An Exploration of Self: Examining the Long-term Impacts of a Pre-service Teacher Education

Abroad Program

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# Abstract

Schools are sites where students and teachers of diverse identities and backgrounds come together. Thus, the development of intercultural competence and the ability to interact positively across linguistic, cultural, and racial lines of difference is essential. Intercultural competence values difference, and is the skills, attitudes, and knowledge necessary to have positive interactions. Pre-service teacher education abroad has been offered as a strategy to expose pre-service teachers to difference and help foster intercultural competence. In order to realize this vision, education abroad experiences must be thoughtfully designed. There are many components to an education abroad experience for pre-service teachers, including pre-departure orientation, coursework, the school based experience, and re-entry. Much research about education abroad focuses on the time abroad, leaving questions about long-term impact.

This research describes participant reflections about participation in a pre-service teacher education abroad more than five years ago. Drawing on data from a questionnaire and semi-structured interviews that included a visual component that I term "identity cartography," this research does not seek to prove impact, but rather to describe it. Participants described meaningful personal impact which also allowed them to shape their professional image and ideas. Each aspect of program design offered the potential for meaningful and memorable experiences, and the findings of this research show how participants curated their own experience within the context of program elements. One strategy participants engaged in was

seeking what they considered to be 'authentic' experiences and creating cinematic reflective moments. This research highlights the importance of the role of mentorship in education abroad experiences. The findings of this research highlight the individual nature of impact and show how participants considered their education abroad experience as impactful in various ways.

# An Exploration of Self: Examining the Long-term Impacts of a Pre-service Teacher Education Abroad Program

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*Traveling – it leaves you speechless, then turns you into a storyteller*
– Ibn Battuta –

Dedicated to my London 14 Cohort: I couldn't have imagined this without all of you

Doctor of Philosophy Dissertation


An Exploration of Self: Examining the Long-Term Impacts of a Pre-Service Teacher Education
Abroad Program



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One of the best parts of any journey is the planning, when you get to imagine all of the possibilities and imagine new and exciting things. Then, as anyone who has traveled knows, the journey begins and you find out things were not exactly as you imagined. But if you are open to it that's where some of the best memories can be made. My journey to the completion of this dissertation has been much the same. When I began the process of graduate school, the world had not yet heard of the Covid-19 pandemic. I had no idea what lie in store for me, both as I grew as a scholar and as a person. And that growth would not have been possible without the guidance, support, and love of many people.

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# Chapter 1: Introduction

*Travel isn't always pretty. It isn't always comfortable. Sometimes it hurts, it even breaks your heart. But that's okay. The journey changes you; it should change you. It leaves marks on your memory, on your consciousness, on your heart, and on your body. You take something with you. Hopefully, you leave something good behind.*

– Anthony Bourdain –

## Researcher Reflection and Inspiration

Throughout the course of human history people have sought new destinations and to learn from others' knowledge and perspectives. Travel predates the existence of nation-states and international borders. History is full of stories of people who sought the freedom of the open road, encountered wise men, barbarians and savages, exotic beauties and sages and then returned home full of stories and new knowledge about the mysterious wide world. Some have no desire to ever leave the comforts and familiarity of home. But for many, the pull of travel is too strong to resist.

This mysterious pull of travel is something that I have felt since I was a teenager looking around my small town and just knowing there was something else out there. I've followed this across oceans – stargazing at night on the open sea, trekking through the Sahara, singing in Notre Dame Cathedral, eating foods I couldn't pronounce and wasn't really sure what they were, and meeting fascinating people. With each new journey, my desire to travel has only grown. Every traveler has their own arsenal of stories from their journeys and they love to share them.

Understanding these stories as more than simply a great tale, but as evidence of how international experiences change our worldview and transform us into new versions of ourselves has been my goal as a developing scholar. I choose to research this realm, because it has been

true in my own life experience. As noted by Anthony Bourdain in the quote that opened this chapter, the journey changed me. I've taken so much from my experiences abroad and they have marked my memory, my consciousness, my heart, and my body. For me, the UConn Education in London program changed my life. I grew up in a very homogenous area of south-central Pennsylvania and didn't have many experiences that challenged my worldview or exposed me to difference in meaningful ways. Many of the experiences in my formative years suggested to me that there was one "right" way to do things and that it was my job to learn and live it. I became quite adept at learning what was expected of me to succeed and masquerading as such. And I was good at it. I knew how I was expected to talk, dress, and act in any situation. This affected both my personal and professional life, and I think it is one of several reasons why it took me many years to uncover my own sexuality and come out. I wouldn't come to recognize this until years later, but these expectations for success, and for life, were steeped in dominant white, heteronormative, American culture. And these influences were so strong that I struggled with anything that pushed against them. At that time in my life, I didn't have the language to name or understand these influences on my life, but I did know that I didn't feel fulfilled and didn't feel like I totally "fit" the mold. In fact, for much of my younger years I would have struggled to identify that I even had a culture. Historically my family has German and English roots, but we don't hold fast to traditions or heritage, so I might have said American, but I wouldn't have been able to describe what that meant. My journey to understanding culture, both broadly and also my own culture began at the University of Connecticut and has been something that has become a central focus of my life as a scholar.

I first stumbled into culture almost on accident when I enrolled in an introductory anthropology course, but I was hooked. From there I started searching for courses that would

expose me to new knowledge wherever I could find them. I enrolled in "Sub-Saharan African Literature and Culture," "Asian-American Literature," "An Ethnohistory of Native New England," and "Language, Culture, and Thought" in an effort to broaden my horizons. While these courses offered me an introduction to new ways of thinking and challenged me to ask broad questions, the learning here was solely academic. Learning about culture wouldn't become transformative for me until I enrolled in the UConn Education in London program in 2011. The program spans a full year, including pre-departure course work, an inquiry research project, a semester abroad, and a re-entry semester seminar. The combination of the coursework and the opportunity to live, work, and study in London brought learning about culture from an academic endeavor into the real world.

From the beginning of my time in the UConn Education in London program, I felt a sense of possibility that was new and exciting. The pre-departure coursework introduced me to new theories and models about culture. The pre-departure coursework had two core aims: to explore the concept of culture and to set the foundation for the inquiry research project. My cohort investigated the ways in which the national curriculum of the United Kingdom prepared students to become global citizens. Working with my cohort to develop research questions, interview protocols, and a student global citizen activity matrix was new and exciting, something I had never done before. This was transformation in an academic sense, where for the first time my learning wasn't connected merely to a final exam or paper, but to bigger questions that I wanted to ask about the world and to ideas that I was seeking to understand for myself, not for an assignment. My cohort was set to arrive in London in late 2011, but Hurricane Irene had different plans, closing down airports along the east coast and forcing us to make new travel plans. This early lesson in the unpredictability of travel and the importance of travel was

something that would be repeated often for me while abroad, most notably on a flight to Munich where weather conditions forced the plane to reroute and land in Memmingen, Germany and I had to use my rudimentary German skills to understand what city we had landed in and how to get to our desired destination. This was an important lesson for me, and developing the confidence in myself to navigate unfamiliar places and adapt is one way that my time in London was personally transformative.

The other way that my experience in London was personally transformative was through the interactions with "the London 14," my cohort of classmates and friends. Initially this group approached one another warily, as many of us didn't know each other before beginning the program. Take a sunny day in Hyde Park, some fun icebreaker games, throw in a few bottles of wine and blocks of cheese, and new relationships started to form. As the experience continued the cohort would become a valued source of support. This group of brilliant and phenomenal women allowed me to explore new parts of my identity in a safe and supportive space, and when I was ready to come out, they would be among the easiest people to come out to. Beyond providing a safe space for each other, the cohort challenged each other's thinking, as we represented a wide array of past experiences and perspectives. We spent many hours passing time in local pubs talking about big ideas, the purpose of schooling, and our understanding of culture. Having this group of women to support me and challenge me allowed me to see myself in new ways, which is the other way that the experience was personally transformative.

I began to ask questions about the assumptions and expectations for success that had up until then shaped my life. My time in the UConn Education in London program allowed me to see these bigger cultural structures, and once I could name and see them, then I could begin to challenge them. It was while abroad that I realized that the path that had been set before me, the

path that didn't quite feel like it "fit" the way I wanted it to, that path didn't have to be my path. While abroad, I made the decision that I wanted to pursue a career in international teaching, something which I didn't even know was an option before enrolling in the UConn Education in London program. This program set me on a path of personal, professional, and academic exploration that has led me to this dissertation. I recognize that my own experiences shape how I ask questions, conduct and analyze interviews, and draw conclusions, and I will discuss my positionality and the ways that I have worked to mitigate my biases in a later section of this dissertation. However, it is clear to me that my own experiences are what led me to choose this realm of research and provide me with the inspiration to ask questions about pre-service teacher education abroad.

## Study Context and Background

Our culture and worldview serve as our primary lens through which we interpret the world. Thus, it is crucial for teacher education programs to help preservice teachers understand not only their own cultural lens but also challenge them to understand and embrace other lenses. This work is complex, yet powerful, and helps prepare pre-service teachers to interact with others of different backgrounds in positive and meaningful ways. As we imagine new possible futures for education, that embraces the full range of identities and supports historically marginalized communities, and challenges traditional notions of education, understanding someone else's worldview and honoring the unique knowledge that they hold is a critical aim of teacher education programs. But the question is, how do we help pre-service teachers develop these lenses? Pre-service teacher education abroad has been offered as a way to enhance pre-service teacher education and offer opportunities for pre-service teachers to embrace diversity

and develop intercultural competence, a necessary skill for thriving in today's global society and building meaningful relationships.

There is a growing body of literature surrounding the time that preservice teachers are abroad, with researchers seeking to examine growth and learning in intercultural experiences including an exploration of (a) personal and professional growth, (b) intercultural/cross-cultural/multicultural learning, diversity, and global citizenship/global awareness, (c) benefits and challenges of international experiences, (d) program elements, and (e) pre-service teacher identity and perception of self (Simmons, Marx & Moss, 2020). However, once pre-service teachers return to the United States (US) there is significantly less research seeking to understand how their time abroad has impacted them. Several studies explore the re-entry seminar and some reconnected with participants 12 or 16 months post-trip (Back, Kaufman & Moss, 2021; Hauerwas, Skawinski & Ryan, 2017; Marx & Moss, 2016). However, research beyond two years post-experience is virtually nonexistent, leaving significant questions unanswered about the long term impacts of an education abroad experience.

Outside of education, Smith and Curry (2011) explored long term effects of a two week experience in Ecuador for international nursing students. Using CeCelia Zorn's International Education Survey, they found that respondents had the highest mean score for development of their professional role as a nurse. Livert (2016) explored the long term effects of a group of chefs traveling to Vietnam. He found that after a decade their interactions abroad still resonated with chefs and they had increased and lasting affinity for Vietnamese cuisine and Vietnamese people, suggesting that the experience resonated for the chefs personally. Paige et al. (2009) conducted a large scale of study abroad participants between 1960-2005. They found that over 80% of respondents felt that study abroad had a strong impact on their college experience. Additionally,

they found that almost 95% voted regularly, 60% enrolled in advanced degree programs, and 35% felt that study abroad helped them in their career, suggesting both civic and professional long-term impacts.

My literature search also revealed a handful of studies focused on teacher education that consider long term impacts of pre-service teacher education abroad. Maynes, Allison, and Julien-Schultz (2013) examined impacts of a Canadian teacher education program that sent teacher education students to teach in Kenya for an NGO for up to three weeks. After four years, they reconnected with two of the participants who reported that their time in Kenya had become part of their story and felt that this experience had influenced their commitment to social justice and had impacted aspects of their current lifestyle and career choices. Shively and Misco (2013) explored the impact of participation in an international experience and a course titled "Comparing US and European Schools" with participants from 2000-2013. Participants reported that their time abroad helped them stand out in the job search and shaped their teaching philosophies. While these studies help us begin to think about the impact of education abroad experiences, there remain significant questions about the ways in which participants make sense of their experience and how their experience impacts their personal and professional life. This dissertation is my endeavor to understand the ways in which education abroad has impacted the lives of participants, and to understand the lasting marks it left on them.

### *Education Abroad*

Earlier this year I taught a freshman seminar course aimed to help students in their transition to university life. In one of the classes, we talked about education abroad, and when I asked the students how many of them were interested in studying abroad, almost every hand went up. Some students had a specific destination in mind, while others just liked the idea of it.

In our discussion, the phrase, "College is the only time in my life where I'll have this opportunity" was said often. Historically, this experience has been referred to as study abroad, and in popular conversation, that is still often the case. However, I prefer the phrase *education abroad.* I conceptualize education abroad as much more than the academic coursework. Students engaging in education abroad learn in the classroom, but there is also significant experiential learning that occurs outside of classrooms. Interacting with members of the host nation, navigating a new location, trying new foods or languages, and calculating new currencies all provide context for important learning. Beyond that, the experience of stepping out of the familiar and into a new environment spurs participants to consider their selves and identities in new ways. Clarke (2009) noted that education abroad facilitated personal growth leading to students adopting new worldviews. The key to adopting these new and expanded worldviews, according to Lee (2012) is meaningful interaction with people of different cultures. Lee described meaningful interaction as interaction which went beyond pleasantries and allowed participants to ask questions about someone's worldview and their experiences. Through these meaningful interactions students abroad were able to critically reflect on their own beliefs and values, supporting Clarke's claim that education abroad led to new worldviews and perspectives.

During the 2017-2018 academic year, 341,751 students from the United States (U.S.) studied abroad, which was a 2.7% increase from the previous year according to the 2019 Open Doors Report (the most recent pre-covid report). 54.9% of students went to Europe with the United Kingdom hosting 39,403 students, Italy hosting 36,845, and Spain hosting 32,411 students. Outside of Europe, 50,807 students traveled to Latin America and 38,408 students traveling to Asia. 2017-2018 saw a rise in summer education abroad program participation with

38.5% selecting a summer program compared to 30.3% engaging in a fall or spring semester program.

However, despite increases in participation and popular conversation surrounding education abroad, it is important to note that education abroad is not open to all populations. The cost of education abroad may be prohibitive for some populations (Stroud, 2010). Further, education abroad is a very white space. In 2017-2018, the majority of participants were female (67%) and white (70%). Black students express concerns about education abroad, citing financial constraints, lack of support from family, faculty and/or friends, lack of programs of interest, fear of the unknown, and not seeing a direct link to career aspirations (Murray Brux & Fry, 2010; Willis, 2015). Simon and Ainsworth (2012) explored institutional gatekeeping and suggest that faculty and study abroad personnel may neglect black students due to a perception that they are not interested or not the "typical" candidate. For as much as education abroad has become part of the popular narrative of college, there remain significant barriers to participation, and while these barriers are not the focus of this dissertation, they are important to name.

For teacher preparation students, education abroad can be a challenge due to the complex licensure requirements and strict progression of required course. Only 3.3% of all U.S. education abroad students were education majors in 2017-2018. Given the important learning that occurs while abroad, and the push to develop culturally responsive teachers, education abroad can be a powerful tool for pre-service teachers, particularly if education abroad is intentionally built into their program and designed to support their development as preservice teachers.

**Intercultural Competence in Teacher Development**

It is essential that schools and colleges of education prepare future teachers who are capable of recognizing the unique brilliance of their students and viewing their background and

life experiences as assets to their learning. Embracing and celebrating student identities is at the core of culturally responsive teaching. Sleeter notes that currently what pre-service teachers learn about race and culturally responsive pedagogy is "not sufficiently potent to disrupt deficit theorizing about students, particularly in schools under pressure to raise student test scores" (2017, p. 157). Before one can begin to disrupt deficit theorizing about students, one must understand their own identity. For as Arthur et al. (2020) note, "It is not only students and parents who have a cultural identity; teachers bring their socialization experiences, values and beliefs to their professional roles as teachers" (p. 1). Teacher education must provide experiences for pre-service teachers to explore their own identities, and then use that exploration as a springboard to embrace the diversity of their students.

International experiences for pre-service teachers offer important opportunities for pre-service teachers to embrace diversity and develop intercultural teaching and learning skills (Cushner, 2007). Intercultural competence can be considered as the skills, knowledge, and attitudes necessary for a person to have successful interactions with people who are different from them. These concepts are taken from the Council of Europe's Competencies for Democratic Culture Frameworks (2018a; 2018b) which will be discussed in greater detail in the literature review. The framework conceptualizes attitudes, skills, values, and knowledge and critical understanding as resources that one can draw on in intercultural interactions. International experiences, which immerse students in an unfamiliar environment, may help pre-service teachers confront difference in meaningful ways, which can help them begin to shift from an ethnocentric worldview to an ethnorelative worldview. These experiences with difference are deliberate and push pre-service teachers beyond their comfort zone (Ingersoll et al., 2019),

allowing them to gain deeper understanding and empathy for their future students, which is important on their journey to becoming intercultural educators.

## Statement of Purpose

International experiences for preservice teachers that position them to understand their own identity and critically reflect on culture are an essential element to helping develop intercultural educators. And there is a growing body of literature exploring the time that pre-service teachers are abroad. However, there is a concerning gap in the research exploring the long-term impacts of pre-service teacher education abroad programs.

