

# Ten years of global citizenship: An examination of the long-term effects of study abroad

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*The sun is shining brightly, pushing away every warning I'd heard about the cold, rainy London weather. People are laughing and children are playing as we enjoy a little picnic in Hyde Park. Spread in front of us is an assortment of meats, cheeses, and snacks. The world feels full of possibility and promise for the 14 master's students and interns from the University of Connecticut (UConn). As the hours slide by, we talk about school, about what we are excited about, about our new favorite things in London. Having just arrived in the city, everything feels new and exciting. This is a once in a lifetime opportunity. We begin to play silly games, laughing together and finding connections we didn't know existed.*

For me, this is one of those golden memories in my life, a perfect day untouched by time. Even though that was 10 years ago, I can still remember what I was wearing, a teal t-shirt and gray chino pants, and a rain jacket (I carried one everywhere the first week, waiting for that ever-present London rain). I can remember wandering through Tesco picking out baguettes and cheeses and thinking how different this grocery store was. I can remember feeling so excited about everything, and hardly able to wait to take the bus to our internship school and get started. What I didn't know at the time was how much that day, and the experience of being abroad, would mean to me and how it would change not only the career path I took, but also the way I saw the world. For many study abroad participants there is a golden memory like this from their time abroad, something they can still picture vividly even years later. But how does study abroad transform from a memorable experience to one that changes participants' worldviews? This chapter presents three pathways that illuminate the long term effects of participation in a preservice teacher study abroad program. We present these pathways not as models of universal learning, but as exemplars of the transformative power of study abroad, which is unique to each individual participant.

People often describe study abroad experiences as life changing, and for preservice teachers, these changes are believed to impact their future classrooms. Study abroad programs have been credited with developing intercultural competence in participants, instilling confidence and independence, flexibility and adaptability, exposing participants to new pedagogies, and developing language skills (Batey & Lupi, 2012; Bennett, 2004; Cushner, 2007; Clarke, 2009; Marx & Moss, 2011; Simmons, Marx & Moss, 2020; Simmons, 2021). Participant growth has been categorized into academic, cultural, linguistic, pedagogical, and personal growth (Ciftçi & Karaman, 2019). Dwyer and Peters (2004) report that 95% of study abroad participants feel the experience had a lasting impact on their worldview. This new worldview is a key outcome for pre-service teachers, allowing them to foster the intercultural competence skills necessary to work with diverse students (Morley et al., 2019). Additionally, their time abroad allowed

participants to act as a “real teacher” and develop an identity as a teacher, while still being a learner discovering their own and others’ cultures (Chao et al., 2019). Jiang et al. (2019) explored how international student teachers transferred their experience abroad into the classroom. They found that participants developed increased sensitivity to language while abroad, impacting their interactions with students and transferred their international learning in various ways, incorporating cultural perspectives through instructional examples, reading materials and media. Teachers also exhibited flexibility through their use of technology and creativity in their lesson planning, and remained open-minded in their interactions with students (Jiang et al., 2019). Okken et al. (2019) suggest four levels of outcomes given participation in international programs: reaction, learning, application, and organizational. Reactions included positive feelings about study abroad, which is where we see the claim of study abroad as a “life changing experience.” Learning included skills, knowledge, and attitude changes as a result of international experience. Application represented an ability to translate learning into behavioral changes and organizational results were shown thorough career choices that reflect ongoing global engagement. Furthermore, Paige et al. (2009) reported that 83% of respondents felt study abroad had a strong impact on their college experience. They also described increased civic engagement and an increased likelihood to pursue an advanced degree. For some study abroad participants, their time abroad resulted in a desire for continued international professional experiences (Williams & Abramenska, 2018). Simmons, Marx and Moss (2020) reported that participants observe cultural differences, experience cultural dissonance, come to new understandings about American culture, experience personal and professional growth that may lead to new plans for the future and an evolution in their identity. Taken together, the literature reveals a complex portrait of potential outcomes for participants in study abroad.

Yet questions remain about the long term effects of these programs. Much of the existing research about pre-service teacher study abroad focuses on the time period that students are abroad or the first few months after the experience, leaving a large gap in the research about long term effects. The studies that do explore long term effects offer some insight, yet inspire new questions. Hauerwas, Skawinski and Ryan (2017) conducted 12 month post and 16 month post focus groups for a cohort of nine preservice teachers who had studied abroad in Italy. All of the participants reported drawing on their language experience abroad and felt comfortable communicating with people from other cultures. Yet, they were unable to articulate their own cultural identity and were unable to connect cultural perspectives to curriculum. Rexeisen et al. (2008) documented positive short term gains on the Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI) (Hammer, Bennett & Wiseman, 2003) yet in a post trip follow up administration of the IDI, the overall development score capturing one’s orientation to cultural difference actually decreased. Okken et al. (2019) reported that as pre-service teachers began their career some found it challenging or nearly impossible to apply their learning from study abroad in the new context of their first classroom and felt a disconnect between their personal philosophy and the goals of the school system in which they were employed.

