, but is that true? Do midterm elections impart specific issues? OK, so let’s say the Republicans or Democrats win the Senate. What does that actually mean in real terms? What will change in Washington? So, we established there are a lot of races happening. Can you name three races you find most compelling and why? What are some ballot measures in these midterm elections that can change the political climate? What is at stake in our democracy and what can midterm elections achieve/not achieve?


A Korean student wrote:
Midterm elections play a crucial role in U.S. democracy. Not only does the midterm election accomplish its basic role of electing members of the Congress, but also serves as a significant check on the party in power. Since midterm elections are overlapping—coming in the middle of the four-year term served by the president—public officials may not settle comfortably in the power they are currently granted. For instance, if people are not satisfied with the current administration, they may indirectly express their opinions by not voting for the party in power. … In other words, midterm elections prevent monopolization of power by a single party.

As for any election, I believe that low voter turnout is also a concern for midterm elections. High voter turnout is the fundamental foundation for democracy (“rule by the people”), and turnout itself is an extremely important unit in politics that measures the legitimacy of the government. The higher the voter turnout, the more legitimacy the elected government has as it is empowered by the will of its people. Since midterm elections are infamous for its particularly low voter turnout compared to presidential elections (36% of registered voters in 2014), action is needed to encourage voter participation.

Moreover, as mentioned above, midterm election results convey the evaluation of the current administration in power. For instance, if the Republicans win the Senate, this implies that the current presidency (Republican) is receiving positive evaluation from the public. On the other hand, if the Democrats win the Senate, we may assume that President Trump (Republican) is receiving less support from the people. Furthermore, the midterm election results will also bring about many changes in Washington D.C. as well. Today, both houses of the Congress are currently controlled by the Republican Party, which supports President Trump. However, if the Democrats win the Senate, they may delay or block the President’s plan by refusing to enact them. After all, the Legislative

APPENDIX
Branch (Congress) has the power to override the President’s veto. Therefore, when the party in power of the Congress and the party in power of the Executive Branch differ, the President would have much tougher time in implementing his plans and policies.

Naming three races I find most compelling in the 2018 U.S. midterm election is quite a difficult question for me since the issue is quite out of my domain as a Korean citizen. But after doing some research, these races seemed most interesting to me: 1. House of Representatives: New Jersey 3rd district (Andy Kim v. Tom McArthur), 2. Senate: Tennessee (Phil Bredesen vs. Marsha Blackburn), and 3. Not a specific race, but the election results involving women in general. The New Jersey 3rd district race was particularly interesting to me because this swing district is represented by a Republican, McArthur, who has fully embraced Trump. Therefore, the election results will indicate whether voters will support a Republican so closely tied to the president. In the case of the Senator race for Tennessee, this race was interesting because it represents a challenge to the Republicans. Tennessee is well-known to be a “red state” supportive of Republicans. However, Phil Bresden, the Democratic candidate, is a former popular governor of Tennessee who won 69% of the vote in the past. I’m curious whether this would be a chance for the Democrats to gain Tennessee for the Senate. Last but not least, I’m curious about the election results involving female candidates in general. The 2018 midterm election involves a record number of women running for public office, including candidates attempting to be “the first black woman to serve as governor, the first Native American woman in Congress, and the first openly bisexual senator.” Some people analyze such phenomenon as a backlash against Trump. I wonder what the results would be for these female candidates in general.

Lastly, I believe that there, too, are shortcomings of the midterm election. Although midterm elections may serve as a check on the current party in power, the effectiveness or validity of such check may be questioned, since two years may be too much of a short time to judge the effectiveness of the President’s policies. As a student majoring in economics, let me take an example of a policymaker trying to achieve the Golden Rule level of capital. The Golden Rule level of capital is a term in macroeconomics that implies the steady state with the highest level of consumption. Since the policymaker’s goal is to maximize the well-being of the individuals of society, a good policymaker would want to reach the Golden Rule level of capital. If the economy begins with less capital than the Golden Rule steady state, the policymaker must raise the saving rate to reach the Golden Rule. However, an increase in saving rate would cause an immediate fall in consumption and a rise in investment. Nevertheless, as capital accumulates, consumption and output would gradually increase in the long term. Therefore, although increase in saving leads to an increase in economic welfare in the long term, there must be a period with reduced consumption in the short term....it may be difficult to judge the effectiveness of the current administration’s policies within two years.