This leaves us with significant questions about the claims made by researchers about the outcomes of their programs. Is learning a few words and phrases in a foreign language evidence of an ethnorelative worldview? Does observing global poverty or donating supplies translate to an understanding of economic challenges in the U.S. context? Does being asked to provide "the American perspective" change your teaching practices in a U.S. classroom? Are positive reflections on their time abroad and statements such as "I love this country" an indication of lasting changes in perspective? Does observing new behavior management techniques change the behavior management strategies used in U.S. classrooms later?

Without systematic studies that explore the long-term impacts of pre-service teacher education abroad, we don't know that the valuable learning evidenced during their time abroad translates into long-term evolution of action. This dissertation aims to uncover the ways in which participation in a semester-long pre-service teacher education abroad program in London was impactful for participants. By interrogating what experiences participants consider to be most meaningful and discovering the program elements that shape their time abroad, I hope to offer a

set of pathways and a way of thinking about impact that is meaningful for other program contexts.

**Overview of Research and Research Questions**

Grounded in my experiences as a developing scholar and my review of the literature it is my belief that participation in pre-service teacher education abroad has lasting impacts on participants. This belief is also shaped by my experiences as an alumni of a pre-service teacher education abroad program. I speculate that these impacts are both personal and professional, with the potential to shape everything from classroom interactions to curricular choices, values, beliefs about the purpose of education to the types and locations of desired jobs. Further, I believe that the unique combination of program elements and experiences and one's identity intersect to shape how these impacts appear in their lives. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to describe and interpret long term impacts of participation in pre-service teacher education abroad, particularly as it relates to their intercultural competence and sense of personal and professional self. The overarching research question guiding my proposed dissertation study is: In what ways do former participants in a pre-service teacher education abroad program make sense of their experience and consider it impactful? Specifically, I will explore:

1. In what ways do participants in a pre-service teacher education abroad program say the experience of participating in an education abroad program impacted their personal and professional selves?

    a. How does it impact their classroom practices and career trajectory?

    b. How does it impact their relationships with students, colleagues, or community?

    c. How does it impact their personal relationships?

2. In what ways do they say the experience of participating in an education abroad program impacted their developing views of culture and their intercultural competence?

   a. How does it impact their values, attitudes, skills, knowledge and critical understandings?

3. What are the self-defining memories that participants in a pre-service teacher education abroad program identify and how are they connected to program design?

   a. What experiences and components of program design, school-based or non-school based seem to impact their growth?

## Significance of Research

I believe this research makes several valuable contributions to the field. First, it is the only study that I am aware of that seeks to understand long term impacts of participation in pre-service teacher education abroad. This research seeks to emphasize the individual experiences of participants and highlight unique transformative and impactful experiences. Beyond that, the program context for this research offers one of the few programs that sends pre-service teachers abroad post student teaching. Much of the research on pre-service teacher education abroad focuses on undergraduate students, such as the research on the Consortium for Overseas Teaching (COST) which examines international student teaching experiences. The UConn Education Abroad in London Program examines the experience of master's students in their final year of an integrated bachelors/master's program. Thus, this dissertation offers a valuable contribution to the developing field of pre-service teacher abroad research. Second, this research accentuates program design and components in a way that is not often found in existing research into pre-service teacher education abroad. I believe that intentional program design is the key to developing impactful experiences. Through seeking to better understand program elements and

experiences that participants identify as impactful this research will offer a guide of potential elements for program designers to consider in the context of their own program. While I recognize that pre-service teacher education abroad is a unique experience, and what is transformative for one participant may not be transformative for another, I believe that a better understanding of program elements will benefit program designers. This may allow program designers to "stack the deck" and consider their programs more intentionally. This proposed dissertation offers a new way for researchers to consider the connection between education abroad and identity.

# Chapter 2: Literature Review

*One's destination is never a place, but a new way of seeing things.*

– Henry Miller –

In order to understand the current state of education abroad, I find it helpful to consider its roots and history. The first section of this literature review endeavors to trace the origins of education abroad programs and uncover some of the cultural and socio-political factors influencing their inception. This history is important as it is the foundation that current programs stand on and it is from this history that we can imagine future possibilities for education abroad, and by looking at them critically we can see both prior and current programs in new ways and with new possibilities. Throughout this section I will use both terms *study abroad* and *education abroad,* as historically the term *study abroad* encompassed all manner of programs. The transition to a view of *study abroad as education abroad*, and the resulting changing names of many university programs may reflect either a change in the conceptual understanding of international experiences or a change in how the experience is defined. In the second section of this literature review I will contextualize education abroad within teacher education, exploring how teacher education programs prepare pre-service teachers to work with a diverse range of students and what we know about education abroad programs and their outcomes. From here, I will discuss models of intercultural competence, a common goal of pre-service teacher education abroad. Next I will identify program elements common to education abroad experiences and some key considerations, which will lead us to an investigation of transformation and the dominant theories of transformation that are applied to research surrounding education abroad. The next section of this literature review will explore what is currently known about the long term impacts of pre-service teacher education abroad and synthesize the existing studies

exploring impact. The final section of the literature review will offer some important considerations about memory and history, offering consideration to the ways in which memory is both shaped and shapes our interpretation.

## History of Education Abroad

In today's higher education institutions, education abroad seems to be a ubiquitous phenomenon, and it is easy to assume that colleges and universities have always instituted study abroad programs. However, when one digs into the history of education abroad it becomes clear that this was not always the case. No one has done more research into the history of study abroad than William Hoffa, whose 2007 text *A History of U.S. Study Abroad: Beginnings to 1965* remains the only text to offer a comprehensive examination into the roots of study abroad (Information in this section comes from his text unless otherwise noted). To my knowledge, there has not been an attempt to capture the history of study abroad post 1965.

In his 2018 book, *Walking to Listen*, Andrew Forsthoefel is on the verge of graduating from college and looks around at his life and wonders if this momentous occasion suddenly qualifies him to be a man. Current U.S. society doesn't really have any rites of passage that suddenly signify manhood. So, Forsthoefel sets off on a 4,000 mile walk across the United States hoping to learn from the people he meets on the way. This modern day journey to learn from others whose lives are different than his own matches the centuries old tradition undertaken by those on the verge of manhood, journeys that Hoffa describes as "journeys of initiation and discovery, believing that their experience in the realms of the unknown would provide them with the maturity, confidence, understanding and skills needed for the survival of the tribe" (Hoffa, 2007, p. 1). Over time, these journeys of learning changed from aimless wandering to seeking out specialized knowledge: places where "traditional knowledge, sacred and secular was passed

from generation to generation… wisdom was kept alive and passed from the cultural centers of learning to the periphery" (Hoffa, 2007, p. 3). These centers of learning included universities spanning from India, Persia, China, Japan and across the Middle East, and they drew students from many different areas who sought to study with these learned men. Since these very early journeys, there has been a link between universities and centers of learning, the quest for knowledge, and foreign travel. Before long, monarchs and rulers noted the importance of traveling beyond their own realms and brought foreign teachers to their own homes, sent emissaries and explorers on journeys, and collected manuscripts and books detailing life in far-off places.

### *The Grand Tour*

As the ruling class came to value the importance of foreign travel and experience, it became fashionable during the late Middle Ages and the Renaissance for young, wealthy, European men to embark on "the grand tour" in order to better be prepared to take their place among the ruling elite. These journeys were far less academic than the previous generations of travelers, focusing instead on the social, diplomatic, and pragmatic aims. They included visits to relatives and important families across Europe, with an emphasis on strengthening bonds and relationships to ensure that these families remained in power. In the 19th century the grand tour had a revival although with different aims, with more emphasis on pleasure. Nouveau riche middle class travelers ventured forth to broaden their horizons. Families set individual itineraries for their sons, though there were certain patterns in the grand tour. Seeing the cultural sites and the artwork of Europe was of supreme importance and one must visit the important cities of the day including Paris, Versailles, Rome, Venice, Florence, Naples, Turin. They attended the opera and the ballet, symphonies and salons, battlefields and museums, talking and reading with

wealthy natives. Mingled amongst these more honorable pursuits was "wining and wenching" and the chance for young wealthy men to break from the strict patterns of behavior and decorum at home. In this 19th century resurgence of the grand tour, women traveled as well. Always carefully chaperoned, the daughters of wealthy families sought the latest fashions and the social finesse and sophistication of European ladies. Wealthy American industrialists also sent their daughters abroad, many with the hope of securing marriages with influential Europeans.

The wealthy were not the only ones who sought experiences abroad; another European tradition that influences study abroad is the wanderjahr. Roughly translating to wandering year, this journey was often undertaken by artists, writers, and craftsman who sought to learn from experience rather than from academic centers. In some cases, these wanderers were supported financially by their families, while other apprenticed themselves to masters or worked and begged when necessary. An important difference between wanderjahr travelers and grand tour travelers is that those on wanderjahr did not have the same social ambitions and obligations of the men on the grand tour. "There were no expectations that they would learn from books, courses or teachers. On the other hand, parents hoped that their sons would learn valuable lessons from and about life" in a way that formal schooling was unable to provide and could not be learned from wandering around familiar homes and locations (Hoffa, 2007, p. 18).

Each of these styles of journey: wandering scholar, quest for knowledge, grand tour, and wanderjahr provided a background for what would become modern study abroad programs, and one can find roots of today's programs in these journeys. In particular, we can see some foundational beliefs: that no single culture possesses all of human knowledge, that there are many ways of learning – including wandering, learning from a mentor or working, and struggling to make sense of foreign linguistic and cultural practices leads to new perspectives on

life, learning and the self. We can also see the roots of some of the current critiques of study abroad, including a dominance of European destinations, neo-colonialism, voluntourism, and the dominance of wealthy and educated families (Murray Brux & Fry, 2010; Stroud, 2010; Willis, 2015).

### *The Beginnings of U.S. Education*

But how these European journeys led to U.S. education abroad is a far more complex story. Early U.S. education had a strained relationship with international study. On one hand, Puritan and colonial America rejected study abroad, as returning to England to study meant continued reliance on the "Old World," and the new nation did not want to rely on the country it had left behind. On the other hand, there were no medical or law schools in early America, meaning that doctors and lawyers still needed formal training in Europe. So, America had to rely on foreign institutions for the education of these leaders. But, sending them abroad meant exposure to strange and foreign ideas that might challenge the teachings of the church and promote heretical thinking, something that leaders of the church, who also oversaw schools, were wary of. These ideas may have challenged the values of the growing new nation, and there was much work to be done to build America's democratic republic. For many, education abroad was simply not practical given the cost and challenge of travelling across the ocean, nor was it desired. Yet, as the new nation became wealthier, prominent families again looked to Europe as a place for their sons to learn. Although this wave of Americans abroad was tinted by growing nationalism that would greatly increase after the Revolutionary War. America found herself in a contradiction of beliefs surrounding international study. Benjamin Franklin, despite living for two years in London and learning about journalism there, founded the University of Pennsylvania (which opened as Patriot Franklin's Academy) in order to provide youth with "the

opportunity of receiving a good Education at home and be under no necessity of going abroad for it" (Hoffa, 2007, p. 26). Thomas Jefferson, while living in Paris, wrote a letter where he cautioned that "an American coming to Europe for education loses in his knowledge, in his health, and in his habits." He went on to express additional concerns about Americans forsaking hard work and a strong work ethic in favor of "a taste for luxury and dissipation" and "women of easy virtue" found abroad (Hoffa, 2007, pp. 27-28). Even George Washington warned against study abroad, as he was afraid that in seeing the rest of the world students would forsake the goals and values of the new nation. Unlike the leaders of earlier centuries who saw value in learning abroad, early American leaders saw it as a threat to the new nation, despite many of them having studied and lived abroad themselves and their belief that study in a Western European country had been necessary to become a leader.

For early American college students seeking to study abroad, an additional challenge, and one that persists today, was accreditation. As the U.S. higher education system evolved through the 18th and 19th centuries, it grew into something drastically different than the European system. The U.S. system is built on a philosophy aimed at educating "the whole self, not just the scholarly mind." It features a "broad and general curriculum, living and learning with other students on a residential campus, and earning a degree via a modular course-credit system with, in general no cumulative examination" (Hoffa, 2007, p. 21). Therefore, while European students mostly enrolled in courses that were specialized in their area of study, American students took a significant number of general education courses before beginning specialized study. Thus, many American students lacked the qualifications to enroll in a foreign institution, so they took classes at European universities with no expectation of a degree. Often, these experiences came through faculty relationships where faculty at American and European institutions who were close friends

would "trade" promising students for a year of advanced language or literature study. The exception was graduate study, which was not offered in the U.S. until the end of the 19th century, leaving those who wished to pursue their studies no option but to venture abroad, and American Eurocentrism led them to only consider European universities. "The perception and the reality persisted that foreign study was superior to domestic study. This was due in part not only to real shortcomings in U.S. higher education but also to the respect that an overseas sojourn brought to establishment families" (Hoffa, 2007, p. 34).

**Other Influences on U.S. Education Abroad**

The religious roots of American education also influenced international experiences, with "foreign outreach as a quasi-spiritual mandate" in Christian America. Europe remained a place where people went to learn, but these missionaries and volunteers looked to Asia, Africa, Latin America and the Middle East "as places in need of American instruction and assistance" (Hoffa, 2007, p. 37). Universities such as Princeton and Mount Holyoke began to develop foreign missionary programming, which was some of the first organized overseas travel for students. Additionally, missionaries founded foreign institutions such as the American College of Beirut, founded in 1862; Syrian Protestant College, founded in 1866; and the American University in Cairo, founded in 1919.

As advancements in technology made travel more comfortable, wealthy Americans began to take vacations to the Holy Land, Egypt, and other exotic locations. With these advancements, travel became a business and group tourism started to grow. These tourists sought to see exotic sights while still enjoying the amenities they were accustomed to at home and the comfort of guides who spoke English. Rest and relaxation were priorities for these tourists, who "did not seek a deep cross-cultural experience through social contact with local inhabitants;" rather they

preferred "splendid isolation" (Hoffa, 2007, p. 42) Mark Twain referred to these tourists as only "in-a-sense abroad (because they never fully left home!). Thus, while they may have been literally in Egypt or Italy, their comprehension remained largely homebound" (Hoffa, 2007, p.43).

Seeing the growth of overseas tourism, American institutions of higher education began to develop their own group travel programming. One of the earliest examples is the "summer tramps" of Indiana University in the 1880s. Started by a professor of natural science, these programs were offered through the university but open to "undergraduate and graduate students, faculty, alumni, and townspeople. These were walking tours to explore places of special geographical, geological, or natural history interest throughout Indiana and its neighboring states" (Hoffa, 2007, p. 43). Before long, Indiana University began to offer international summer trips to places of cultural or historical significance in Europe. This model was taken up by other institutions by faculty who had ties to Europe. These experiences did not provide academic credit; rather they offered an international experience to enrich American education. But the mission trips, overseas vacations, and summer excursions came to a halt with the outbreak of World War I.

After World War I, the United States began to see itself as a world power, and with this came a need for greater understanding of international perspectives and the lifestyles of different people. These international leanings were not always popular, with many isolationists arguing that America should return to the policies urged by the founding fathers and stay out of European affairs. Many veterans had no desire to return to Europe, which they associated with the horrors of war, and simply wanted to get on with their lives, forgetting the rest of the world. But some veterans held on to friendships with European allies, recalled positive experiences in Europe, and

looked forward to going back to see Europe in peacetime. These feelings were particularly common among faculty and administrators and led to a resurgence in the creation of overseas volunteer experiences, arts programming, and international experiences. One program founded during the aftermath of World War I was the Experiment in International Living, started in 1932. This summer program featured a month-long language and cultural immersion home-stay followed by a month of travel. Founder Donald Watt believed that extended cross-cultural immersion was the best way to promote understanding of others and build peace between nations. Watt's program was "educational but not academic" and named an "experiment" because "he knew that for each participant it meant temporarily putting aside home-country values and habits and learning to live by those that were initially foreign to them. Thus, they were 'experimenting' with the enriching experience of international living" (Hoffa, 2007, p. 64). The resurgence in interest for international travel and understanding, arts programming, mission and volunteer trips added to the earlier historical influences of the grand tour, the wanderjahr, and foreign study to provide a background for the founding of U.S. study abroad programming in the 1920s and 30s.

**U.S. Study Abroad: Junior Year Abroad, Faculty-led Tours, and Summer Study**

U.S. study abroad drew on these ideas but emerged as something new and unique. "This campus-based undertaking was neither matriculated study for foreign university degree nor extracurricular enrichment. Rather, it was an innovative and programmatic attempt on the part of a few American colleges to combine academic and experiential learning modes in a foreign setting" (Hoffa, 2007, pp. 69-70). Three program designs emerged: Junior year abroad, faculty-led study tour, and summer study. Junior year abroad (JYA) was a full year of language and cultural immersion engaged in after at least two years of U.S. college. JYA was founded in 1932

by University of Delaware faculty and envisioned to build greater international understanding. Additionally, the university president felt that it would make Delaware graduates more competitive and desirable in the job market. Students lived with families and took six to eleven weeks of intensive language courses and then were enrolled at the Sorbonne with French professors through their program for foreign students. The Director of Foreign Study Plan ensured that credits earned transferred to Delaware. The initial program featured eight students and was a success and as word spread students began transferring to Delaware to participate. The modular credit system, as mentioned above, made it possible for them to transfer only for one year and still have their credits accepted at their home universities.