There is a need for a more complete understanding of the long term outcomes of preservice teacher study abroad programs, which may not be able to be understood until some time has passed. To our knowledge, there is not another study that seeks to understand these outcomes 10 years after participation. This chapter begins to fill this gap in the literature by exploring how participants reflect on the effects of participation in the program. In particular we sought to

uncover participants' views on how participation in a pre-service teacher study abroad program impacted their personal and/or professional life. To do so, we adapted McAdams's life story interview (2008). Questions included: Was there a "turning point" for you in London, where the way you thought about yourself, education, the classroom, or culture changed? How, in any ways, did the London experience challenge the way you saw the world? As this research seeks to understand the evolving story of self and is concerned with meaning-making, narrative research methods were appropriate (Adler et al., 2017). After the interviews were conducted and transcribed, they were coded for personal and professional growth. This chapter presents data from three of the interviews, where the codes revealed especially strong themes, which we are calling pathways, that reveal how one event led to other events in life and what meaning participants ascribe to their experiences.

The Neag School of Education at the University of Connecticut has offered a UConn Education in London Program for more than 20 years. Participants in the program are enrolled in the integrated bachelors/master's degree program and spend a semester abroad in their final year of the program. While abroad, the participants live together, are enrolled in graduate level coursework, complete a 15 week internship in state funded primary and secondary London schools and complete a master's-level inquiry project with an international focus. The fall 2011 cohort included 14 participants, 13 females and 1 male. All cohort members were interviewed as part of this research. The lead author of this chapter is a member of this cohort and the second author serves as the program director. At the 10 year anniversary of their time abroad, they reconnected with cohort members to examine how participants reflect upon their experience(s) abroad and how their time abroad. This chapter presents three pathways that demonstrate how the international experience has influenced their personal and professional trajectories and classroom practices.

As a member of this cohort, I experienced many of the stories shared by participants and engaged in bracketing to isolate my own recollections of the experience and focus on the meaning for participants. As much as appropriate, we tried to use participants own words to tell their story. To ensure confidentiality, the names of participants are pseudonyms. I am humbled and honored to call these women friends and colleagues and to celebrate them. I have named them after female explorers: Amelia Earhart, Jackie Ronne, and Gertrude Bell. Amelia Earhart, known for her daring and bravery, fought for her place in a world dominated by men. Amelia the participant similarly always struck me as fearless, often leading the group on new adventures, seeking unknown travel locations, and exhibiting a confidence I am constantly inspired by. Jackie Ronne was the first woman in the world to work on an Antarctic expedition. Traveling with her husband and a crew of 21 members, Ronne served as the historian and recorder for the expedition, uniting the members of the group. She is the namesake of the Ronne ice shelf. Jackie the participant similarly explored the world and united our cohort, forming strong relationships with everyone, which she maintains today, with unmatched kindness and compassion. Gertrude Bell was a British writer and archaeologist, committed to sharing the knowledge of people across the world and connections across culture. She ardently believed that antiquities should be preserved in their home countries. Belle the participant shares that legacy of connections across people and culture. In our time abroad and after, she has constantly questioned and sought to learn as much as possible within any context, challenging me to do the same.

## Professional Pathway – Finding your Career Path

“I remembered the second I learned about the London program I did not hesitate for one second if I was going to do that. And I made an effort, I needed to get into that program from the second I learned about it.” For Amelia, the international experience was the pinnacle of her education at UConn. The daughter of parents in the travel industry, Amelia had significant international experiences before beginning the UConn Education in London program. Yet, she notes that the London experience felt different:

When I describe my experience in London to people, I kind of share how it felt like real life, in that we were working and taking public transportation, and going to the grocery store and didn't go out during the week...I found that the experience in London, we really were ingrained into the culture a little bit more. Kind of living more normally than being on vacation. And so, I really appreciated that. I think back about going to all the markets, going for runs, like I said taking the bus.

For Amelia, her previous international experiences, including a summer study abroad in Italy were “just fun. We took two classes, we traveled every weekend for a long weekend, we went out probably every single night. We ate so much. You know, it was just a vacation.” So, she was seeking something different, she wanted the London program to be an opportunity for her to go beyond her previous international experiences. As Amelia says, “I see it as it was real life to me. It wasn't just this temporary vacation; it was getting to do everyday things with new people in a new part of the world.” Coming into the program, Amelia was determined to make this experience feel more like real life, yet she discovered that life in London was more than that.

I just loved how elevated normal life felt...I loved being able to walk out our door and take the train or walk to get coffee or to a market or to the zillions of awesome parks they had. And I loved running all around London and I remember I would run to the museum and go in the museum in my gym clothes and just like peek around for a few minutes.

This “elevated” lifestyle was very different to Amelia, who had grown up in a small New England town and “it showed me I want to live in a city too... I would say I didn't realize how much I liked the city until being in London and living there and being able to walk everywhere that was awesome.” For Amelia, one particular aspect of the city was the outdoor markets that she found herself frequently exploring.

Oh my gosh, I loved just walking around and wandering places and [the outdoor market] was like a place that was set up to just do those things and peruse and look at the clothes and get snacks and check out different ones in different neighborhoods. It was just something to do that you don't have to spend money and it wasn't necessarily like going to a tourist attraction or a museum it was just a Saturday afternoon, kind of felt like a little bit more of a local thing to do.

This realization that she loved the hustle and bustle of city life was important for Amelia and shaped her plans for future employment.

When I was looking for jobs I was looking in New York, DC and Chicago... I truly loved that city lifestyle and up until a year ago I had been living in the city. I lived in New York for a couple of years, then I lived in Boston.

While working in Boston, Amelia met her husband, and after getting married, Amelia and her husband moved to the suburbs. Yet, Amelia remains determined to keep some of what she loved about the city alive in her new home.