A U.S. student wrote:

For the most part, there are two historical truths about the midterm elections: They consistently have a lower voter turnout than the general election and the president’s party loses congressional seats. As we approach the 2018 midterm elections, Democrats are feeling confident that there will be a historic turnout. At the end of the day who turns out to vote will ultimately be the determining factor in the 2018 midterm elections. According to many researchers fewer people vote in midterm elections, around 40 percent of the population, than in presidential elections, around 50-60 percent. This difference accounts for a pretty stable finding in political history, which is that the president’s party almost always loses seats in midterm elections. The average number of seats lost, going back many decades, is 30 seats, and even more if the president is unpopular. In this midterm election, the current president approval never hit 50 percent, [which] means that Republicans are expected to lose more than the average number of seats. As we learned from presidential election in 2016, it’s very hard to predict elections. Every election has consequences but this midterm election will be the most consequential election because if the Democratic Party controls the legislative branch, we will see historic policy change. As many of as agree the current administration has reversed many policies of the Obama administration so if the democrats control both the senate and house.
In other words, impeaching the president, climate change, Obama care, economic booming, Supreme Court judges and strong military are some of the policies on the ballot. Some important senate [races] in this midterm are Texas, Arizona, and Alabama. Texas senate race between Senator Cruz and Representative Beto [is] the most expensive and popular in this midterm, both are perfect examples to represent what both political parties look like. Senator Cruz [is] one of the important members of the senate who supports the president’s agenda but Representative Beto stands against the president’s agenda in almost all policies….

**A Korean student wrote:**

I believe that midterm elections were designed to provide better representation and continuity. In Federalist Papers No. 52, the author argues for biennial elections to the House of Representatives because it is “essential to liberty that the government in general should have a common interest with the people”—and by holding frequent elections, the legislative branch can have an “immediate dependence” on the people, to better represent their interests. Midterm elections also provide continuity in that only 1/3 of the Congress will change, which helps avoid “mutability” and provide stability, continual change, and prudence in change of law according to Federalist Papers No. 62. Put into context, the midterm elections can be a national evaluation on the President’s performance, and a chance for the opposition party to gain greater political voice and leverage….

Because midterm elections can determine which party will have a majority seat in both houses, turnout is critical. Because I am not a target audience of either party, I haven’t been exposed to candidates’ political campaigns, but based on articles I’ve read, I think there has been more negative ads in general (See https://edition.cnn.com/2018/10/04/politics/midterm-campaign-ads-ne... and https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/politics/elections/2018/09/20/m...). For instance, 6/10 television ads of Republican candidates involved personal attacks on Democrats, an increase from the midterm elections in 2014. This is not surprising, however, as Democrats are only 23 GOP seats short of a Democrat-majority House, and from historical data that a first term president’s party usually loses the midterm elections. If the Republicans and Democrats were reversed in their position, I believe that Democrats would have resorted to similar measures. Currently about 36% of its advertisements include negative portrayal of Republican candidates.

A Democratic majority House/Senate would mean that there will be a deadlock—the legislature will most likely impede everything the President does, as it was with President Obama in his last 2 years in the White House. It will be difficult to push through the President’s agendas quickly, like Republicans did in confirming Brett Kavanaugh to the Supreme Court and passing the Republican Health Bill. It means that President Trump won’t get to do as he wishes—or at least he will have to overcome significant barriers to do as he wishes.

One race that I have been following—it’s not really for the legislature, but was interesting—is the race for Governor in Georgia because the voter restriction policies have been very controversial. The race is first of all very close, but the more important issue has been strict voting rules that Brian Kemp (current Secretary of State of Georgia) has enforced. The law required an exact match between a voter’s registration form and the voter’s government documents, but analysis by the Associated Press showed that 70% of suspended registrations were for black Georgians in a state where only 30% of the population was black (see https://www.nytimes.com/2018/10/15/us/politics/georgia-abrams-kemp-... https://apnews.com/fb011f39af3b40518b572c8ece6e906c). These and other voter restrictions (bolstered with President Trump’s voter fraud claims which is proven to be false, see https://www.politifact.com/truth-o-meter/statements/2018/jan/04/don...) continue to target and disenfranchise minorities, eroding the principles of equality and representation crucial to a healthy democracy.

In addition to these voter restrictions, US voting law also prohibits citizens with criminal records from voting. Citizens lose their right to vote upon conviction of a felony in 48 states, and although there are processes for them to regain their voting rights, in some states the process can be costly and arbitrary. In some states, people lose their voting rights upon conviction of a misdemeanor (see https://www.aclu.org/other/voting-criminal-record-executive-summary). With biases in the rate of incarceration for certain minority groups, this can be another problem for democracy.
I think this midterms have the potential to send a strong political and social message, like the Metoo movement... It could lead to an array of more (socially) liberal policies and seriously check the President’s power.