Soon other universities, like Smith College and Marymount College, sought to offer their own JYA programs. Marymount started their program in 1924, the first program exclusively for women. The women lived together at the Marymount Center, not with host families. Their faculty director planned social activities and field trips, chaperoned the women, and provided academic advising. Many of the programs graduates would go on to become language teachers. At Smith, not all faculty were on board. Some expressed concerns about the academic rigor of these programs and viewed them as educational tourism. Smith College president William Nielson countered in 1934, saying, "We've been sending students abroad for the Junior Year for nine years now and I have watched the effect of it closely. In my opinion it is in practically every case much the most valuable year spent in College" (Hoffa, 2007, p. 77).

Montclair Teachers College established their own JYA program in 1929 for students seeking to be language teachers, likely the first explicit program for pre-service teachers. It is unclear, but unlikely, that the Montclair students engaged with schools abroad; rather, they used their time abroad to boost their language skills. The program did inspire reflection in these

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students who return "with a new outlook on life…by contrasting America with the nation which they have visited they have come to see much more clearly America in her relation to foreign countries" (Hoffa, 2007, p. 81). While JYA programs sought to offer a fully immersive experience, their participants typically learned more about other participants and their host families than they did about European students. This was partially due to the academic differences and language proficiency needed to engage in European institutions, which led to many JYA students taking courses through special programming set up for foreign students.

Faculty-led tours were extended group tours that often visited multiple countries and featured coursework in English taught by the faculty members leading the trip. These programs sought to learn and experience many places and compare and contrast them. In the early 1920s, James Edwin Lough, founder of University Travel Association, an independent entity, attempted to guide students in learning about the wide world through a floating university. He envisioned a year of study in courses on world issues as the ship circumnavigated the globe, stopping at many different ports of call. Lough, along with John Dewey, questioned if traditional classroom settings, textbooks, and lectures were the best way to learn and he imagined the exchange of ideas with people from across the globe, instead. Though criticized as simply an expanded tourist itinerary, the Floating University World Cruise embarked on its inaugural voyage in 1926 with 504 students from 143 universities and 34 faculty members, who visited 35 countries in seven and a half months. It is important to note that no single university managed this voyage; instead, it was managed by an independent organization and an advisory panel featuring academics. Classes took the form of general lectures about the countries that participants were visiting, courses spanning a variety of subject areas that met on days at sea, field trips, and advanced

seminars exploring problems through intensive study. The voyages would continue until 1936, and their intentions would be revisited through today's Semester at Sea program.

Summer study offered short term discipline-specific or thematic study. Two such institutions to first offer short-term summer study were Georgetown and Indiana. In 1920, Georgetown offered a five week program to Venezuela for students in the Walsh School of Foreign Service, where they earned three credits in Spanish. Indiana University offered a summer program to Munich in 1929 for musicians who could earn 7.5 credit hours in music, arts, and language courses. Likely, these were not the only institutions to offer summer study, though Hoffa notes that records are hard to find. Although these programs were impactful for the students who participated, they represented a small set within U.S. higher education. JYA, faculty-led programs, and short term summer study all represented different approaches. "From the beginning, study abroad was not one thing, but several, each appealing to different kinds of institutions and students, each with its own strengths and potential shortcomings" (Hoffa, 2007, p. 101). These different program models also provide the roots for one of the current debates in study abroad: depth vs. breadth.

Though all formal programming ceased during World War II, with the end of the war, renewed conversations about the value of international study resumed on campuses. Similarly to the aftermath of World War I, some veteran students had no desire to return overseas, preferring to focus on their life in the U.S., while other students sought opportunities to volunteer overseas and rebuild war torn areas. The U.S. was once again thrust into the debate over internationalism vs isolationism, this time with isolationists claiming that "the American way" had won the war so Europe had nothing to offer. Others urged that we should take this "American way" abroad and rebuild Europe with American vision, spreading democracy and American values. Cluett

(2002) notes that crossing international borders is always political, and study abroad occurs in "a dynamic context of political and cultural relations that both shift and persist over time" (p. 24).

While this debate was not new, the U.S. could not ignore it's global role after World War II and began to view students as global goodwill ambassadors who would share the best of America. This led to new international initiatives such as the Fulbright Program, People-to-People, and The Peace Corps, as well as rebuilding programs established by the Rotary Foundation and many religious groups. Returning volunteers often noted that their experience was more valuable than classroom lessons. Likewise, faculty noted that international experiences provided students with a more nuanced understanding of language, politics, and culture, and they seemed more confident and mature. As tensions between the U.S. and the USSR grew into the Cold War, there was increased emphasis on destinations for education abroad and increased numbers of grants and scholarships for the study of language.

The 1950s also saw a return of the Junior Year Abroad, Experiment in Learning programs, and other cross-cultural immersion programs like American Foreign Service and Youth for Understanding. The Lisle Fellowship featured a model that prioritized "group interaction, community living, moral reflection, and community service [and] … emphasized participant "dialoguing" to deepen personal empathy, tolerance, and acceptance of cultural and social differences" (Hoffa, 2007, p. 144). The 1950s also saw the start of what would come to be known as "the Scandinavian Seminar," which offered "a one-year enlivening education among equals with lots of emphasis on traditional poetry, music, dance and history" (Hoffa, 2007, p. 145). These folk schools were non-degree granting and immersed American students among natives in Denmark, Norway, Sweden, and Finland.

One of the few early programs without either a European focus or a white patriarchal view was Operation Crossroads, founded in 1957, which took college students to volunteer in Africa, though the program has since expanded to include young professionals. Operation Crossroads encouraged collaboration and friendship between North Americans and Africans as the students lived in villages with community members and engaged in community building, healthcare, agriculture, and education volunteering. Founder Dr. James H. Robinson embraced the idea of giving and sharing and encouraged participants not to impose their values, but to be open to the values of others. Their current website explains that "sensitivity, flexibility, and patience are essential. Crossroaders do not go to Africa to impose their own values but to seek a truer comprehension of African values" ("Who Should Apply"). For many African American students, Operation Crossroads strengthened their roots and bonds to their African heritage. This program would become a model for the development of the Peace Corps, although the Peace Corps has been criticized for the imposition of outside values. This connects to a larger problem still faced by education abroad programs today, the challenge of overcoming neo-colonial and white saviorist thinking. This challenge is particularly germane to programs with Global South destinations. Helping participants view the host country as a rich site of knowledge and not as a place to spread American views is a challenge still faced by programs today.

Universities were happy to encourage these programs, which occurred outside of the academic year and did not offer credits. Participants returned home asserting "vigorously and persuasively that they could never have learned as much about themselves as individuals and as Americans, or about another culture, at home" (Hoffa, 2007, p. 147). In addition to these formal programs, youth also began seeking independent travel abroad, mostly throughout Europe. They viewed these experiences as separate from their degree but equally worthwhile. Their time

abroad represented learning for the sake of learning and experience, not bounded by the pressures of exams and essays.

## New Programming for Study Abroad

With the success of these programs and the overall positive outcomes associated with time abroad, colleges started to borrow from their models to offer their own experiences, which greatly increased in numbers in the 1960s and beyond. However, when Stanford concluded that their students needed more international awareness, they created a new model: a series of branch campuses across Europe. The first of these branch campuses opened in Germany in 1958, followed by others located in France, Italy, Austria, and Spain. The branch campuses were "extensions of the Stanford campus, foreign only in location. Tuition, room and board, and the educational format would be the same as the home campus, with courses counting directly towards majors and general requirements" (Hoffa, 2007, p. 176). The courses, representing many different disciplines, were even taught by Stanford faculty in English. This model allowed Stanford to tailor their experience and market to their own students, ensuring that the time abroad would count for academic credit and degree progress. Courses met four days a week, and students were encouraged to travel on the weekends and during a three-week mid semester break.

The University of Minnesota created another new model in their Student Project for Amity Among Nations (SPAN). This was a two year commitment, starting with a year of language preparation and learning the history and culture of the country to be visited, followed by eight weeks abroad in a country of the student's choice, with the student collecting research data and writing a cumulative paper. Credit was determined by the quality of the final paper, not the experience of being abroad. Each year featured new destinations, decided by the admitted

students, who were provided with advisors who experts on the respective nations. Unlike many contemporary programs with a Eurocentric lens, SPAN included destinations such as Israel, Ghana, Turkey, Nigeria, Lebanon, Algeria, Morocco, Ethiopia, Uganda, Egypt, and Iran. The familiar idea of students visiting multiple countries also had a resurgence during this time period, with the creation of the University of the Seven Seas and "Study as You Go" – a year-long program that combined air travel, train, and bus to maximize time in 19 cities across the globe.

Despite these new and revived models of programs, for many students, study abroad was still disconnected from their university degrees. Many colleges would not validate credits earned from other institutions or programs run by foreign agencies. One solution to this challenge were academic consortia composed of multiple universities. In this model, faculty from each institution were involved in setting the standards and advising on academic concerns, and each institution issued its own credit. The Institute of European Studies is one such consortium. Another, formed specifically for teachers, is the Consortium for Overseas Teaching (COST), formed in 1973 (Grand Valley State University – Consortium for Overseas Teaching). This group of sixteen universities provides opportunities for education students to complete their student teaching abroad in one of fifteen countries around the world. Students are abroad for 6 to 15 weeks, depending on the criteria of their home university. COST encourages students to apply the knowledge and skills from their home university in an international context, gaining firsthand experience in working with bilingual and bicultural students and families, seeing the world through a non-U.S. perspective, and experiencing life in a new setting.

**Debating the Future**

Even with these many different program models and the national conversation about American students abroad, participation remained small through most of the 1950s and 1960s.

One report from 1951 had a "reasonable estimate of about 20,000 American students attending year round or summer study courses in different parts of the world" (Hoffa, 2007, p. 231). Another report from 1957 cited the number of participants at 705. These drastically different estimates of participation stemmed from the multiple challenges of accurately counting the number of students abroad. But even with modest participation, people began to share concerns about the number and the quality of programs. People also began to express concerns about the difference between "students abroad" and "study abroad" and what constituted serious study compared to extracurricular tourism. Complicating this question were the stories that students shared upon return. Rarely did they gush about their classes; rather, they shared stories of adventures and mishaps and the pleasure of exploring the world. At the core of this issue is a continuing question about what is valued more, academic pursuits and knowledge or experiential learning. "In the first view students are American scholars… and the value of overseas study depends almost entirely on the quality of courses judged by U.S. academic standards," whereas emphasizing the experience positions students as "cross cultural learners and civilian ambassadors… [and] value lies in cross-cultural learning and its capacity to build peace and understanding between countries" (Hoffa, 2007, p. 245). Some questioned if study abroad was better suited to general education early in one's college career or specialized study or post-graduate work. Could overseas schools meet the same quality that American students were used to at home? Were foreign professors as skilled as American instructors? To address these questions a national conference and discussion was planned in 1960. In particular, fifteen propositions were put forth. Many of these propositions continue to be debated today. A few key considerations included:

1. That any institution that contemplates setting up an overseas program be urged to define and state clearly its educational goals and objectives, the age levels it wishes to consider, the size of the program, the needs the program will serve, and how the program's objectives are related to the objectives of the institution itself, and to the objectives of the host institution.

2. That the institution examines the length of the program, whether the goals are best attained in a full year, a semester, a short term, or a summer. The institution should also study carefully the timing of the proposed program, whether best in the freshman, sophomore, junior or senior year, or post-graduate years for the fullest achievement of the goals.

3. That it be recognized that, in general, shorter terms of foreign study are better suited to "general education" goals, while the longer terms of a year or more are better suited to advanced study and technical specialization.

4. That a well-conceived and carefully structured program of foreign study at the undergraduate level does not constitute an interruption of study but is an integrated part of the student's four year experience.

5. Since experience in another culture demands more of both student and faculty than a domestic campus program, the institution must define and tenaciously enforce the standards of quality for the program.

6. That the basic criteria of selection should include intellectual capacity, seriousness of purpose or motivation, good character, demonstrated potential for social adjustment and a basic understanding of the United States and of the host country. Above all, and with rare exception, the student possess an adequate working knowledge of the language of

instruction in the foreign country – in terms of understanding, speaking, reading, and writing.

7. That the selection of the director or supervisor of the overseas program is of the utmost importance. He should be a leader and an example for the group, fluent in the foreign language, familiar with the civilization and customs of the host country and well acquainted with the educational organization of the United States and of the host country. He should possess a dynamic, warm and understanding personality. He should be adequately paid. An overseas program should not be treated as a fringe benefit to be passed around among unqualified faculty members on the basis of expediency.

8. That as a general rule it does not seem necessary or wise to export instruction, that is, to send American faculty members overseas to teach in these programs. There is little immersion in the foreign intellectual environment if the student merely works with a transplanted American faculty.

9. That academic credit toward a degree is not granted unless the program is officially sponsored by an institution, and unless there is a bona fide program of serious study with final examinations comparable to the usual resident college program.

10. That serious consideration be given to the possibility of operating study abroad programs in other languages and areas than those of Western Europe and Latin America. The countries of Asia, Africa and the Middle and Far East are vital in America's educational planning (Hoffa, 2007, pp 246-248).

The conference featured keynote addresses and discussions on these propositions with the goal of analyzing existing programs and providing guidance for future programming. Many of the proposition's ten points appear again in the final summary report of the conference, which

also included additional considerations about funding, the creation of a clearinghouse of information, and program evaluation. How to evaluate the inferences and impact of the conference is a complex issue: one can examine the impact on the student, the institution, or the nation. Do certain types of students benefit more? How long should one be abroad? Conference members concluded that more research into evaluation was needed to answer these complex questions. The conference members were not in agreement about everything, with some members pushing for year-long language immersion as the most preferrable method. John Wallace of the Experiment in International Living argued for a broader conception of study abroad and created a typology that included variation in program duration, placement in four-year program, relationship to academic institutions in host country, participant selection, leadership/supervision, and housing. Wallace presented a "pluralistic vision of study abroad… [H]e emphasized that the key was thinking [these variables] through, combining them carefully, informing everyone what the program offers" (Hoffa, 2007, p. 261).

After the 1960 conference it was clear that study abroad had entered a prominent space in the university conversation across the nation. The relationship between the student studying abroad, their home country, and the host nation was increasingly considered. After all, as Cluett notes, "The foreign student embodies his native culture among his foreign hosts, and upon his return to his own people embodies the foreign culture in which he studied" (2002, p. 33). With the development of these overseas programs, organizations and groups to support the exchange of students were needed. The Institute for International Education (IIE) was founded to support international students in the U.S. and serve as an intermediary between schools and the government. IIE helped to secure funding and nonimmigrant student visas for international students. Dietrich (2018) notes that historically one single faculty member oversaw study abroad,

but as programs expanded, a professional field supporting international education formed. This field included the United States National Student Association, the Council on Student Travel, and the National Association of Foreign Student Advisors. These professional organizations founded journals to support scholarly inquiry about study abroad including *Frontiers: The Interdisciplinary Journal of Study Abroad* and the *Journal of Studies in International Education*. Additionally, today they offer professional development, standards, and guidelines for education abroad today. However, too often, offices of education abroad today are not viewed as partners in program design; rather, they are relegated to managing the logistics of the trip. Ideally, the professional organizations and campus offices of education abroad offer insight into learning objectives, assessment, and intentional program design that can maximize the learning and transformative potential of education abroad and aid in the formation of partnerships between education abroad offices and program designers and directors.

Many of the current patterns and trends in education abroad can be seen in the history of study abroad. Both the grand tour and the wanderjahr offered people the chance to see new and inspiring parts of the world, which I would argue is still a core motivation for many education abroad participants. Yet, we must also recognize that for much of American history, travel abroad was the domain of two groups of people, wealthy white families and wandering artists. The wealthy white families upheld American Eurocentrism and used the grand tour as a way to reproduce the social construction of status. The implications of this are vast, still seen in the prevalence of European destinations, the cost of education abroad, and the white participant majority. Comparing the grand tour and wanderjahr to models of education abroad, like the Stanford branch campuses program, highlights a key debate that has been had across this history of education abroad and continues to shape international experiences today. From one

perspective academic learning is highly valued, with concerns about faculty qualification, accreditation, and evaluation of learning outcomes. The other perspective emphasizes experiential learning and frames the international experience as a context for learning that is bigger than the classroom. This debate explores not only what is a valued outcome of education abroad, but also prompts us to consider the various learning contexts and opportunities that one might encounter while abroad.

I can see many of the roots of education abroad reflected in my own experiences abroad. At 16, I performed with the Sound of America Honor Band and Chorus alongside musicians from all 50 states. In 21 days, we performed 14 concerts in seven different European nations, including singing in Notre Dame and the Luxembourg American Cemetery. The itinerary also included museum visits and significant cultural sites, reminiscent of the grand tour. In the week of rehearsal before departure, we also discussed being cultural ambassadors for America, representing our states and nation abroad. Then, the summer after my junior year, I traveled with Semester at Sea, visiting nine countries across the Mediterranean and Northern Africa. In this voyage, the focus was on learning about the lives of other people and learning from them. Each new destination offered exposure to new ideas. Both of these experiences, however, remained largely separate from my U.S. educational experience. None of my high school or college classes connected to my experiences abroad. However, that changed with the UConn Education in London program that I participated in during my masters year as a student in the Neag School of Education. As a pre-service teacher I was taking classes about learning theory and education, then when I went abroad my courses were still connected to education. I was immersed in one culture for a full semester, living and working in a London school. The school internship, coursework, and inquiry research project were a capstone of my teacher education program an

enhanced my previous learning. The aim of the UConn Education in London program is to

develop the intercultural competence of pre-service teachers and prepare them to think about

culture. In the next section of the literature review, I will explore how teacher education

programs have sought to prepare intercultural teachers who can think and act in culturally

responsive ways. In order to understand how pre-service teacher education abroad programs are

integrated into a meaningful program of study, we must also consider the aims of teacher

education more broadly.