It was a hard pill to swallow moving to the suburb of New Jersey, but we're doing okay. I still walk to town.... I still try to walk to the grocery store here, which nobody does in the suburbs but I do just because I'm trying to hold onto that city habit. My neighbors must think I'm so weird when I walk a mile with my grocery bags. I'm trying so hard to just hold on to some of those things from city life.

Amelia's time in London didn't merely shape where she wanted to look for jobs, it utterly changed the trajectory of her career. Early on in the education program, Amelia "always knew I wanted to go into education, but I wasn't sure I wanted to be your typical standard school teacher" so she sought out "non-traditional experiences" yet she knew that "having classroom experience would ultimately be pretty helpful." Even before applying to the London program, Amelia "still saw the long term plan as being out of the classroom when I was going through the school of education but I just wasn't sure what that was at the time."

While in London, everything clicked for Amelia on one day where she visited a hospital school in North London as a formal part of the program designed to expose interns to various teaching and learning settings. While in high school Amelia volunteered at a hospital and loved that experience, yet she knew she didn't want to work as a nurse. "I had toyed around with [it] in the past. I had always had a little bit of a passion for that" so visiting the North London hospital school combined everything for Amelia.

I know I loved the one day that I went to [the hospital school]. I remember coming home and I just remember the schedule was around the kids. If they wanted to do art first, they could do art first. If they wanted to take a break and sing a song, they could take a break and sing a song. It was super hands-on, creative, and again I was just drawn to the population. I think that day is a pretty strong memory. I can still really remember what the classroom layout looked like and even what some of the kids looked like

From her previous volunteer experience in hospitals, Amelia had started to consider possible options, "the closest thing that was on my radar was actually a child life specialist, which is a position that works in children's hospitals and they manage the well-being of the kids that are there." Her day at the hospital school put all the pieces together. "When I learned about teaching in hospitals I was like, that is the perfect thing, because it combines what I've gone to school now for with this other passion that I've had for a little while with hospitals."

"Literally when I was looking for my current job, I googled hospital schools in America and that's how I found my job. From how I got from [London] to here, it's obviously made a huge impact." After graduation, Amelia found a position in New York City teaching kids on a child

inpatient unit from grades Kindergarten – 6<sup>th</sup>, combining her knowledge of education with this passion for health and well-being.

For Amelia, the skills she learned in the UConn Education in London program shape her daily work interactions in several ways. Her exposure to different cultures, lifestyles, and ways of thinking allowed Amelia to realize “how sheltered I was” and allowed her to “become a little bit more open minded to different ways and trying to see different perspectives.” Additionally, observing the “super hand-on creative” instruction at the hospital school shaped how Amelia approached interactions with students.

Realizing you as a person, and you as a culture, and you as a country are not the center of the world. There are ways to just learn from different people and different cultures and you have to actively try to do that... I think just going with the flow a little more then helped me build more trust with some of the more difficult kids. And I think that was an approach that could be seen as really helpful with the more challenging population

As a hospital school teacher Amelia used this mindset to build relationships with her students.

The kids I was working with in the hospitals were all so different and all had such unique and individual needs and backgrounds and situations that they were going through, so I think some of the same type of perspective that you would need to have to be a good global citizen could correlate to the type of approach you would want to take with kids in a behavioral health hospital.

As Amelia’s career progressed over the past decade, she started travelling across the United States to help support hospital schools and to help start new programs and support the teaching staff at many different locations. Eventually she transitioned into business development for the company. For Amelia, the experience in London was also valuable as her role changed. While abroad, Amelia was engaged in a collaborative research project. She says “that was probably my first time dealing with such a large group, working together on this research project, with all these different styles of communication and organization and passions.” The challenge was “trying to mold that all together into something that I felt really great about.” For Amelia, navigating collaborative research prepared her for the complex structure of her business.

I think that’s transpired a lot into my current life at work. We have the sales team, we have a school district team, we have the teachers, we have our VPs and they are all so different. I have to be able to trust them, and trust that we have the same end goal, and be flexible about how we reach that. I think some of that was probably happening in London in well. Likely it was preparing me to be able to work as a team to accomplish one goal and just let people do their own things, I can’t control everything. So that’s probably something that helped in my professional career too.

For Amelia, her time abroad impacted where she wanted to look for future jobs, and a single day visiting the hospital school in North London changed the course of her future career. It opened up new pathways and led her to a career that she didn’t know existed before London. Amelia uses the skills she developed abroad daily in her professional life.

Basically, it's impacted my entire last 10 years. Literally, I would not have been working for my company if I didn't go to London because I would not have known that hospital teaching jobs existed and working for my company has been my whole past 10 years of where I've lived and how I met my husband.

## Personal Pathway –Finding your Groove

Jackie also had prior international experience, which had started her thinking about teaching abroad, which she set as a goal for herself after graduation. "I had been to Zambia previously and had done an internship, I hadn't gone through the education program yet, I was just kind of helping out in the classroom." Gaining the skills needed to better support international education was central to Jackie's reason for applying.

Deciding to go to London, or applying was also because I had planned to go to Zambia. That was sort of in my path. I was doing an independent study at UConn, I was already planning to try to get there, so I kind of wanted to go to London to have some sort of international experience to help me more understand, because in Zambia they use more of a British style of curriculum. So, I wanted to have a little bit more knowledge on that before going.

And although Jackie did gain new insight into the British curriculum, new pedagogies and instructional styles, and a broader global perspective; she feels that the lasting changes of her participation in the UConn Education in London program are personal. Jackie completed the first two years of college at one of UConn's regional campuses, transferred to main campus for the start of her junior year and began to take classes in the school of education.

Because I went to Avery Point [a UConn regional campus], I didn't have those first two years of college. I transferred to Storrs [main campus], I was a junior in a freshman dorm and my roommate went home every weekend and so I didn't have [a group of friends], and we were in the Neag [School of Education] program and everyone had their friends; so, it was hard to make those friend groups and have those kind of college experiences where you let yourself go wild, let yourself go outside your comfort zone.

Beyond just being a new student where everyone else felt established, Jackie also faced personal pressure and expectations, "I feel like my whole life, I've very much felt like this is what I'm supposed to do. I'm the shy one, I'm the one who works really hard. So, then I kind of put myself in a box and I didn't do a lot of college experiences before London."

Arriving in London, Jackie was intimidated by the size of the city and a bit overwhelmed. She leaned on the other members of the cohort, in particular her roommates and the other interns at her school placement.

I felt right away that my roommates, I was like hmmm I don't have any connection to these [people]. I feel like we were all very different, but I feel like we got to know, had to

kind of come out of our shells to get to know one another which was a great experience. I feel like my group that we were all at [school] together, like the whole getting on the tube, then getting on the bus, all the transfers, getting there, and getting dinner together; like they felt like, if there was somebody in London that I needed to go to, they were my safest people to lean on and rely on.

Having that safety net of her roommates and fellow school interns to rely on, Jackie began to feel safer and more comfortable, and began to step out of her comfort zone and challenge some of the personal expectations she had placed on herself.

I feel like in London, I allowed myself to do that [come out of her comfort zone], and again I felt safe in doing that with the group because everyone is very supportive, but I definitely, I would not even when I was at UConn before London [act like that] ... If I hadn't gone to London, I wouldn't have had that same experience. I probably would have stayed in my apartment and kept to myself and stayed in what I thought was safe and comfortable, and I'm so grateful that I like had that opportunity to be a little silly, be a little crazy, and like do things that were outside of my comfort zone for sure.

The more Jackie opened up to the other members of the cohort, the closer those friendships became, which was not something Jackie had anticipated happening.

I knew a handful of the people that we went to London with, but I didn't know everyone very well and like the whole experience of living together, exploring the new city together, being placed in the same jobs, it really was such a bonding experience for everyone. I built, we all built, these friendships that I've continued in my entire career as a teacher to rely on and I reach out to all of those educators. I have this built in resource that I've always used throughout my years of teaching that I didn't expect.

As Jackie spent time with the other members of the cohort, she started to question some of her assumptions and perceptions about them, realizing that her judgements may have been made prematurely, especially about one member of the group.

She really sticks out in my mind, because she was somebody that I didn't know before London. I had been in classes with her and I had this sort of perception of her as being a sorority girl and just not being the type of person that I would normally be friends with. And how also in a way that she was kind of intimidating to me, seemed a little bit too cool for me to hang out with. And then getting to know her she was somebody that I really connected with in London and felt very safe around, every perception I had of her before was like completely busted when we were there. And she was somebody who I really thought I wouldn't have this connection with, and as our relationship developed, not only in London, but coming back we stayed really close ... I don't know why, but like her family, her mom feels like somebody I know. Like there's just like this connection

Living together, working together, and exploring the city together was essential to forming those close friendships. The group was intentional in getting to know one another, being open, and



spending time together. “I think definitely that first [week] us going and having that day at Hyde Park was huge for us, like us all just coming together and doing something together.” Eating meals together was a regular occurrence for the group, even from the first day.

I feel like us all, even the first day where we all went to that pub that was right next to [where we lived]. And we didn’t even know how the money worked and we were like “uhhh, here, we’re living right next door.” I don’t know how you make that happen that everyone went and we did it all together. And it was such kind of a stupid thing to do. Like if we were more savvy, we would know, where could we ever 14 people go together in London? But we kept trying to do it. We kept all wanting to go together.

The formation of a group identity may have started even earlier than their arrival in London. Jackie recalls that as the group was planning to depart from the US, there was a hurricane which changed everyone’s travel plans.

I also even wonder about like just the whole, there being that storm, that hurricane right before we left, and our trip being pushed back, and then us all having this kind of crazy story to getting there. Like I just have this crazy memory of us all on the plane, all talking about it. I really distinctly remember getting on the bus and taking that coach bus to our apartment and like figuring it out. So, I feel like, I don’t know, I felt like we bonded with people before we even had a chance to start bonding with one another.

Traveling was also key to building relationships and trust. The group planned a trip to Scotland early on together, traveling 15 hours by bus and staying in a 30 person group bunk bed room in a youth hostel.

The time that we took our trip to Scotland, we were all on the bus, and then stayed in that youth hostel together. When we were in London we were all learning a new city together, but then that was like us all exploring and kind of having fun in a new city, and then a lot of us went on that hike the next morning. That had a lot of like really great memories, bonding experiences, with our group, so it was like special that we all got to go on this big trip together. I feel like, honestly that trip stands out in my mind because it was a trip where we really had each other’s back... We all showed each other that we were there and supporting one another. Like we weren’t going to let anyone be left out. We were going to make sure that everyone was comfortable and having fun in their own way, but that we were there as a group... And I know I didn’t want to go on the hike in the morning ... That wasn’t what I had thought the trip would be and I wasn’t prepared. And people were like It’ll be fun. I just remember getting up there and it was beautiful, and doing a little mini rock climbing, and just like yeah, our friends took us out of our comfort zone, but made it so that everything felt like something that everyone could participate in.