## Teacher Education

The demographics of K-12 students are rapidly changing, and classrooms today do not

resemble the demographics of 50, or even 20, years ago. However, the profile of the average

U.S. classroom teacher remains the same: white, female, middle-class, monolingual, and

European-American (Gay, 2000; Ference & Bell, 2004; Aud, Fox & Kewal, 2010). This

influences the landscape that graduates of teacher education programs are entering; thus it is

critical that schools and colleges of education prepare their graduates to work with a wide range

of diverse students. Many of these future teachers imagine that as they look out at their

classrooms they will see faces that look like theirs; they believe their students will have similar

backgrounds to themselves (Thapa, 2020). However, arriving in their classrooms, they are met

with a very different reality. Their cultural backgrounds and their social status do not match

those of the students they teach (Zumwalt & Craig, 2015). This cultural clash can adversely

impact the educational experiences of students, particularly students of color, bilingual learners,

and students of ethnically and linguistically diverse backgrounds (Gay, 2000; Zhao, 2010).

Álvarez Valdivia and González Montoto (2018) have suggested that teachers must develop an

awareness of their own prejudices and biases in order to understand the unique groups of

students they work with. There will never be a "one-fits-all" model… [H]owever, culturally responsive teaching practices should always start with teachers' cultural competence to realize their own culture, to identify their own valuing system and to address the cultural diversity of their students and families … to reduce or avoid unconscious bias" (Xu, Hao & Huennekens, 2016, p. 82). Part of the challenge teachers face in uncovering their own cultures is due to the sometimes invisible nature of culture for members of the mainstream hegemonic culture. They often perceive culture as something exotic or something that other people have. Larry McClain (2008) discusses how white college students are unable to distinguish the dominant norms of whiteness, thus believing themselves to be individuals rather than part of a culture. This is a privilege of whiteness, to believe that culture is invisible, a privilege not extended to teachers of color, who see both their own culture and the culture of white teachers. Thapa (2020) notes that teachers view culture as separate from "American-ness" and don't understand their own values as an element of culture. Further, Thapa highlights that in many U.S. citizens' perceptions of American culture, dominant traits are masculinity and individuality. Both of these traits categorize success as an individual venture and do not suggest value in acquiring cultural knowledge about others or forging deep connections. This is important, since, as Yuen (2010) notes, teachers serve as gatekeepers, deciding if cultural differences are considered and valued in classrooms. When teachers lack an understanding of their own cultures, they perpetuate patterns and behaviors that serve to alienate other cultures in their classrooms. In addition to understanding their own culture, teachers must be aware of the cultural and linguistic differences of their students, experiences of migration, and the homes in which their students live (Garcia, Arias, Murri & Serna, 2010). Often, teachers imagine the home lives of their students mirror their own personal lives and this drives their impressions of students' abilities, home support,

and the interactions between home and school. Only through developing a more complete picture

of their students can teachers implement culturally relevant strategies that best benefit their

students (Ladson-Billings, 2005, 2014).

Most commonly, teacher education programs aim to position teachers to teach in

culturally relevant ways and instill ethnorelative views through school placements that serve

culturally diverse student populations and through multicultural education coursework. Teachers

with ethnorelative worldviews understand the complex and beautiful nature of culture, and view

each culture as equally valuable, without imposing one culture's worth over others. Yet, multiple

studies have shown that K-12 teachers hold ethnocentric cultural views, where one culture is

perceived as 'right' rather than ethnorelative world views that are the goal of teacher education

(Cushner, 2008). The addition of multicultural education theory and coursework into teacher

education programs has helped prepare teachers to meet the needs of students who are culturally

different. (Xu, Hao & Huennekens, 2016). Further, multicultural education coursework has been

criticized for not doing enough (Villegas & Lucas, 2002) and for adopting a "celebrate diversity"

approach that masks the nuance of culture and does not prepare pre-service teachers to address

systemic inequality. Cushner (2011) contends that a solely multicultural approach, even one

rooted in social justice, may not be enough to prepare pre-service teachers. In multicultural

coursework, the celebration of diversity is often presented as an idea, but in the everyday

practice of schools, it is often rejected for uniformity and conformity, especially when cultural

conflict appears in schools (Álvarez Valdivia & González Montoto, 2018).

It is clear that coursework alone is not sufficient for teachers to develop an ethnorelative

view, especially when, as noted by Xu, Hao and Huennekens (2016) pre-service teachers take

one or two standalone multicultural education courses. They need hands on community

experience as well, which brings us to the second method used by many teacher education programs to promote cultural understanding: domestic cross cultural field placements. These placements provide an opportunity for pre-service teachers to engage in the culturally diverse communities and interact with a wide range of cultural and linguistic backgrounds. The goal of building intercultural competence and helping pre-service teachers develop an ethnorelative worldview is best achieved when these interactions are positive (McBride, Bellamy & Knoester, 2020). But there are significant questions about whether pre-service teachers' experiences in diverse districts always meet that goal of positive intercultural interactions. First, when these placements are framed as diverse, it may send the message to pre-service teachers that diversity is only found in urban areas (which is often code for Black and poor areas) which undermines the broader goal of multicultural or intercultural education. Framing this experience around "high diversity schools" increases the perception that culture belongs to other people and is exotic, which disrupts pre-service teachers' ability to see themselves as cultural beings. Domestic cross-cultural field placements may have limits in their ability to impact pre-service teachers (Marx & Moss, 2011). Pre-service teachers show up at their diverse placement and are only there for a short time, sometimes only a few hours a week. At the end of their time in the schools, they return back to their personally familiar setting. Once returning to the familiar setting as part of the cultural majority, they may stop engaging in and trying to understand the new cultural contexts.

In order to graduate teachers who are fully prepared to effectively meet the needs of a diverse and evolving student body, teacher education programs must think outside of the box, or even out of the country though international experiences. These international experiences cannot be considered as separate from the teacher education program; rather, the discussions evolving

from the 1960 national study abroad conference suggest that they must be connected to the larger

program of study. In particular, they must match and support the core tenets of the teacher

education program. It is vital that teacher educators disrupt pre-service teachers' ethnocentric

worldviews and prepare them to successfully teach culturally diverse student populations (Marx

& Moss, 2011). Teachers must become comfortable living and working in a different cultural

context from what is familiar to them, and international experiences can be well suited to achieve

this aim (Cushner & Chang, 2015). Through immersion in a new cultural context, pre-service

teachers can develop deeper understanding of culture and develop the skills necessary to work

with a diverse range of students. Developing intercultural competence is a common goal of pre-

service teacher education abroad. In the next section I will discuss several prominent models of

intercultural competence and their connection to education.

## Intercultural Competence

In today's world, traditional geo-political borders have become more permeable. From

refugees to expatriates, migrants to international workers, mixing and mingling among languages

and cultures occurs regularly, not to mention the ease of online interaction across traditional

borders. Of course, it is important to note that these opportunities for interaction and movement

across borders are not equally distributed among all peoples, and there are very real economic

and political barriers. But the potential for interaction among people of different cultures grows

every day: Arthur et al. (2020) who noted a 49% increase in the number of people living outside

of their country of birth since 2000. This increasing diversity and interaction make the

development of intercultural competence essential in today's world. Chen and Sarosta (1999)

consider intercultural competence as three interrelated aspects: Intercultural sensitivity,

intercultural awareness, and intercultural adroitness. Intercultural sensitivity is an affective

aspect characterized by a willingness to know and appreciate cultural differences. Intercultural awareness is a cognitive aspect representing understanding cultural practices and their influence on how people perceive the world. Intercultural adroitness is a behavioral aspect of skills needed for effective intercultural interactions. Intercultural competence has been studied through many different lenses, and, as Deardorff (2006) notes, despite it being linked to many fields of study, there is not one single agreed upon definition (see also Fantini, 2009; Sercu, 2004; and Spitzberg & Chagnon, 2009).

Intercultural competence may best be developed in a "comfortable third space" (McKinley et al. 2018). When someone interacts with someone from a different culture, this interaction happens within a third space. The construction of this third space is co-negotiated by the people who are interacting. This third space allows for (re)negotiations of identity and reality where those present feel at ease with their own and other's cultural identities and differences. This third space, "liberated from the structures and hierarchies of both their 'home' culture and the 'other' culture, social actors can (re)negotiate their identities and (re)position themselves – creating hybrid identities that offer new possibilities for empowerment and change" (McKinley et al., 2018, p. 11, referencing Bhabha, 1994). It is important to note that although the third space embodies opportunity, different cultural groups must travel different lengths to reach the third space. It doesn't fall equally between cultures, but all members of the third space must ensure it is a space where diversity is valued and different perspectives can be shared openly. So each person adjusts to create a place where they can communicate and interact successfully. Further, Álvarez Valdivia and González Montoto (2018) have suggested that intercultural competence may be distributed throughout a community and is not merely an individual trait. This suggestion holds potentially strong implications for education abroad program design and for the power of

school culture. This suggests that the abroad cohort may play a significant role in one's development of intercultural competence and highlights the importance of developing cohort norms of behavior, communication, and shared values.

International experience is a common approach used to develop intercultural competence, but pedagogical interventions have also been found to be successful. Damini and Surian (2013) investigated group investigation as a strategy to boost intercultural competence. Groups engage in cooperative investigation of a topic, which requires a willingness to listen to peers and commitment to each other's learning. Teachers also used critical incidents to assess changes in cultural attitudes. Service-learning has also been proposed as a way to improve intercultural sensitivity. Service learning positions students to interact with people who represent different economic, social, ethnic, or cultural groups. Westrick (2004) explores service learning and intercultural competence at international schools. Participation in service learning experiences allowed students to consider multiple perspectives and resolve the cognitive tasks of defense and denial. Brendel et al. (2016) investigated the role of fieldwork in intercultural competence development. They report that students of different cultural backgrounds struggled in multicultural discussions, both content and process. Students struggled to understand the significance of their own and other's cultural backgrounds, in particular they struggled to make sense of different preferences for feedback, different levels of motivation, and different approaches to working together.

Here, I will present three models of intercultural competence: the Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity, Deardorff's Pyramid Model, and the Council of Europe Competencies for Democratic Culture Reference Framework. For the purpose of this study, I

will use the definition and model provide by the Council of Europe. This section concludes with a discussion of the importance and challenge of assessing intercultural competence.

***Competences for Democratic Culture Reference Framework***

The Council of Europe's Competences for Democratic Culture (CDC) outlines a framework with the desired skills, values, attitudes, knowledge and critical understanding that are necessary for people to live and interact peacefully in the diverse world (Barrett, 2016). The framework prioritizes intercultural dialogue and recognizes that these competences are not automatically acquired; rather, they are learned and practiced (Council of Europe, 2018a). In this, they turn to education and its potential to empower citizens, and they recommend that the model inform educational decisions and curriculum planning, emphasizing the ideals of democracy and the principles of human rights. The framework was designed with education in mind, and has been used at all levels of education. While the framework does not offer a curriculum, it does provide common language and can be viewed as a tool for designing curriculum, pedagogy, and assessment (Council of Europe, 2018a).

Identity and culture are both central to the CDC framework. The framework conceptualizes identity as "a person's sense of who they are and the self-descriptors to which they attribute significance and value" (Council of Europe, 2018a, p. 29). In this view, one has a range of identities, including both personal and social identities. The CDC conceptualizes personal identities as including personal attributes (e.g., kind, artistic), interpersonal relationships and roles (e.g., father, sister), and autobiographical narratives (e.g., educated at religious school, middle-class). Social identities are based on inclusion in social groups (e.g., national, religious, gender, generation, occupation, hobbies and clubs) (Council of Europe, 2018). Cultural identity is a particular type of social identity.

The CDC framework considers culture as comprised of three main resource aspects: material resources, social shared resources, and subjective resources of individual group members. Material resources might include food, tools, and clothing; socially shared resources are language and the unwritten rules of interaction; and subjective resources are values, attitudes, beliefs, and practices, which individuals employ in vastly different ways (Council of Europe, 2018a). All people belong to different combinations of groups and have their own unique cultural positioning. Cultural groups are always internally heterogeneous and evolving, and the meaning applied by individual people is shaped both by cultural viewpoints and own's own life history, personal experiences, and personality. Additionally, individuals emphasize different cultural affiliations according to their social contexts. Barrett considers the internal process of evaluating and employing relevant values, attitudes, skills, knowledge and understanding in different contexts as essential to competence (2016).

Figure 1
*Competencies for Democratic Culture Model*

**Competences for Democratic Culture**

**Values**
- Valuing human dignity and human rights
- Valuing cultural diversity
- Valuing democracy, justice, fairness, equality and the rule of law

**Attitudes**
- Openness to cultural otherness and to other beliefs, world views and practices
- Respect
- Civic-mindedness
- Responsibility
- Self-efficacy
- Tolerance of ambiguity

**Skills**
- Autonomous learning skills
- Analytical and critical thinking skills
- Skills of listening and observing
- Empathy
- Flexibility and adaptability
- Linguistic, communicative and plurilingual skills
- Co-operation skills
- Conflict-resolution skills

**Knowledge and critical understanding**
- Knowledge and critical understanding of the self
- Knowledge and critical understanding of language and communication
- Knowledge and critical understanding of the world: politics, law, human rights, culture, cultures, religions, history, media, economies, environment, sustainability

Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture

The CDC Framework acknowledges that acquiring intercultural competence is a lifelong endeavor and that competence does not transfer automatically from one context to another (Council of Europe, 2018a). The framework then, "has a potential to help in this process in all kinds and stages of education" (Council of Europe, 2018a, p. 21). As all people simultaneously belong to multiple cultures, intercultural situations occur regularly. The CDC conceptualizes an intercultural situation as "when an individual perceives another person (or group of people) as being culturally different from themselves" (Council of Europe, 2018a, p. 31). Competence is defined as "the ability to mobilise [sic] and deploy relevant values, attitudes, skills, knowledge and/or understanding in order to respond appropriately and effectively to the demands, challenges and opportunities that are presented by a given type of context" (Council of Europe, 2018a, p. 32). In Figure 1 the values, attitudes, skills, knowledge and critical understanding are conceptualized as psychological resources that can be applied to respond in intercultural situations. It is important to note that these are viewed as resources, not as abilities. The framework does not explicitly include dispositions, but rather considers them as implicit in the definition of competence. Disposition is crucial. One must possess the disposition to use one's competences in behavior. Without this disposition to employ these resources, there can be no competence (Council of Europe, 2018a).

The model lists 20 competences that are subdivided into four clusters: values, attitudes, skills, and knowledge and critical understanding (Council of Europe, 2018a). In an intercultural situation, people draw on a large set of competences and apply them in tandem to navigate the situation. In the CDC framework, values are considered to be "general beliefs that individuals hold about the desirable goals that should be striven for in life" (Council of Europe, 2018a, p. 38). An attitude is the overall mental orientation that one holds toward someone or something.

The CDC considers attitudes as consisting of four components: "a belief or opinion about the object of the attitude, an emotion or feeling towards the object, an evaluation (either positive or negative) of the object, and a tendency to behave in a particular way towards that object" (Council of Europe, 2018a, p. 41). Skills are considered as the capacity to carry out patterns of thinking or behavior to achieve a goal. Knowledge is the information known by a person and understanding is the meaning made based on that knowledge. Critical understanding, according to the CDC framework emphasizes "the need for the comprehension and appreciation of meanings in the context of democratic processes and intercultural dialogue to involve active reflection on and critical evaluation of that which is being understood and interpreted" (Council of Europe, 2018a, p. 52).

### *The Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity*

As people interact in the world, they are faced with cross-cultural situations. When encountering these situations, some people seemed able to communicate across cultural boundaries, while others seemed to struggle with these interactions. The divide between these two types of people spurred Milton J. Bennett to investigate these interactions, and this led to the creation of the Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS) (Bennett, 2004; 2017). The DMIS is not a model of knowledge, attitude, or skills, but explores approaches to difference. The DMIS (see figure 2) assumes that people can be more or less "sensitive" to cultural difference. As people become more interculturally competent, the quality of their interactions in cross-cultural situations improve. Bennett presents a continuum of increasing cultural awareness, understanding, and adjustment.

Figure 2

*The Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity*
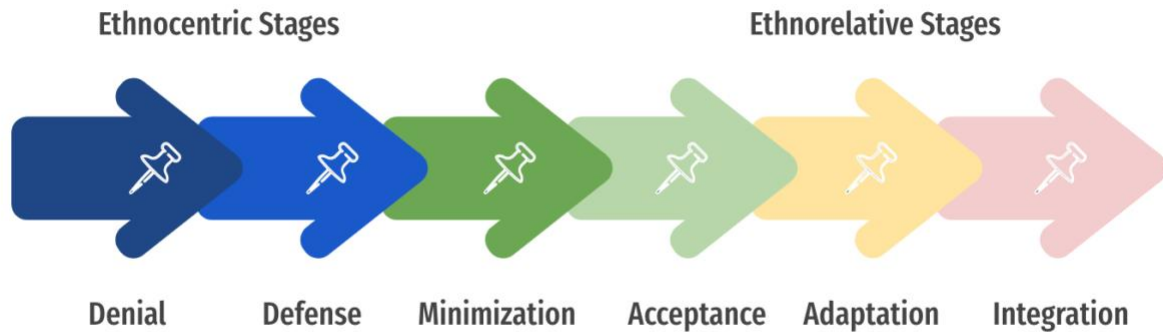


The first stage of the continuum is Denial. For people in denial, cultural difference is often not experienced at all. If people in denial experience cultural difference, they do so through undefined groups of people, such as "foreigners" or "immigrants" based on broad and familiar categories like race. This stage is characterized by isolation and separation. People at denial are uninterested in experiencing difference, and may separate themselves to protect an isolated worldview.

Defense is the next stage on the continuum. People at defense view their culture as the only viable culture. Your culture is superior to everyone else's cultures. People at defense experience cultural difference, but are threatened by it and can interpret difference as an attack on their cultural values, employing an "us vs. them" mindset. Defense can manifest through racist or culturally insensitive jokes, membership in nationalist groups, positive stereotyping of one's own group, and negative stereotyping of other groups. To resolve the challenges of a defense mindset, people must see the common humanity of people of other cultures.

People at Minimization consider elements of their own culture as universal. Cultural differences are trivialized or even romanticized as exotic and thrilling. People at minimization

focus on universal ideas and values instead of acknowledging that differences are caused by cultural patterns.

Denial, Defense, and Minimization represent the "ethnocentric" stages of the DMIS, with Minimization serving as a transitional stage between eethoncentric and ethnorelative. The ethnocentric stages are characterized by a belief that one's own culture is central to all reality. As people moved from ethnocentrism to "ethnorelativism" they began to acknowledge that there are multiple, equally valid, world views, and that cultures can only be understood relative to one another. Further, they recognized that behaviors should be considered within a cultural context. The ethnorelative stages are Acceptance, Adaptation and Integration.

Acceptance is characterized by an attitude of recognition and respect. People at acceptance are curious about difference and respectful to the differences of other cultures. People at this stage are able to recognize how cultural differences influence a range of human interactions. One's own culture is not the only cultural worldview.

People at Adaptation are able to recognize and accept different cultural worldviews, and they also are able to adjust their own behaviors and actions depending on the cultural context. They are able to act in culturally appropriate ways and shift perspectives dependent on context and engage in empathy.

Integration is the final stage of the continuum. People at Integration view their identifiers in the margins of culture and are able to fluidly move in and out of different cultural worldviews to evaluate the world from multiple viewpoints. Their identity is not based solely in one culture, but is constantly created and (re)defined by themself.

A common critique of the DMIS is that the linear representation of the stages also implies that people move through the stages in a linear fashion, a series of steps with a finite goal of

achieving intercultural competence. This model doesn't account for moves back and forth among stages, or regression over time or in new and different contexts. Another critique is that the DMIS does not fully acknowledge the role of language (for more on language and intercultural communicative competence see Byram, 1997). Human perspective is messy, and this is not always reflected in the neat linear stages of the DMIS.

Acheson and Schneider-Bean (2019) propose a pendulum model that places adaptation in the middle with extreme similarity (denial) on one side and extreme difference (polarization) on the other side of the pendulum (see Figure 3). People swing between this extreme focus on similarity and extreme focus on difference. Each swing is less severe and people can leverage their prior experiences in new intercultural contexts. The pendulum model frames intercultural competence as consistently changing with each swing of the pendulum. This model can be applied with more of a learner-focused approach and allow for intercultural competence to be viewed from a diagnostic view rather than through an evaluative lens. For some participants, education abroad may be their first time in a new culture and place, which is stressful and sometimes scary, so they may "move backwards" on the continuum (Paras & Mitchell, 2017), but the pendulum model reframes that as a natural progression of growth.

Figure 3

*The Pendulum Model for Intercultural Development*



**Focus on Similarity**    **Focus on Difference**

DENIAL

MINIMIZATION

ADAPTATION

ACCEPTANCE

POLARIZATION
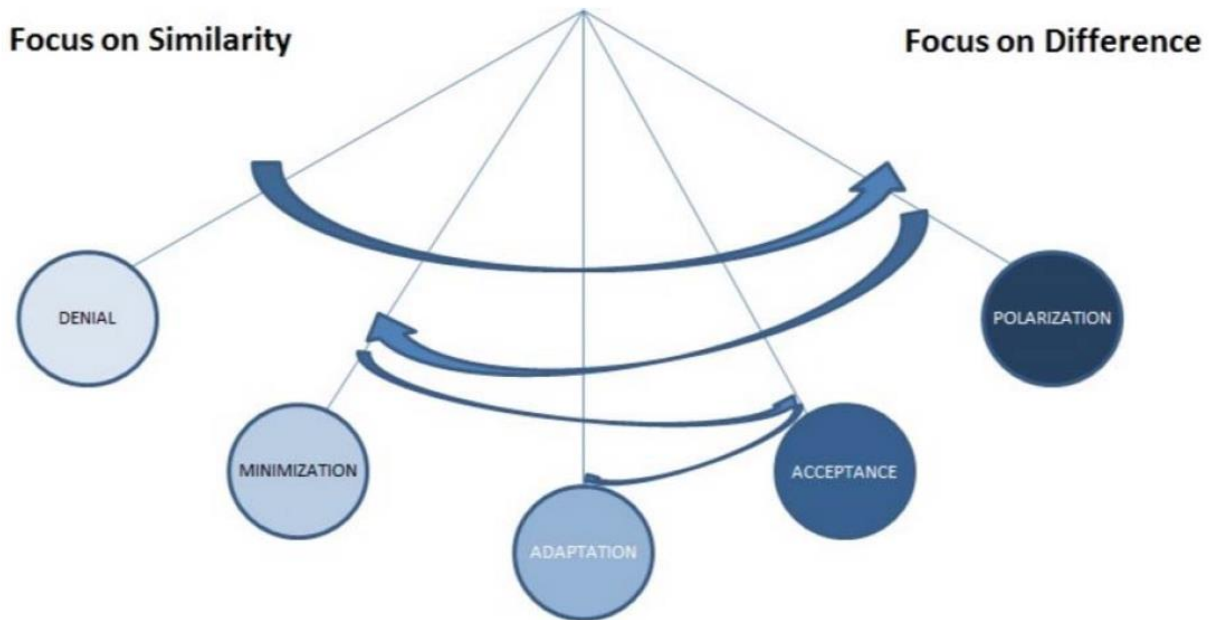
***Deardorff's Intercultural Competence Model***

Darla Deardorff's Intercultural Competence Model (see Figure 4) begins with required

attitudes of respect, openness, and curiosity (2006). Deardorff asserts that these are fundamental

if people are to develop intercultural competence. Once the requisite attitudes are in place,

people build knowledge, including cultural self-awareness, sociolinguistic awareness, and a deep

understanding of culture. At the same time that they build this knowledge, they are honing their

skills of listening, observing, and interpretation. The knowledge and skills lead to the internal

outcome of adaptability, empathy, and an ethnorelative worldview. Finally, the internal

outcomes transmit to the desired external outcome which is effective communication and

behavior based on one's intercultural knowledge.

Figure 4
*Deardorff's Intercultural Competence Model*



**DESIRED EXTERNAL OUTCOME:**
Behaving and communicating effectively and appropriately (based on one's intercultural knowledge, skills, and attitudes) to achieve one's goals to some degree

**DESIRED INTERNAL OUTCOME:**
**Informed frame of reference/filter shift:**
Adaptability (to different communication styles & behaviors; adjustment to new cultural environments);
Flexibility (selecting and using appropriate communication styles and behaviors; cognitive flexibility);
Ethnorelative view;
Empathy

**Knowledge & Comprehension:**
Cultural self-awareness;
Deep understanding and knowledge of culture (including contexts, role and impact of culture & others' world views);
Culture-specific information;
Sociolinguistic awareness

**Skills:**
To listen, observe, and interpret
To analyze, evaluate, and relate

**Requisite Attitudes:**
Respect (valuing other cultures, cultural diversity)
Openness (to intercultural learning and to people from other cultures, withholding judgment)
Curiosity and discovery (tolerating ambiguity and uncertainty)

*Assessment*

The models of intercultural competence discussed above can be applied as theoretical frameworks to guide pre-service teacher education abroad program design. The international context provides an opportunity for pre-service teachers to immerse themselves in a new culture. However, at this point it is important for us to draw attention to three considerations. First, theoretical frameworks are applied inconsistently across teacher education abroad programs. In a review of 37 studies of pre-service teacher education abroad originating from U.S. institutions,

23 of the studies applied a theoretical framework. Of those, only eleven of the theoretical frameworks were explicitly cultural. Eight studies applied Mezirow's Transformative Learning Theory, which will be discussed in a later section.

Second, intercultural competence is not an automatic outcome of international experience. Participants do not complete their time abroad and suddenly hold an "interculturally competent certificate." Developing intercultural competence is a lifelong pursuit. McBride, Bellamy and Knoester (2020) note that one must consider their own journey and deeply reflect in order to change and begin to develop intercultural competence. It is not enough simply to learn about the cognitive elements of competence. Critical reflection is commonly considered to be an essential component that allows one to consider their own growth. Intentional program design and specific elements that may help participants develop intercultural competence will be discussed in the next section.

Finally, it is important to name the challenges and methods of assessing intercultural competence, which will be the focus of the remainder of this section. When we assess things, we send implicit messages that they are important, so from that view, assessing intercultural competence communicates to participants that this learning is important. However, Sercu (2010) has noted that intercultural competence cannot easily be divided into quantifiable step-by-step levels that are associated with traditional measures of assessment. Additionally, the models presented above present a challenge to assessment: if assessments do not clearly indicate what model they are using as a reference there may be a disconnect (Borghetti, 2017).

One assessment that makes very clear connections to the theoretical framework it applies is The Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI), grounded in the DMIS and created as a means to assess aspects of intercultural perspectives (Hammer, 2012). The IDI assesses participants'

placement along the continuum of the five stages (denial, polarization, minimization, acceptance, and adaptation) provided in the DMIS. The IDI provides a developmental orientation score (DO) representing one's primary orientation towards cultural differences and commonalties and a perceived orientation score (PO) representing where the individual perceives themselves to be. Often PO scores are higher than DO scores and IDI administrators can face backlash when debriefing people who are unsatisfied with a low DO score. When presented with their PO and DO scores, teachers may try and justify the gap or turn negative (Álvarez Valdivia & González Montoto, 2018). Again, the linear nature of the continuum can be counterproductive to participant growth if their DO score is in denial or polarization but their PO score is in acceptance. The perceived gap between the two stages can seem insurmountable to participants. Lantz-Deaton (2017) has critiqued the IDI as being too general and not capturing the subtle changes that happen while abroad. There are many factors that may impact your IDI score: gender, motivation to study abroad, prior international experience, language skills, and educational level have all been suggested as potential impacting factors.

We know that simply living abroad itself does not necessarily facilitate students developing a more ethnorelative worldview. Several studies of university students provide baseline data to understand how education abroad might impact intercultural competence. A closer look at these studies provides evidence that numerous program features may influence the impact of an abroad experience including explicit support for students, types of housing, the corresponding coursework, and the length of the experience, among others. Applying the Intercultural Developmental Inventory (IDI) as a pre-post measure is a common research approach to assessing intercultural competence development through international experiences.

In what is considered by many to be a baseline and influential study, The Georgetown Project looked at nearly 1300 university students from the U.S. attending 61 different education abroad programs during the 2003-04 and 2004-05 school years (Vande Berg, Paige, & Hemming, 2012). The study included pre-post measures with a control group who did not study abroad using the IDI. The overall results showed a statistically significant increase in the students' cultural competence who studied abroad, though this change was only for female students, not for male students, whose overall cultural competence actually went down. Students who were abroad one semester showed the most gains compared to those abroad for a shorter or longer period of time. The researchers concluded that onsite intervention was an important feature of an education abroad experience that increases cultural competence (Vande Berg, Paige, & Hemming, 2012).

Terzuolo (2018) examined the impact of a study abroad program on undergraduate students' intercultural competence, drawing comparisons between a group that stayed in the U.S. (n=65) and a group that studied abroad (n=108). The study indicated a statistically significant effect on intercultural development for one semester of study abroad, as opposed to remaining on one's home campus. In addition, similar to the Georgetown Project, the results showed that females were more apt than males to move toward a more intercultural mindset during study abroad.

Cushner and Chang (2015) also report on pre- and post-IDI scores, but compared three groups of pre-service teachers: one that stayed in the U.S. (n=8), and two that had student teaching experience from 8 to 15 weeks abroad. One with no intervention (n=34) and one that completed focused reflections (n=18). Unlike most of the previous studies discussed participants IDI scores were not significantly different pre to post as a result of the overseas student teaching

experience with, or without, reflective questions. The authors suggest that the reason for the lack of change is that teaching and living overseas by itself can't lead to intercultural gain.

Spenader & Retka (2015) reported IDI results from several programs from the same university. They found no statistically significant differences in pre-departure scores.  In the post-IDI scores all programs except for one showed evidence of growth, though they had varying amounts of growth in different programs. All of their programs were built around three core ideas: a semester international experience, guided cultural interaction and experiential learning, and faculty-facilitated reflection. They note that pedagogical variables are a critical component and need further investigation to best determine how to support intercultural growth (Spenader & Retka, 2015).

He, Lundgren & Pynes (2017) report pre- and post- IDI scores for a short term international experience for in-service teachers (n=12). The group as a whole experienced growth but when you examine individual results, two teachers experienced minor decreases and three teachers experienced decreases of greater than five points. The authors suggest that multiple methods to assess intercultural growth are critical, as even those participants who experienced a decrease in IDI scores identified their own growth in reflections.

When one considers the IDI results of all of the studies described here, it is clear that assessing intercultural competence is a challenge. Though the IDI is only one of the empirical assessments used by education abroad, overwhelmingly, intercultural competence is assessed through qualitative measures. Cushner and Chang (2015) have criticized this, as the studies rely on self-report and often don't provide enough information for readers to draw their own conclusions about the intercultural competence development of participants. Additionally, the majority of research published about pre-service teacher education abroad is written by

researchers with direct program responsibilities. Often the exact nature of the researcher's relationship to the study was not clearly articulated, though possible researcher roles in the programs included program director, course instructor, residence hall director, and coordinator. While self-study or engaging in research on a program offered within one's own institution is common practice, it is essential that this be explicitly reported in research studies, and limitations caused by the relationships need to be acknowledged and considered. In some cases, individuals ended up making travel arrangements for participants and suggesting experiences, which may have distracted them from the important work of fostering intercultural learning. Researcher relationships should be disclosed as a researcher with program involvement may be influenced by other factors (tenure, program funding, etc.) that inhibit their ability to be self-reflexive about the program.

Some have questioned if intercultural competence can and should be assessed at all (Borghetti, 2017). Assessing intercultural competence is complex and cannot easily be distilled to a simple numeric score. Borghetti (2017) notes several ethical dilemmas associated with assessing intercultural competence. First, intercultural competence is often associated with personal and private beliefs, feelings, and reflections. Assessments force participants to make those public, visible, and subject to external investigation and judgment. Similarly, many models of intercultural competence include personality traits and values such as flexibility, curiosity, and respect. Can those personality traits be assessed? Is it ethical for someone to be judged on their values? Further, as noted earlier, there is not one single definition for intercultural competence, let alone for culture. There is immense potential for assessment creators to be operating on one understanding of the defining concepts and for test-takers to be operating under a different understanding. Borghetti (2017) also suggests that there is not a clear distinction in the models of

intercultural competence between competence and competent performance. Performance is a challenging idea because it questions if one's actions are sincere and authentic. It also forces us to examine if it is desirable for all people to act the same. At best, that perpetuates hegemonic Western values and at worst it creates a tendency for people to inauthentically perform as interculturally competent without an internal foundation to support those actions. Borghetti (2017) suggests that the best way to assess intercultural competence is through multiple methods such as the use of critical incidents, portfolios, autobiographies, ethnographic observations, interviews, performance tasks, mini-dramas, and critical incidents. How to best assess intercultural competence must be considered by education abroad program designers. The experiences that are designed for each specific program must align with the program's goals for assessment.

## Education Abroad Program Elements and Design

Now we turn our attention to the program elements that define a pre-service teacher education abroad experience. In structuring the program, designers and coordinators must consider a wide range of possibilities. This section will provide background information for some of the programmatic decisions that contextualize learning in an education abroad program. These choices regarding the program elements and structure impact the experience of participants.

Effective program design should begin with a clear goal and purpose of the abroad experience. However, in the review of the 37 studies mentioned earlier, only 13 articulated a clear rationale for the program. In the program purpose statements, intercultural learning was commonly stated as a purpose. Additional program goals included exploration of and reflection on different teaching pedagogies or beliefs. Once program designers have clearly defined their

goals for the program, they can begin to design experiences to support those goals. Here, I will discuss several program elements and key decisions that program designers must consider including: predeparture orientation, program destination and duration, housing, school-based experiences, extracurricular activities and trips, which sometimes positioned students to engage in poverty tourism and dark tourism, and re-entry experiences. If students engage in poverty tourism or dark tourism, they need critical reflection and deep contemplation to process their experience. A review of the literature surrounding pre-service teacher education abroad reveals a vast landscape of program decisions and a world of possibilities.