As Jackie forged deeper bonds with the other cohort members through traveling, working, living, and exploring together, she was able to open up and try on new roles in the group.

I’ve always felt like, and I still feel like, I’m a person that is there for my friends, and like tries my best to be supportive and kind of motherly. I feel like the London trip allowed

me to not be that person, to be a little bit more vulnerable, put myself in more situations that I probably wouldn't have here, but that I still was able to like care for all of our friends that were there, and that kind of trust built very fast. And I think that I am a very trusting person, still to this day, I form friendships very quickly and want to be there for people all the time.

Jackie's experience in the British school system in some ways echoed her experience with the other members of the cohort, "They were all really good friends at our school, they hung out outside of school." Working in that environment, Jackie was able to see a new perspective on school culture and collegial relationships. The structure of the school system encouraged collaboration and teamwork.

The school that I worked at in London really made sure that the teachers had time to work together as a team, and I've always been, like I want to work with my teammates. I want to plan together; I want to support each other. At the school we were at in London, every Wednesday the teachers had a half day that they met and they planned together for the week out which I thought was very unique... Everyone truly took their lunch and took a break, people didn't do schoolwork, so it was like there were couches set up, there were tables, so everyone sort of sat in clusters, and everyone made a cup of tea or had a cup of coffee, and sat down. That was really a nice time for us to get to know our coworkers. They were asking us about our experience, they would talk to us about what was going on in their lives. A few of them had even invited us, we got dinner out a couple times, we had thanksgiving dinner at someone's house, so the school environment itself, that staff room set this [tone] like we're in this together, this is where we come to talk about our personal lives.

Interning in that type of school environment shaped how Jackie approached her future work. Another significant factor for Jackie's personal growth was the ongoing journal she shared with the professor of one of the classes taken during the program. The journal was a private space for Jackie to make observations, ask questions, and explore new ideas, and the professor, who served as a cultural guide, would respond weekly, asking new questions, providing an insider perspective.

I do feel like I, especially as far as teaching, I'm always looking for sort of like a mentorship relationship and I've always felt comfortable to have somebody come in and observe me and work in my classroom and I've been very reflective on my teaching and I want that feedback, I want to know if I can improve or if I'm doing well... the best thing you can do is learn from others, be willing to ask questions even if you feel like you should know the answer and you might feel stupid or might reveal that you don't know something, it's better in my opinion to ask and get the support than to try to cover it up and I feel like that was sort of something that I learned through that kind of dialogue, a personal dialogue with a teacher that I had where there weren't very many opportunities to have that in other college courses.

For Jackie, the London experience was the first time that she felt safe to step out of her comfort zone, "we created a safe environment. We could be vulnerable with one another." Feeling safe in

being vulnerable with this group allowed Jackie to grow as a person and as a teacher. As the group has continued to be friends over the last 10 years, Jackie has turned to this cohort time and time again.

I've just always felt like I could ask for advice and everyone would be there to support me. I can like run through a situation at school or in my personal life and they've just continued to be a support. And somebody that I want to turn to to ask for advice. There's plenty of other people in my life, like I could go to my coworkers if I had education questions, or to some of my other friends, but like I constantly go back to the London group

## Hybrid Pathway – Finding Connections in Work and Life

“Oh, my goodness. Where do I start?” Belle’s recollections about London are varied and include both personal and professional moments.

I remember all the trips we went on together. Scotland, the four countries in seven days. I remember when we went with David to Oxford and Cambridge. And then Katherine (Professor) took us on the walking tour. Her dad led us around too. Ye Olde Cheshire cheese. We went to a play. I remember that, we went to a play one night, all of us in the West End. I feel like I have so many different assortments of memories.

An English major, Belle had previously done a summer study abroad program to London, but didn't feel like she had been able to integrate into city life during that program, so the semester long program provided her an opportunity to really live as a Londoner.

Knowing that we were there for months, as opposed to a six week program, I think was something that really stuck with me because I realized that this was going to be my home for the semester. And so, getting used to the flat, getting used to the neighborhood, that all stuck out to me, excited me, because we got to be part of a community in that regard. And then obviously our internship experience was something that stood out to me because we were there, we were working. What really stood out to me was the day that we were told we had to find our way from our flat to our internship place. Here's your oyster card go navigate...I remember our oyster cards only went to zone five or six. They stopped at a certain zone. And [my internship school] was the zone right before that. So, we just kept taking the tube out, out, out. We were like when do we get off? So, I remember doing that... I think actually living and being part of the culture and community was probably the biggest takeaway. Our internships were interesting in their own experiences, and getting to work there and be a part of that was something that I'll forever remember. Especially because [the internship school] was so unique in a lot of ways. But I think knowing that, for four months, for an entire semester, we lived, worked, went out, repeat, everything. So, we had to get over the excitement hump of living in London and get used to the everyday norms and assimilate in that regard.