### *Predeparture Orientation*

It is well recognized that pre-departure programs for study abroad students are a necessary part of their development. However, many existing pre-departure programs focus on the logistics of study abroad, such as plane tickets, visa requirements, and course credit. Van Amselvoort (1999) suggests that many students are unable to accurately visualize daily life abroad and are therefore unable to form realistic expectations. Further, many study abroad students are unaware of their own cultural identities and how culture shapes their views, values, and interactions (Jackson, 2018; Marx & Moss, 2016). Grove (1989) identified five goals for pre-departure orientation programs: help students develop realistic expectations about their time abroad, help students identify their own culture, ease pre-departure anxiety, describe the program and expected behaviors, and share logistics. Van Amselvoort (1999) adds language instruction as a goal for predeparture. Roberts, Conner, and Jones (2013) suggest that predeparture should also consider emotional or affective states, and learner motivation and leverage them to develop goals for their time abroad. Thoughtfully designed pre-departure orientation that goes beyond logistics and builds a foundation for future instruction allows students to capitalize on this foundation and

jumpstart their learning and growth in the first few weeks after arrival abroad (Van Amselvoort, 1999).

Prior to going abroad, students have a variety of academic, personal, and financial concerns. These concerns include culture and re-entry shock, homesickness, challenges of intercultural communication, impact of study abroad on their future employment, loneliness, family support, academic expectations of international professors, concern for their GPA, finances, lost wages, impact on graduation status, and safety while abroad (Hipple, Soltis & Hyers, 2020; Lovett, 2018; Stroud, 2010; Vernon, Moos & Loncarich, 2017; Wang et al., 2016). Additionally, students of color and queer students may have other added concerns about how they are perceived, not only by the host nation, but also by the other members of the education abroad cohort (Hipple, Soltis & Hyers, 2020; Murray Brux & Fry, 2010; Simon & Ainsworth, 2012). Murray Brux and Fry (2010) note that students of color who study abroad to explore their own identities and histories are met with a variety of outcomes. Some feel an emotional link to their ancestral countries and their histories while others expected to feel a sense of homecoming but find it difficult to connect and interact with host nation individuals. If student concerns are not discussed in pre-departure orientation, they negatively impact a student's ability to engage and grow while abroad. Roberts, Conner, and Jones (2013) consider building strong connections and student relationships as a key goal of pre-departure work. Building relationship is especially important in programs like the London program, which are what Norris and Dwyer (2005) refer to as "island programs" where the cohort lives, works, and takes classes together. Here, a key factor is the role of program leaders, whom Marx and Moss (2016) refer to as "cultural guides." While the complex role of program leader is beyond the scope of this dissertation, it is important to note that the program leader is crucial to the growth of the cohort and of individuals, designing

shared elements at the developmental level of the cohort but also providing individual support and mentorship, as needed.

When we consider building relationships, we must also take a moment to think about who the participants of the program are. Considering participants' demographics and backgrounds is crucial as predeparture orientation should be shaped by the participants' needs. Across the literature we see a wide range of participant ages and educational levels, from first year students (Rahatzad et al., 2013) to 50-year-olds (Mabingo, 2019). Predeparture orientation must recognize that all participants come to an abroad experience with different prior experiences and exposure to difference. For example, some may have extensive international travel experience and some may never have left the country before. Thus, the work to prepare them for the journey of learning on their education abroad program may need to look different for different participants. Consider, for example, a 17-year-old student from Ohio who has never left the country. What are the concerns and challenges they may face while abroad? Now consider a 37-year-old graduate student who speaks three languages and the concerns and challenges they may face while abroad. Program designers must consider what might be different about sending a cohort abroad during their first semester of pre-service teacher education compared to their final semester in the program. A wide range of participant ages and years of study may be simpler where recruitment is concerned, but has an impact on the experience of participants. Willis (2015) found that in a multigenerational cohort older members served as additional mentors for younger students, yet at the same time the older members felt excluded by younger participants. Additionally, the racial and ethnic composition of the cohort drives the experience of participants. A racially homogenous group will have a different experience than a racially diverse group, requiring program designers to deeply reflect on their participants,

considering where they are in their learning progressions and creating experiences to meet them where they are at and stretch and challenge their perspectives. Predeparture orientation that is tailored to the backgrounds and needs of the participants allows for relationship building and beginning to consider the concept of culture creates a context for learning and growth while abroad.

### *Program Destination and Duration*

The history of education abroad continues to impact the selection of program destination and duration. As noted earlier, American Eurocentrism leads many to consider European destinations as ideal for study abroad, causing them to overlook destinations in other places. Of the 37 studies reviewed, twenty of them had European program destinations, with the majority of those selecting the United Kingdom as the destination. Conversely, there were four programs in Africa and four programs in Asia. Matthews and Lawley (2011) have suggested that internationalization is limited to transactions between developed nations, which further supports the dominance of European destinations. Most often, the destination was selected as the result of a partnership or long-standing relationship between faculty members, universities, or institutions in two countries. For example, Maynes, Allison, and Julien-Schultz (2012) describe a partnership between the University of Northern Ontario and an NGO in Kenya. This relationship is perceived as mutually beneficial and provides the context for teacher candidates to engage in a three-week practicum abroad.

Language is a factor in many destinations, and program designers must consider how salient language will be. Some intentionally select destinations where English is not the dominant language. Often, this is to support language acquisition or understanding of English Language Learners and multilingual students. While it is unclear if language barrier aids or

impedes intercultural development, it is clear that it does impact student experience and must be considered as a factor in program design. Some have suggested that being abroad in a nation where English is not spoken positions participants as "the other," which allows them to build greater empathy for minoritized students in the US. Others have suggested that a destination where English is spoken removes language as a barrier for participant engagement and widens participation. Further, it is important to note that the United Kingdom is not the only nation where English is commonly spoken. Thus, program designers must question if their selection of the United Kingdom (or any destination) is the result of their own (or student) bias toward a particular destination or if the program destination selection is driven by the unique learning opportunities afforded there.

While abroad, students may live in university dormitory housing, shared apartments, or guest houses, or homestays. Across the literature, there is wide variation in the types of housing described and housing is often unreported in studies of pre-service teacher education abroad. Of the 37 studies reviewed, only 17 studies reported housing descriptions. It has been suggested that homestay experiences create additional opportunities for pre-service teachers to engage with host nation individuals and gain insight into host nation cultural practices. However, homestay experiences also carry greater potential for conflict, which may challenge both hosts and participants. A critique of shared housing, where participants live with other U.S. students is that it increases the likelihood that they will only engage with U.S. individuals and not seek meaningful relationships with host nation individuals. Housing is a critically understudied and undertheorized element of pre-service teacher study abroad.

International experiences are typically classified as long-term, short-term, or mid-length. Short-term programs are fewer than four weeks, mid-length programs range from four weeks to

eight weeks, and long-term programs are nine weeks or longer. Perhaps the key factors in determining duration of the program are the course of study and the certification requirements. Some students may not be able to take a full semester and still graduate on time meeting the requirements for teacher certification. In 2018-2019 there were 347,099 U.S. students who studied abroad, with 64% of them studying abroad for eight weeks or fewer (Open Doors, 2020). Batey and Lupi (2012) have argued that programs of eight weeks or fewer are beneficial because they are less expensive than longer programs and provide less disruption to a student's course of study. Further, they suggest that these programs, which often follow a cohort model (sometimes with a faculty advisor who travels with the cohort) may be more accessible for students who are wary of travelling alone. Others have argued that the impact of a more significant time period can last a lifetime (Sims & Nishida, 2018). The cohort model with faculty companion may diminish the opportunities for students to explore independently and gain independence while abroad. The literature reveals a complex web of opinions and outcomes regarding program duration.

### *School Based Experience*

Arguably, the most critical consideration that program designers must make regarding pre-service teacher education abroad is the nature of the school based experience. Time in schools abroad provides the context for participants to consider new pedagogies, evaluate perspectives on behavior management and assessment, and reflect on the purposes of education. There is a wide range of possible structures that the school based experience can take, from a focus on observational to directed student teaching abroad.

Ten of the 37 reviewed studies examined participants who were student teaching abroad. During student teaching, pre-service teachers are fully immersed in the classroom, and for many

it is their first opportunity to apply the knowledge learned in their teacher education coursework. It is known to be a stressful and challenging time for pre-service teachers. Likewise, navigating life in an unfamiliar cultural context can also be stressful. The combined stressors of student teaching and unfamiliar contexts may prove to be substantially challenging for pre-service teachers to navigate, leaving them in 'survival mode' (Cross & Dunn, 2016). Additionally, given that student teaching may be their first sustained teaching experience, pre-service teachers may focus predominantly on the interactions within their classroom and not critically reflect on the larger cultural contexts of the host nation. This may impact their ability to understand culture and their own identities. Lu and Soares (2014) describe a five week program of student teaching in Taiwan. When one participant had to return home early, the remaining four participants took over his placement, rotating to cover his classes. This put incredible stress and pressure on the pre-service teachers and impacted their ability to build relationships with students and host nation teachers.

Student teaching may also cause challenges for the host nation teachers. Jin, Cooper and Golding (2016) describe Australian student teachers abroad in China and their challenges to teach in a way that aligned with Chinese evaluation systems. The Chinese evaluation system was based on the number of objectives met, while the Australian student teachers wanted to design lessons they perceived as engaging. These lessons often took significant time to complete, meaning students met fewer objectives. This left the Chinese teachers feeling behind and pressured to move their students in a different direction after the student teachers returned home. Klein and Wikan (2019) advocate for a slow transition of teaching responsibilities, beginning with an observation period. However, this is only possible in programs of sufficient duration to facilitate a gradual transition. Major and Santoro (2016) also highlight the complex power

relationships involved in student teaching. They sent Australian pre-service teachers to the Solomon Islands where native teachers privileged western knowledge, thus positioning the pre-service teachers as the expert over the host nation teachers, even though the pre-service teachers lacked experience.

A variation of student teaching that provides another option for the school based experience is paired student teaching. Cross and Dunn (2016) describe a paired student teaching experience in Sweden for two U.S. pre-service teachers. In paired student teaching, two student teachers plan and implement lessons together, working with a single mentor teacher. This model emphasizes collaboration and may provide an additional support in the classroom as both student teachers rely on each other for assistance, creativity, and feedback. The success of paired student teaching may rely on the relationship between the two student teachers. Finally, it is important to remember that student teaching may have specific regulations regarding observation and evaluation for credit. For example, host nation cooperating teachers may not be permitted to serve as practicum supervisors which may send messages that host nation teachers are not qualified leading to their knowledge and experience not being valued.

Internships are another model for the school based experience. School interns may hold a variety of responsibilities in schools, some engaging in enrichment or remediation, others engaging in assessment and intervention, still others engaging in subject specific lessons or special projects. Palmer and Menard-Warwick (2012) describe a four week experience in Mexico where the participants were placed as interns and given the opportunity to leave their internship after the first week or extend them into a second week. Given the option, most chose to leave the internship due to the stress and discomfort of navigating the unfamiliar language and cultural context. They used the second week to engage with additional language classes.

Coursework is a common element of pre-service teacher education abroad. For some, the coursework is the foundation of the school based experience. Coursework may focus on content, pedagogy, methods, or international and comparative education. In some models, the students begin and end the semester in their U.S. university with a trip abroad in the middle (Medina, Hathaway & Pilonieta, 2015; Misco & Shiveley, 2015), while others are abroad for a longer time, engaged in both coursework and school observations. Coursework might offer participants the opportunity to collaborate with host nation pre-service teachers, which may allow for pre-service teachers to develop shared global visions for the future of education (Medina, Hatahway & Pilonieta, 2015; Salmona et al., 2015).

There are many different types of schools that universities can partner with for the school based experience. Pre-service teachers can be placed in international schools (Cross & Dunn, 2016), public schools, private schools, gender separated schools (Kabilan, 2013), bilingual schools (González-Carriedo & de Nava, 2017), or schools with religious roots (Kasmer & Billings, 2017; Major & Santoro, 2016). Additionally, some experiences are designed to support a specific subject area, while others present "education" more broadly. Kasmer and Billings (2017) describe a program that focuses on math education, which challenges pre-service teachers to explore math discourse in the classroom. Their participants taught three or four math classes daily for three weeks in Tanzania. Sims and Nishida (2018) describe a program where pre-service teachers travel to Japan for two weeks to engage with early childhood students in art activities. Foster et al. (2014) sent pre-service agricultural educators to South Korea for 10 days, one of the few nations to offer agricultural education at the secondary and university level. Each school based experience offers unique opportunities for learning and reflection. Students can be placed in schools that align with their content or grade level focus or in schools that do not.

Students can be placed in schools with western style curricula or host nation curricula. Students can be placed in schools with the primary objective being observation, or engage in classrooms in myriad other ways. Each decision that is made regarding the school based experience has the potential to impact participants' experience.

*Extracurricular Travel Experiences*

The school based experience and coursework are only one part of the experience for pre-service teachers abroad. One of the most motivating factors for pre-service teachers to travel abroad is the opportunity to see the world and many take advantage of travel opportunities while in country, taking weekend trips or using their semester breaks as extended travel time. As Hoffa (2007) has highlighted the history of study abroad has been fraught with questions about the "study" component, with critics claiming that education abroad is not educational, but merely a glorified vacation. This may be one reason that extra-curricular travel experiences are often absent from the literature surrounding education abroad. While abroad, participants plan their own travel experiences and programs often offer planned excursions that feature historic or cultural sites in country or provide service opportunities. These experiences can feel separate from the other abroad experiences and often are framed as more for entertainment than for educational opportunity. As such, they are also understudied and undertheorized for their transformative potential, even though they may provide very meaningful experiences and lasting memories for participants.

However, as these travel experiences are often conceptualized as separate from the education abroad experience, they must be viewed with a critical eye. As discussed, while in the host country, participants are engaged in a process of learning and reflection that helps them understand the historical and cultural context of the host nation. When they travel outside of the

host nation those supports cease and it is unclear if participants engaged in extracurricular travel experiences reflect in meaningful ways on their experience. This may be particularly problematic in certain destinations. Poverty tourism, also known as slum tourism, favela tourism, and township tourism, are conceptualized as visits to disadvantaged parts of a city often through guided tours (Steinbrink, 2012; Rolfes, 2010). If participants enter these spaces with deficit perspectives, they reinforce negative stereotypes about global wealth and poverty, often along lines of the global north and global south. Selinger and Outterson have questioned if travelers have the right to enter these communities or if by doing so they are merely voyeurs (2010). Mabingo (2019) reminds us that these types of experiences abroad take place against a backdrop of Western views and if participants form meaning without understanding their prior views the meaning reinforces othering of foreign peoples and stereotypes. Thus, without careful consideration, education abroad can sustain colonial power structures and binaries such as "developed-underdeveloped, rich-poor, first world-third world, modern-traditional" (Klein & Wikan, 2019).

Another type of excursion that may need additional consideration is "dark tourism," the tourism of site of death, disaster, atrocity, and the macabre (Lennon & Foley, 1999; Liyanage, Coca-Stefaniak & Powell, 2015). Researchers have considered the experiences of visitors to Holocaust memorial sites (Dalton, 2009; Dekel, 2009; Flennengård & Mattsson, 2021) and slave castles (Dillard, Duncan & Johnson, 2017; Olcoń, Pulliam & Gilbert, 2019; Williams & Cokley, 2019). Dalton (2009) discusses how these sites should be approached with consideration and sensitivity and have implicit standards of conduct that may be unclear for participants. I recall a trip I took to the Auschwitz concentration camp with some friends. We all found the trip to be both challenging and memorable and contemplated taking a group photo while we were there,

but we wondered if that was appropriate, and if we decided to take the photo if we should smile in the photo or not. After all, these places can be sites of grief and trauma, and we must critically question if tourism belongs in a place of grief. Additionally, these sites can be emotionally overwhelming for participants to experience, as shown by Williams and Cokley (2019) who told the story of one woman's visit to the "cell of condemnation" at a Ghanaian slave site, who shared that she become "overwhelmed with thoughts of the pain, agon, grief, and rage that my ancestors must have felt" (p. 235). The emotional toll of visiting sites of dark tourism can make private processing become public. On the other side of dark tourism is places that are decontextualized and separated from history, such as museums of torture which showcase a range of torture items used throughout history. If these artifacts are presented without adequate discussion of who used them and who was victim to them, then visitors may not gain an understanding of the power structures and inequalities that exist in our world.

### Re-entry

The final stage of the education abroad experience is re-entry, where participants make sense of the experiences had during their time abroad and integrate their learning into a U.S. context. Many consider re-entry not to begin until participants return to the US, but Marx and Moss have suggested that it begins in the final weeks of the time abroad (2016). Often, participants in their final weeks abroad have a moment of realization that the experience is coming to an end. This typically marks a shift in thinking, where they view their surroundings differently. However, this can be different for each participant, and also may be different for participants in programs of different lengths. However, regardless of when re-entry begins, participants need support to navigate their return to the U.S. and too often are left to make sense of their experience on their own.

Suggestions for re-entry activities include journaling and reflection, remaining connected to international destinations through continued communication with friends and reading international press, getting involved in groups with an international focus, connecting with other study abroad returnees through informal social gatherings, and framing re-entry as a natural part of the process of personal development (Brubaker, 2017; Young, 2014). For pre-service teachers, re-entry must also include opportunities for participants to explore their school contexts and integrate their learning abroad into the U.S. school environment. Although participants enjoy getting to see their friends and family again and eat their favorite U.S. foods, they often experience a sense of sadness and loss once home again. After the excitement of life abroad, life in the U.S. can feel unexciting and uninspiring (Marx & Moss, 2016). This is commonly called "reverse culture shock," and participants struggle with both emotional and behavioral aspects of re-entry, which can be more shocking if they assume that the transition to the familiar context of home will be easy (Young, 2014). While abroad, participants may have adopted new behaviors or come to view time or schedules in new ways that may not align with life in the US. Additionally, participants may develop new ways of thinking, set new goals or priorities in life, and, as a result of their time abroad, judge the home nation culture more harshly than the culture abroad. Finally, study abroad can seem atemporal for students if they assume that nothing at home has changed while they were abroad. However, while they were abroad, their friends and family at home may have started or ended relationships or jobs, or moved locations, all of which can complicate re-entry.

An additional challenge of re-entry is that participants want to share everything about their experience abroad, but people at home may not be able to understand or be interested in

hearing these stories. It is not uncommon for returning participants to perceive frustration from their friends or families. As a participant I interviewed noted,

> We came home from London and we had to come back down from our high of being away for a semester, and we were your stereotypical "we studied abroad" kids and only talked about study abroad to everybody and anybody. And our friends that stayed at UConn for that first semester hated us. They were so sick of us.

This perception of no one wanting to hear about your experience or no one understanding how important it was is another reason why re-entry support is critical for participants. Making sense of one's personal learning is a significant aim of re-entry programming. For pre-service teachers re-entry must also include opportunities for participants to explore the school context and integrate their learning abroad into the U.S. school environment. Some programs have instituted a re-entry seminar or course to support students as a follow up to their time abroad (Marx & Moss, 2016; Maynes, Allison & Julien-Schultz, 2012).

Figure 5
*Program Design in Pre-service Teacher Education Abroad*



72
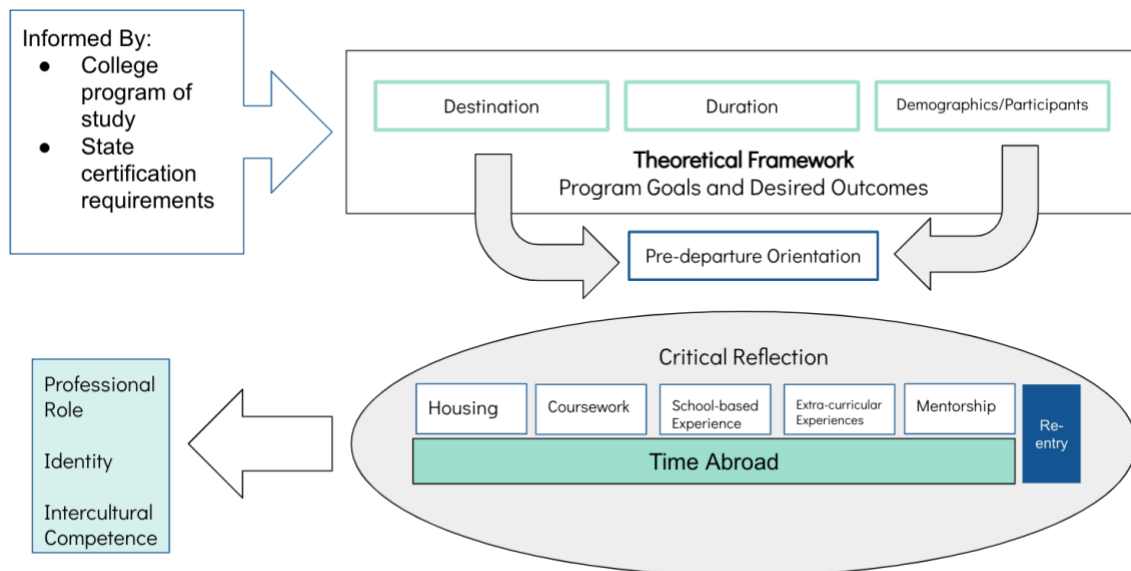
In this section I have highlighted common program features of pre-service teacher education abroad programs and noted some of the variations found within program designs. These program elements can be seen in Figure 5 above, which depicts my representation of the alignment and connection of program elements in an education abroad experience. Planning an education abroad program begins with providing the context of the university program of study and state certification requirements. From there, a theoretical framework and clearly articulated program goals that align with and extend the university program of study can be identified. This program theoretical framework then guides program designers in selecting destination and duration, and in recruiting participants. After these elements are decided, planning for predeparture orientation and the time abroad can begin. While abroad, experiences in the classroom, school context, and other experiences should be supported with guidance toward critical reflection. This leads to three outcomes that are commonly considered: professional role, identity, and intercultural competence, highlighted in the green box in Figure 5. These program design elements shape the experience had by participants and are thus important to consider when exploring program impact. These experiences frame their time abroad and the experiences that participants assign meaning to. In the next section, I will discuss theories of transformation. The transformative power of education abroad lies in the combination of the program elements discussed above. These program elements allow for education abroad to become the life-changing event that participants often describe it as.

**Experiential and Transformative Learning**

Mezirow's transformative learning theory is one of the most commonly cited theories to explain transformation in education abroad. The theory explores adult learning and posits that when adults encounter unfamiliar situations they consider their prior learning and assumptions,

sear for new perspectives and knowledge, and through critical reflection they are able to transform their worldview. Mezirow (1991; 2000) considers transformation as a process rather than an end state, and outlined 10 steps of transformation.

1. Disorienting dilemma

2. Self-examination

3. Critical assessment of assumptions

4. Recognition that one's discontent and the process of transformation are shared and others have negotiated similar changes

5. Exploration of options for new roles or relationships

6. Planning a course of action

7. Acquisition of new knowledge and skills necessary to implement one's plan

8. Trying out new roles

9. Building of competence and self-confidence

10. Reintegration into one's life as dictated by one's new perspective

Mezirow views learning to make meaning as shaped by two frames of reference: meaning perspectives and meaning scheme. Meaning perspectives are "broad sets of predispositions resulting from psychocultural assumptions which determine the horizons of our expectations" (1994, p. 223). These can include feelings, social norms, ideologies, personality traits, and learning styles. Meaning scheme is "the constellation of concept, belief, judgment, and feeling which shape a particular interpretation…specific manifestations of our meaning perspectives" (Mezirow, 1994, p. 223). These meaning structures are transformed through reflection, and we can learn by "refining or elaborating our meaning schemes, learning new meaning schemes, transforming meaning schemes, and transforming meaning perspectives" (Mezirow, 1994, pp.

224-225). Snyder (2008) outlined four specific elements of the transformation process, reflection on: the content of their knowledge, the process of knowing that content, the premise of what they know, and the relational elements of their knowledge. Thus, as Coghlan and Weiler note,

> One can think of personal transformation as brought about by a novel event that is sufficiently challenging that it requires radical self-examination. As a result, the individual begins to reflect on and change what they know, how they know it, the way they think and the way they relate to others. (2018, p. 571)

In this way, transformation is an individual process, with the novel event being different for each person involved. Further, self-examination can only be done by one person looking at themselves, so the process must be individual. In order to understand transformation, we cannot simply claim that participants transform, but rather we must seek to understand how they transform. In this way, the current trend of education abroad research to report transformation as an end state, and evaluate it by cohort is deeply flawed. In order to understand transformation, we must seek to understand how each unique individual transformed.

Hudson and Inkson (2006) and Tomazos and Butler (2010) have adapted the "myth of the hero's adventure" to study long-term overseas volunteering and allow the "hero" to realize their full potential, confront new challenges, and learn new things. While on one hand I think their connection to this literary device is interesting and innovative and may help students make sense of their experiences, I must also question if positioning students as the "hero" and referring to foreign contexts in the language of "myth" reinforce notions of white saviorism, bolster the othering, and exoticize international contexts, ultimately making the lives and experiences of people who are different than we are seem less real and authentic. In a similar sense, Morgan (2010) applied van Gennep's (2013) metaphor of "rites of passage" as transformation through

liminal encounter with otherness and applied it to educational travel in which the traveler

changes during travel from "ordinary resident" to "traveler" and finally to "transformed home

comer." However, given the advances of technology and such frequent armchair exploring

through social media, Wee (2019) questions if today's travelers might not already be situated as

"transformed home comer" before embarking on a journey.

Brunner (1991,) however, questioned if transformation is possible given that tourists are

abroad for a short time and they are often insulated from meaningful experiences with the host

nation; surrounded by other tourists; and generally seeking to escape, rest, relax, and engage in

hedonic activities. Volunteer tourism and intentional education abroad experiences may

challenge Brunner's critique. Volunteer tourism is highly interactive and offers a "backstage"

view of foreign contexts and opportunities for self-actualization and transformation.

Education abroad allows for immersive experiences and the chance to form connections

to host nation individuals. Time abroad allows for the escape from the commonplace and

everyday rhythms of life in one's home context. In this escape from the home context, which is

sometimes perceived as mundane, Kirillova, Lehto & Cai (2017) highlight that the everyday can

become extraordinary, with people finding delight in the simplest of tasks and activities. For

example, grocery shopping at home is not often considered an exciting task, but abroad in an

unfamiliar context, grocery shopping becomes an exploration of new foods and a quest to find

the items on your list. In this way, an everyday task becomes extraordinary. These "peak"

experiences are moments of intense happiness and fulfillment, when people feel truly 'alive'

(Maslow, 1959). Here we see the potential for striking experiences that participants remember

long after they have finished and prompt them to ask questions about who they are, why they live

and what they live for.

Through the release from their everyday expectations and prescribed social order, tourists may feel a powerful sense of freedom. Abrahams (1986) suggests that a key feature of this freedom is spontaneity, leading people to appreciate these extraordinary moments. In this lies the potential for self-exploration and a reconsideration of one's purpose and values (Kirillova, Lehto & Cai, 2017). Kirillova, Lehto and Cai (2017) outline seven categories of triggers: Introspection, unity with nature, unity with others, spontaneity, novelty, aesthetic experience, and self-development. Experiences that fall within any of these categories can prompt travelers to begin the process of reflection that leads to transformation. For example, a hiking trip where one feels connected to nature and to the earth may trigger the reflective process prompting someone to change their behavior to embrace nature more beyond the end of the trip. Transformation can also take the form of epiphany or sudden insight (Krillova, Lehto & Cai, 2017). Epiphany can be considered either as mystical, springing unbidden to mind, or as the result of intentional reflection and insight. Some would suggest that transformation is more likely to occur as a result of intentional reflection rather than from a mystical epiphany. But for some travelers, epiphany occurs during seemingly routine processes near the end of their travels, thus seeming mystical. As they go through commonplace, seemingly unconnected events, they are suddenly struck by the contrast of how far they have come, or they are prompted to look around and ask where they go next. Further Krillova, Lehto and Cai (2017) highlight the intense emotional power of epiphany: positive, negative, or bittersweet. Bittersweet in the sense that you recognize that it will never be like this again. Education abroad offers the potential for many of the transformative elements explored in this section, though as will be discussed in the next section, little is known about the lasting impacts.

## Long Term Impacts

People often describe education abroad as life changing, but what does that mean? Education abroad has been linked to a variety of outcomes, including the development of intercultural competence (Batey & Lupi, 2012; Bennett, 2004; Cushner, 2007; Clarke et al., 2009; Marx & Moss, 2011; Simmons, Marx & Moss, 2020; Simmons, 2021), confidence and independence, flexibility and adaptability, understanding of new pedagogies, and developing language skills. Dwyer and Peters (2004) report that 95% of study abroad participants feel the experience had a lasting impact on their worldview. Chao et al. (2019) found that their time abroad allowed pre-service teacher participants to act as a "real teacher" and develop identities as teachers, while simultaneously retaining identities as learners discovering their own and others' cultures. Ciftçi and Karaman (2019) explored short-term international experiences for pre-service and in-service language teachers and found academic, cultural, linguistic, pedagogical, and personal growth in participants. Personal growth included feeling more independent, self-confident, and mature. Morley et al. (2019) noted that fostering intercultural competence and the skills required to work with diverse students is a key outcome of international experiences for pre-service teachers. Jiang et al. (2019) explored how international student teachers transferred their international experience into their classrooms. They found that participants developed increased sensitivity to language while abroad, impacting their interactions with students, transferring their international learning in various ways; and 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 occurring through participation in international programs: reaction, learning,

application, and organizational. Reactions include positive feelings about study abroad, which is often claimed as a "life changing experience." Learning included skills, knowledge, and attitude changes. Application describes the translation of learning into behavioral changes and organizational results were shown through career choices that reflect ongoing global engagement such as choosing a school in a specific location or seeking particular types of partners.

Furthermore, Paige et al. (2009) report that 83% of respondents felt study abroad had a strong impact on their college experience. They also reported increased civic engagement and an increased likelihood to pursue advanced degrees. For some study abroad participants, their time abroad resulted in a desire for continued international professional experiences and they seek ways to return abroad (Williams & Abramenka, 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 wide range of possible outcomes.

Yet questions remain about the long term impacts of these programs and how programs report evidence of change. Smolcic and Katunich highlight that much of the research into pre-service teacher study abroad is descriptive in nature, and does not "attend to methodology very closely…[doing] little to address a general lack of evidence in what the authors argue their program does and the outcomes it accomplishes" (2017, p. 54). They offer examples of this lack of evidence that include unclear explanations of sample and data collection, vague consideration of theoretical approaches and a lack of clarity in analysis. Hauerwas, Skawinski and Ryan (2017) further note that much of the research relies on self-reporting and "lacks generalizability and external evaluation criteria" (p. 203). Additionally, Bishop (2013) draws attention to the visual

and verbal messages that education abroad participants receive before, during, and after their trips and questions if participants' reflections of transformation is influenced by these messages rather than their actual experiences abroad. These implicit messages may encourage participants to describe their experiences as positive. As an example, when I was interviewed participants 10 years after their time abroad, as part of a pilot study for this dissertation, one of the questions I asked was if there was a low point or negative experience during the trip. While some of my participants were able to identify a low point, they were quick to reframe it and minimize it in relation to the overwhelmingly positive experiences they described. Doppen and An (2014) reported a similar phenomenon where participants reframed challenges as examples of persistence or growth. Bishop (2013) would insist that we question if their minimizing of the negative elements of their experience was indicative of the overall positive nature of the experience or if it was a result of their preconditioning to frame their time abroad as positive.

Although the majority of the research suggests positive impacts, some researchers have reported complex outcomes. Hauerwas, Skawinski and Ryan (2017) questioned if immersion in another country led to greater awareness of the needs of culturally and linguistically diverse students when preservice teachers return home. They conducted interviews with 12 and 16 month post-return focus groups with 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 identities and were unsure how to bring cultural concepts into the curriculum, leading the researchers to conclude that the greatest area of change was language growth rather than interculturality. 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 careers some found it challenging or nearly impossible to apply their

learning from study abroad into the new contexts of their first classrooms and often felt a

disconnect between their personal philosophies and the goals of the school system in which they

were employed. In a survey of Consortium for Overseas Student Teaching participants between

1995 and 2012, Doppen and An (2014) found no significant differences between participants

more than five years ago and participants less than five years ago.

Conversely, four years after participation in an overseas experience in Kenya,

participants had internalized their experience and made it part of their life stories (Maynes,

Allison & Julien-Schultz, 2012). Further their emotional response to their time abroad was not

diminished over time, but was supported by professional practices that formed the basis for

decisions in their life.

There is a need for a more complete understanding of the long term outcomes of

preservice teacher education abroad programs. Paige et al. (2009) suggest that lasting outcomes

of education abroad only become evident years later. And as many teacher preparation programs

are only four years long, can any long-term change be witnessed? (McBride, Bellamy &

Knoester, 2020). Little formal research exists that focuses on long-term impacts. Paige et al.

(2009) conducted a survey of over 6,000 U.S. study abroad participants between 1960-2005.

They measured impact largely through civic commitments and reported that 83% of participants

cited education abroad as having a strong impact on their college experience. 94% of participants

voted regularly and 54% volunteered regularly with education organizations. Finally, 60%

enrolled in an advanced degree program and 35% felt that study abroad had helped their career.

These proxy measures can offer insight into changes in behavior, but they don't offer a picture of how participants consider the experience impactful, and if and how they integrate the experience into their senses of self.

### *Identity and Self-defining Memories*

Central to the question of how pre-service teacher education abroad impacts individuals is the concept of identity. Research questions that explore pre-service teacher identity and perceptions of self are one of the categories of questions identified by Simmons, Marx and Moss (2020). They highlight "evolving identity" as one of six themes of participant growth. This theme describes how participants became more interculturally sensitive, came to see the world with a more global perspective, and became more aware of their own cultural identity (as self-reported).

My notion of identity is informed by Norton (2000), who frames identity as "how a person understands his or her relationship to the world, how that relationship is constructed across time and space, and how the person understands possibilities for the future" (p. 5). Identity is not static; rather, it is a dynamically evolving construct influenced by the experiences and interactions that one has.