While abroad, the internship experience and the coursework challenged Belle's conception of what it means to be a teacher. Belle was placed at a hospital school in North London, working with a team of teachers to provide individualized instruction to students on the psychiatric ward. This environment was unlike any previous experience Belle had had with the school of education, and forced her to take a second look at some of her beliefs about education. "In my mind, I wanted high school and I wanted the "Dead Poet's Society" classroom." Belle's internship placement was far from the image of her idealized classroom, instead she walked into a setting built on trust and openness where relationships with the students were crucial to success.

I think all of us found connections with teachers and with students, but I think for me in that really unique environment, I was able to see teachers respond to whatever it was those students needed, whatever it was. But also, there were moments, like I'm thinking when somebody had an actual tantrum. And I just remember [the director] saying like "no" and she walked away and she had to be firm at times. And she said "there are days you are firm and then there are days you have to laugh. Because some of this stuff is so ridiculous you just have to laugh it off because otherwise you'll be so upset for the rest of your life." Her perspective on everything was just, she was so candid but she was so caring and compassionate about those kids, their world, and the world they were going to leave when they left that school. And I think that really helped me think about what it is that I want for myself, for my students, for my daughter, for my family that kind of helped me figure it out a little bit more.

Taking the time to get to know each student, what they wanted and needed, was core to the practice of that school. "Not only did they show us that there's other ways to be a teacher. It wasn't like their way was right and ours was wrong. It was just exposing that there's different viewpoints and there's no right way." When Belle returned to the US, she got a job teaching 8<sup>th</sup> grade and she started to think about how she could take what she had learned in her internship and apply it to this setting.

I think I saw, after I accepted, and took some time realizing I wasn't going to get the classroom of my dreams I think I realized when I was in there, there's so much I can do here... You kind of figured out exactly what you wanted your role to be because you had that clarity now.

The open and trusting environment that she felt at the internship school wasn't just for students, her internship supervisor challenged Belle to be more open. "It was okay to be emotional and it was okay to be scared by things but it was okay to just bring yourself into the classroom and let your students get to know you on a personal level and that was normal." Belle was also challenged by the courses she took in London. The program director and a British course instructor who served as a cultural guide for the cohort constantly pushed Belle to question her perspective and think about things from a new point of view.

I remember David explaining this to us in the beginning, people don't think of England as a foreign country that you are going into a different place. But he said to us you really have to immerse yourself in it. You have to be a British citizen to the best that you can

be, even though we're on a visa. Go through the entire motion, go through the excitement of being there, go through the mundane of working here, go through the parts where you hate the culture and then go back to where you appreciate it and respect it. And I think doing that and you know, we were in it day in and day out. It wasn't like we were constantly wondering about what was going on at home, we weren't. I think as a collective group when we were there, we were there 100%. And we did everything that we thought was in the best interest of the situation that we were in. whether it was interning, our project, living, traveling. So, I think that stuck with me. If you're going to go into something and you're going to make a decision to do it, then you do it. And you do it to the fullest extent. And you weigh the benefits and consequences. And if you find yourself in a situation where maybe you are disagreeing with something or you're not understanding something, you take yourself out and you look at it from a different perspective and you come back to it. And you give yourself that time to process.

I really enjoyed Katherine's class. She constantly made us challenge our thinking, she had us reflect constantly. And the journals, and the writing about our experiences. I think that reflective discussion and questioning that she had us do has stayed with me. Because I constantly try to take a step back and think about things in a different way, in a different perspective.

For Belle, this semester abroad was the longest she had been away from home and it was an opportunity for her to start to imagine what she wanted her life to look like. As she navigated the city and a new professional landscape, Belle found a new sense of independence and self-confidence.

I think a personal turning point was my parents came to visit and when they left. It sounds bad, but I like wanted them to leave. So, they came out, and I was very excited to see them when they came out, and I remember I got like emotional when I saw them, which I wasn't expecting. But then when they left I was like, I want to keep doing me. I'm okay. I want to keep doing me. And that was a huge turning point for me. For years I thought I was independent. But in that moment I was like, I really can do things, and make it, and make my own decisions, and I'm going to be okay.

Spending time with the group was important to Belle, sharing Thanksgiving in London is one of her favorite memories.

It was the first time we were away from family on a major holiday. Not just away, but like six hours, different country, different everything. And more than that we wanted to bring our traditions in so everybody took their own component of the meal and we all made it and we all sat down together and had it. I think that was really, I consider that a high point because it just showed us all coming together truly in this moment we wanted to be there, we wanted to have these memories together. We weren't trying to figure out ways to run home or do other things and avoid it. We all approached it at the same time. I thought it was something that brought us all a little bit closer with one another

Yet for Belle, it was also important to be her own person and do her own thing. Another cherished memory is riding the bus around her favorite parts of London and listening to Christmas music in her final weeks in London. While other members of the cohort went out to pubs or bars, Belle, myself and another member of our group set out to just experience the holidays in London in a new way.

There was a little bit of that homesickness kicking in but also at the same time a little of the sadness that we were leaving sooner than later... We got to do what we wanted to do in that moment and we didn't speak. We sat on a bus with our iPods and our headphones and we drove through our favorite parts of London and just really made it a memorable night for all of us. For different reasons. But it was a shared experience... I feel like looking back on that I didn't want to ruin the moment. I didn't want to let people in on the secret. Like no, you can't have this, this was ours.

Understanding and being comfortable being like I need some me time and I need to do some things you might not necessarily like or agree with but I need them for me. I think those are huge.

These experiences may have felt ancillary to core work of interning in schools and other program requirements in the moment, yet they taught Belle valuable lessons about the life she wanted to lead in her future. As she returned to the US and began teaching, Belle tried to find ways to bring these new ways of thinking to her career and to her life at home.

I don't want to completely lose everything that I have, so what can I bring from my experiences, London included, into this classroom? What do I want my students to get out of it? And I remember my first year teaching, Jackie and I connected because I had my students, it wasn't Zoom but whatever webcam situation, we talked to each other when she was in Zambia and that was like a really big thing for the school, for the district and I remember feeling really proud that. Here was one of those global citizenship things that we really focused on in London that I actually got to bring to a group of kids that would have never had this sort of experience, and kind of popping their bubble and their world a little bit more. And that I think was really the catalyst for me, in what can I do, what small little things can I do as a classroom teacher that will constantly allow students to have their horizons broadened a little more? How could I start conversations? How could I get them to think outside of their personal bubble, their community? And think about the world at large? So that led me to become really passionate, and we did social issue projects, curriculum, it led me to really kind of ask some questions and get to know them on a deeper level. But I really tried to figure out what it was that they wanted, what kind of things they were interested in and I think that stayed with me regardless of the classroom and school that I was in.

Just as Katherine constantly challenged Belle's thinking, Belle sought to ask questions of her own students to get them to reflect and to ask questions about the world and their experience.

The personal changes also impacted Belle's life as the years went on. She taught 8<sup>th</sup> grade for several years, got married and started a family, and she started to think more about some of the things she had experienced in London.

The self-care that they did, which none of us experienced, because we stayed up till 3 am doing work and prepping. And so that really made me take a step back and be like, the work will be there tomorrow and that's okay. There are other things in your life that are important and if you're not happy with those other things you can't be there for the students that are in front of you. And that was a huge takeaway for me also... And I think that is kind of what pushed me to take this coaching role. Now that I did start a family and I have other goals in my life. Do I want to be grading papers until however long at night? Or do I want to have the time with my family? Do I want to still have an impact on school and still work with teachers and be around students? Yeah, but it definitely helped me start thinking about my priorities. And I think that's huge especially when you're 22/21 and you set out to get a job.

## Conclusions

For each of these women, their international experience had significant impact on them, yet in varied ways. For Amelia her previous international experiences positioned her to arrive in London seeking something different. She took living in the city and living as a Londoner as serious work and sought to experience life like a member of the host nation. In doing this, she discovered that she wanted to live in a city, and sought a job that would allow her to live in a city. Amelia knew she wanted to have a career in education but was unsure what this could look like outside of the classroom and her time in London explicitly revealed a career path that she could envision herself doing every day. Upon returning to the United States, she immediately started working towards making a career in hospital schools her reality. Savva (2015) suggests that searching for a first job is influenced not only by job availability but also by the experiences of one's teacher preparation program. This is certainly the case for Amelia, who didn't know the career she has even existed prior to going abroad. Her experience abroad not only helped Amelia find her career but gave her practical skills to thrive in the different positions she has held in that career.

For Jackie, the connections she formed with the group and the safety net the group provided were essential for her to let down her guard. This experience allowed Jackie to live a life she had previously imagined, but felt unattainable to her. The group supported Jackie and allowed her to try new roles and have new experiences, always "had her back" and didn't judge her. Returning to the US, Jackie sought to keep as much of this new personality that she had developed in London alive and surrounded herself with friends and colleagues who would be a support system for her. This group has continued to be a support to Jackie, who has turned to them to ask questions about her current teaching and help her consider new perspectives. Her journey was personal, reflexive and grounded in a deep sense of self.

Belle imagined a future for herself both personally and professionally while abroad. She thought a lot about quality of life and the type of interactions she wanted to have with her students,

friends, and her family. Belle's experience in a school where relationships were critical changed how she approached school interactions and in her professional life she sought to ask deeper questions to better understand the needs of her students. The experience abroad broadened her worldview, which she then seeks to do for her students. Yet the self-care she noticed while abroad served as a reminder to her that she must find balance in her life. Additionally, Belle's time abroad allowed her to come to a new understanding of what it means to be independent and envision a life in which she could live out these experiences.

## Observations and Recommendations

Ten years on from participating in the program, these pathways offer important considerations for program designers and facilitators. We close this chapter with some key observations and recommendations that have transformed the UConn Education in London Program from what might be considered a typical study abroad offering to an intentionally designed experience fostering a broad range of outcomes and pathways designed to meet the aims and needs of each participant. One thing that struck us most clearly while interviewing these women is that small moments had powerful lasting impacts. For Amelia, her most powerful moment of the trip was one single day visiting the hospital school in North London. Amelia interned at a secondary school, yet it is her single day visit to the hospital school set her on a career path that she has followed for over a decade. Although, there is no way for program designers and facilitators to entirely predict what experience(s) will have a lasting impact – but that doesn't mean they are powerless to impact the trajectories of participants. In the program reported on here, the participants are 21 and 22 years old, just beginning to think about what they want their future, both professionally and personally, to look like. They are, however, poised to ask questions about themselves, their identity, their chosen career, and the world that awaits them. Many study abroad programs intentionally plan for critical consideration of culture, pedagogy, and education, yet as the pathways outlined here demonstrate, personal growth and identity are equally powerful. This should not be taken lightly by program staff, who must find ways to support participants as they grapple with these big questions. For the UConn Education in London program this role is shared by two individuals, the program director and a host country professor who teaches one of the required courses and serves as a cultural guide for participants (Moss et al., 2018). Both embody the characteristics of humanistic mentoring (Norman & Ganser, 2004) listening to participants and allowing them to share their struggles as they grapple with cultural contradictions and the formation of self. Neither seek to minimize these struggles or make them go away, rather they guide participants to lean into them, ask questions and reflect. Additionally, both mentors excel at genuine conversation (Gadamer, 2004; Sheridan & Young, 2017) and open dialogue where participants feel free to share their honest thoughts and struggles. It feels like a conversation between two partners rather than the mentor leading and bracketing the discourse through predetermined channels. These conversations take place in a variety of settings; during coursework, through a shared journal with the professor, at coffee shops, on the tube, over a pint at the local pub, or waiting for a train, all offering participants opportunities to discuss their experiences and challenges and imagine future pathways for themselves. During my time abroad and for several years after participating, the program director regularly asked me what my “5 year plan” was, encouraging me to consider what I wanted my pathway to look like and helped me think about what the next step would be. The role of program director must go beyond merely the logistics of plane tickets, school placements, and academic content and support



participants through the lenses of the many facets of how participants see and embrace their experience abroad. Formal training for such key roles is an area for consideration. At UConn, formal professional learning around issues of risk and student conduct compliance are required for key personnel, yet the broader notions of mentoring and such are left to individuals. The Neag School is fortunate to have a critical mass of international teacher education programs, including such sites as Cape Town, South Africa and Cuzco, Peru (Back et al., 2021) and through such a critical mass of program directors there is an informal network of sharing, reflection, and professional learning helping to support this mentoring work.

The group identity can be an incredibly powerful force for international cohorts. As Americans abroad, participants may cling to the cohort as the only familiar anchor in a sea of unknowns. The Fall 2011 cohort forged exceptionally close bonds, and those bonds have remained, with the cohort gathering together yearly and turning to each other for personal and professional support. We recognize that not all cohorts form such close bonds, and although the ways in which those bonds were formed is beyond the scope of this chapter, we will suggest three possible factors as described by our participants. The fall 2011 cohort, with 14 participants, was the largest group that the UConn Education in London Program had yet experienced to date and in their pre-orientation workshops, the program director mentioned that reality several times. While he did orient participants to this fact to be explicit about the challenges of so many voices learning, living and working together, participants felt that the assigned group designation as the largest group, and therefore special, served to cement bonds even before arriving in London. Second, many participants highlighted a group trip to Scotland planned early on in their time abroad. It is important to note that this trip was not planned by the university, rather the participants collaborated to choose a destination and the activities of the trip. In planning they were careful to consider finances and the diverse interests of the group. As a result, we took a £5 bus, stayed in a large group room in a youth hostel, went hiking and to museums. The group purposefully sought to make everyone feel welcome and part of the group, which may have helped to form the supportive and welcoming group identity. Finally, in this group, people felt willing to open up and share about themselves and curious about the other members of the group. This desire to understand each other, paired with the group's desire to support everyone may have had unique positive effects on the participants.

It is important to remember that the learning that happens while abroad is much larger than just what happens in classrooms. Participants are asking questions about their world, deciding what they want their future to look like, and experimenting with their identity. It is imperative that programs honor the responsibility of sending preservice teachers abroad and recognize the seemingly small moments that have lasting effects on participants' personal and professional paths. Research beyond traditional academic and/or professional aims could shed much needed light on these elusive yet impactful and catalytic experiences.

The intentional program elements of the UConn Education in London Program position participants to consider not only the cultural and academic experience(s) but also to consider their own identity (Wenger, 1998) and formation of self. The key elements of coursework with an international focus, a school based masters-level inquiry research project, and the teaching internship provide the context for participants to reflect on the role of the teacher, curriculum, and school and experience new pedagogies. Additionally, the program is intentionally placed in

the final year of an integrated bachelor/master's program. Traveling abroad post student teaching allows participants to think beyond the daily interactions within a classroom to consider larger issues impacting education. Immersion is another key program element. Before traveling abroad, participants complete a required summer course that primes them to be sensitive to culture, prepare for their research project and establish lines of communication with each other (Marx & Moss, 2017). Once abroad, moments of cultural dissonance and personal conflict are not minimized, rather participants lean into those moments of dissonance to gain a better understanding of culture. Participants are not simply left to suffer, rather support is provided at key moments.

A final program element is the emphasis on experiences. It is clear from the stories shared in this chapter that experiences lead to other experiences and possibly to a change in participants future pathways. It is impossible to predict which of the experiences in a semester abroad will have lasting impact, but program designers can position participants for the best possible success by including intentional design elements that promote both personal and professional growth in enduring ways. The intentional design transforms the program from merely 15 weeks abroad to a purposeful program with specific aims and potentially lasting effects. For Amelia, Belle, and Jackie, the intentional program design and special combination of support provided by the program director, in-country cultural guide, and the group allowed them to see London, schools, and themselves in new ways. Through this chapter we have highlighted some program elements and features identified by participants as especially powerful for their growth. The pathways taken by Belle, Amelia, and Jackie highlight the diverse range of potential outcomes of pre-service teacher study abroad. The international experience is a central capstone element of their preservice teacher preparation and allowed them to grow both personally and professionally, ultimately influencing the actions they take in the classroom.

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