Additionally, I recognize identity as a complex constellation of multiple elements. Each person holds multiple identities that hold more or less significance to them in any given situation. My understanding of identity is also influenced by narrative perspectives and the larger body of work of scholars such as Dan McAdams, Donald Polkinghorne, Michael Connelly and Jean Clandinin. They emphasize the connections between identity and narrative. Humans are social creatures and natural storytellers who understand our life through the stories we tell. Through stories, we gain new understandings of why people act in particular ways (Polkinghorne, 1995).

Here, narratives are not viewed in isolation, but rather at the intersection of individual and social. When someone tells a story, they tell it in a specific place and time, to a specific audience. The narrative holds meaning for the teller, but the audience may also interpret the story in their own ways. Thus, the narrative is at once individual and social. Additionally, the person telling the story may make adjustments to the story as they tell it based on feedback from the audience. The telling of the story can help the teller clarify emotional meaning (McAdams, 2008) as they talk through what they were and are thinking and feeling. Stories help us make sense of who we are and who we see ourselves to be.

Stories can also help us make plans for our future. As we think about and share what has been impactful in our past or present, we also consider our futures. As Connelly and Clandinin note, "All of these stories offer possible plotlines for our future" (1990, p. 60). Winstone and Moore (2017) consider this "aspirational identity," where people form an image of who they see themselves to be in their future and work in the present to begin to achieve that image. Winstone and Moore discuss aspirational identity in the liminal space of graduate study, but I believe the concept also applies to professional and personal spheres. As we develop our senses of self, we examine who we are today, but also hold an image of who we wish to be in the future. It is important to note that this aspirational identity is not fixed, rather it evolves with new knowledge and new experiences. As one begins a teacher preparation program, they hold an image of what it means to be a teacher in their mind. This image is shaped by previous experiences in classrooms, yet, as they engage in clinic work, coursework, and reflection, what it means to be a teacher – the aspirational identity – changes and evolves into a new conception. The same thing happens for one's notions of home, family, connection, and community. In this sense, identity is at once a backward- and forward-moving concept of constant reflection on history and memory to make

sense of the present and (re)consider the future. Our identities can then be found at these intersections of past, present, and future; individual, and social. Fivush (2008) describes the construction of self in this way:

> Memory in general, and autobiographical memory in particular, is constructed in social interactions in which particular events, and particular interpretations of events, are highlighted, shared, negotiated and contested, leading to fluid dynamic representations of the events of our lives that function to define self, other and the world. (p. 50)

Memory and history are intricately linked, and equally complex. In 1932, Carl Becker attempted to answer the question 'what is history?' In grappling with this question, Becker concluded that there are two histories, "the actual series of events that once occurred; and the ideal series that we affirm and hold in memory" (p. 222). Here, Becker highlights the complex and dynamic relationship between history and memory. Our interpretation of history is filtered through our current context and presented as relative, changing as our own knowledge grows. Becker lands on the definition that "history is the memory of things said and done" and asserts that "if the essence of history is the memory of things said and done, then it is obvious that every normal person, Mr. Everyman, knows some history" (1932, p. 223). The history that Mr. Everyman (or Mx. Everyperson) knows orients them to their "little world of endeavor" guiding them in the tasks they must complete today (p. 224). In this sense, history and memory are connected to each other and to the present and future, and they are unique to each person. Becker (1932) explains that history is "an imaginative creation, a personal possession within each of us." (p. 228). In creating this personal history, Mx. Everyperson is not limited to the events of the last week. They can recall their childhood, places they've lived and adventures they have had. Becker (1932) explains this process of creating history:

Daily and hourly, from a thousand unnoted sources, there is lodged in [Mx. Everyperson's] mind a mass of unrelated and related information and misinformation, of impressions and images, out of which [they] somehow [manage], undeliberately for the most part, to fashion a history, a patterned picture of remembered things said and done in past times and distant places. It is not possible, it is not essential, that this picture should be complete or completely true: it is essential that it should be useful to [Mx. Everyperson]; and that it may be useful to [them] …and to [their] idea of [themselves] and of what [they] are doing in the world and what [they hope] to do. (p. 230)

Becker's assertion that "it is not essential, that this picture should be complete or completely true" suggests that memory is notoriously fickle. Often memories are tweaked to reflect the audience and shaped in response to our current mood and emotional state (Fivush, 2008; Fivush, Booker & Graci, 2017; Libby, Eibach & Gilovich, 2005; Pasupathi, 2001; Ross, 1989; Routledge et al., 2012; Strack, Schwarz & Gschneidinger, 1985; Wilson & Ross, 2003; Wood & Conway, 2006). Marsh (2007) notes four types of distortions found in the retellings of memory: exaggerations, minimizations, omissions, and additions. Retelling stories and engaging in nostalgia can help people determine a sense of meaning in life (Routledge et al., 2012).

This intersection of history, memory, present, and future that is most relevant to the examination of impacts of pre-service teacher education abroad. As this study seeks to understand the long-term impacts of pre-service teacher education abroad, the participants were asked to recall abroad events that happened in their past that they considered to be impactful. I recognize that the narratives they share of their memories will have inaccuracies. The accuracy of the memory is not as important as the meaning that a participant ascribes to it. And, as each experience leads to other experiences, the narratives shared by participants may reveal

connections and pathways. These connections link past, present, and future. Connelly and Clandinin discuss these connections as a continuum, writing, "Whenever one positions oneself in that continuum – the imagined now, some imagined past, or some imagined future – each point has a past experiential base and leads to an experiential future" (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990, p. 2). In particular, I sought to better understand how participants of pre-service teacher education abroad programs hold the memories of their past experiential base abroad in mind as they interact in the present and view their experimental or potential future.

To identify the connections and impactful experiences, I draw on the concept of self-defining memories (Singer & Salovey, 1993; Singer et al., 2013; Wood & Conway, 2006). Narrative identity begins with autobiographical memories, which, depending on their relevance to our long term goals, become self-defining memories (Singer et al., 2013). Self-defining memories are memories of significant personal events that we assign great meaning to; these memories contribute to our overall life stories and senses of self (Singer & Salovey, 1993). Singer and Salovey describe self-defining memories with this prompt: if you wanted someone to get to know you on a deep and personal level, which stories would you tell them? You would select stories that are meaningful to you, divulge your sense of self and your understanding of yourself, and are stories that reflect who you wish to be seen as. For example, if one views themselves as resilient, they may share a story that reveals a time where they had to overcome a challenge. At times these self-defining memories are made up of one specific incident, while at others they meld together multiple similar experiences into one general self-defining memory.

For example, when I was nine-years-old I fell off my bike, shattering my kneecap. I instantly knew something was wrong, but there were no outward signs that my leg was broken, and my mother insisted that I'd be fine once I took a bath. Two days later, despite my numerous

and repeated claims that something wasn't right with my body, I still had not seen a doctor. On the third day, my knee swelled to the size of a watermelon and my parents took me to the doctor, where we were informed that I would need surgery that same evening[1]. To me this story represents a time where I knew that something wasn't right. Even though from the outside it looked like I had barely scraped my knee, and my parents insisted that I was fine and was just being melodramatic, I held firm to my beliefs and was vindicated in the end. To me, telling this story conveys a message to others about trusting myself and advocating for myself – it's about me having the courage to say something isn't right even if other's don't believe me at first.

Let's contrast this with an example of the other type of self-defining memory, where a repeated experience merges into a single self-defining memory. In most of my childhood memories, my father is more the serious type. However, his demeanor changed when we went on vacation. Growing up we spent some time on an island off the coast of Maine almost every summer. After driving nearly 14 hours, once we stopped for groceries and turned off the highway onto the winding coastal roads that would lead us to the ferry terminal, my dad would roll down the windows. As John Fogerty's "Centerfield" album played, my dad would softly sing along, and I'd see him relax – the seriousness that he usually displayed faded away. There was an exciting sense of possibility in the freedom of that moment. There on that annual coastal drive, I learned the value of finding places and times to relax and step away from the stresses of the world, that and the importance of a great musical soundtrack. That's the story I tell; that's the self-defining memory. But in this case, the self-defining memory isn't one single event, it's an amalgam of many different drives down that road with my father. I'm certain that we didn't

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[1] My mother recalls that my knee was the size of a softball and that she took me to the doctor the day after I fell off my bike. The differences between our two recollections further illustrates how memory can be changed to reflect the person's self-construct and aims.

listen to the same album every time. I'm certain that sometimes it was raining. I'm certain that sometimes my father was still stressed and stoic, worried about making it to the ferry terminal in time. And I'm certain there were times when my father was annoyed at me because I didn't use the bathroom while we were at the grocery store and now needed to go. But the meaning of that story for me is best illustrated by this image of my father, one arm out the window, driving on clear and sunny day, without a care in the world. The story reveals lessons that I try and apply in my own life – lessons that I credit my father with instilling in me. And the narrative illustrates that lesson in a way that holds meaning for me, and for others when I share it, further illustrating the individual and social intersection of stories.

It is these significant, self-defining memories, and their connection to pre-service teacher education abroad that I was most interested in exploring through this dissertation research. It is these self-defining memories that we draw on for meaning making and understanding life. In both of the examples that I shared above, the story serves to illustrate a belief I hold about myself and reveal some aspect of my identity and how I see the world and my place in it. I will share a brief example from my own experience abroad; I had and internship placement at a middle school in North London. When I had a free period you could almost always find me sitting at the back of the Religious Education classroom. Religious Education is a compulsory part of the British National Curriculum, and in that classroom I watched many incredible lessons. I watched Year 6 students compare and explore creation stories. I watched Year 8 students debate the ethics of divorce from different religious perspectives. These powerful conversations were unlike anything I'd seen in U.S. education. The students talked about topics that I'd been told my whole life we didn't talk about in public, and especially didn't talk about in schools. Watching these students explore these big and potentially controversial topics through respectful and open

dialogue completely changed my view of what education could be. It was in that classroom that I formed my view of who I wanted to be as a teacher, and the value of discussion became a central component of my teaching philosophy. In this example, the context for the school-based internship experience was essential. I would not have had this experience in a U.S. classroom, but the teaching I observed abroad changed my own professional practice.

As we further contemplate the notion of self-defining memories for pre-service teachers, it is important to consider the age of our participants. The connection between participant age and identity is often unexamined.  As I noted in the previous section, participant ages range widely, but most participants are in their early 20s. McAdams (1993) notes that college is often viewed as an opportunity for a fresh start, where people reimagine and reinvent themselves away from the problems and concerns of their former selves. This idea is prominent in popular culture descriptions of college and the wild freshman year. Children begin to receive messages about who they should be and who they can grow up to be at a young age. For some children, these messages are limiting, and they struggle with the tension between their internal sense of self and how they wish to live their life and the external pressure to exist in certain other ways. McAdams suggests that the new context of college, where one leaves the familiar place of home and the associated messages about who they should be, is an opportunity to re-examine one's identity. As noted above, one's identity is always in process of being navigated, formed, and reformed. But, as I discussed in Simmons and Moss (2023) some people struggle to shed the personal, familial, or cultural expectations of the type of life they should lead at the start of college: participants of pre-service teacher education abroad programs are often still in the process of navigating their own identities as they embark on their journeys and the change in physical (and cultural) location offered by the international context may be important for this process. Some,

may have had the wild and crazy freshman year and then settled into a new sense of self. Others may be struggling with the tension between their aspirational identities and the lives they currently lead. And for others, the international experience may come exactly as they shed the expectations of their former selves and begin to reimagine their new lives.

A second consideration regarding participant age and identity is related to Erickson's (1963) theory of psychosocial stages. Broadly, Erikson outlines eight stages of life. The two that are relevant to consider here are Stage 5: Identity vs. Role confusion and Stage 6: Intimacy vs. Isolation. In Stage 5, occurring often at the transition from childhood to adulthood, people may ask questions about themselves and how they fit into society. In this stage, one develops a clearer sense of self. Part of that process involves trying on new roles, activities, or behaviors to determine what one likes, dislikes, and makes them uniquely themselves. During this stage, one may develop a sense of personal style, decide into which social groups they best fit, and commit to a career path. This is also a time of uncertainty for people, where they question where they belong in society and lack confidence.

During Stage 6, commonly occurring during early adulthood, people begin to consider and develop close relationships with people. These relationships can be romantic or sexual in nature, but also includes deep friendships and meaningful connections. These meaningful relationships are built on support and reciprocal sharing. However, during this stage, one may face rejection and confusion leading people to withdraw, develop a fear of commitment or intimacy, and experience deep loneliness. While Erikson's work has been critiqued for being misogynist and for the rigid nature of stage-specific models, it does prompt us to consider the connections between age and identity development in pre-service teacher education abroad. As they enter these programs, participants may already be asking questions about their likes and

dislikes, places in the world, ability to form connections with others, and senses of self. As they

grapple with these questions, the new and unfamiliar contexts of an international location offer

them the opportunity to temporarily escape their perceptions of themselves that felt

overwhelming in their home context and try on new identities and roles.

## Conceptual Framework

As I completed the literature review and developed my research questions, I also

developed a conceptual framework to show the relationships and connections that I see between

these concepts (Figure 6). The purple box represents memory and history, which form the

starting point for considering the long term impacts of pre-service teacher education abroad. This

dissertation explores the memories that participants hold of their experiences, guided by Singer

and Salovey's (1993) concept of self-defining memories. Inside the purple box are two white

rectangles, which represent intercultural competence development and transformative

experiences and program design. Both of these boxes are connected to personal and professional

impact, represented by the circles. My notion of intercultural competence draws on the Council

of Europe's Competencies for Democratic Culture model (2018a; 2018b). The development of

intercultural competence has implications for both personal and professional impact, changing

one's perceptions of, and interactions with others, who are culturally different both inside and

outside of the classroom. Likewise, transformative experiences can impact one in both a personal

or professional sense, depending on the nature of experience. At the center of my conceptual

framework is identity. I consider identity to be one's understanding of themself and their

relationship to the world, which draws on Norton (2000). One's identity has both personal and

professional realms and is shaped by and, in turn, shapes the cultural groups to which one

belongs. Telling stories of our past, particularly memories that hold significant meaning helps us

make sense of our identities and imagine a future for ourselves. By identifying and understanding these memories and what education abroad experiences participants view as transformative and meaningful, we can begin to understand how their experience abroad impacted their current identities. Further, this model offers implications for program design and management, with program designers shaping programs to maximize the potential for impact.

Figure 6
*Conceptual Framework for Pre-service Teacher Education Abroad Impact*
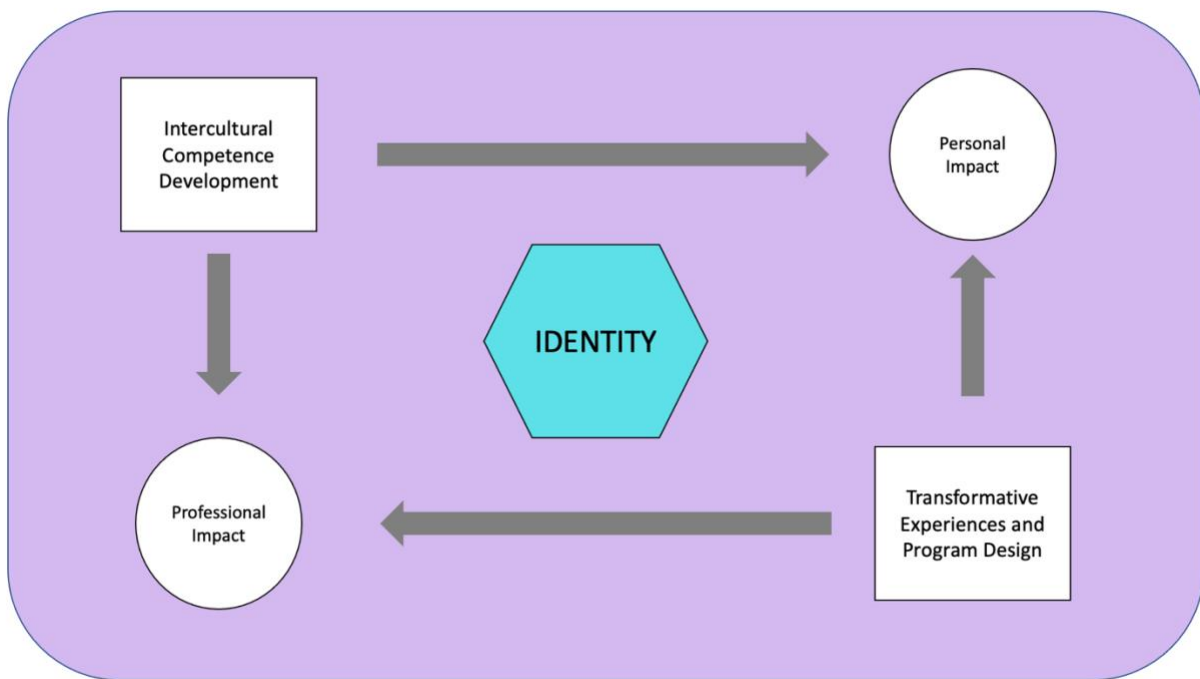


## Conclusion

It is into this complex and unknown landscape of long-term impacts that I am wading. It seems to be widely agreed upon that education abroad holds the potential for lasting transformation, but clarity is needed to understand this process. Historically, journeys abroad were taken to learn about and from others, but the hidden truth of education abroad is that you sometimes learn more about yourself than you learn about others.

At the start of this literature review I explored the history of education abroad. From the grand tour across European sites of cultural significance to full enrollment in a foreign institution

for advanced study, I highlighted the many variations of education abroad. This history reveals some critiques that are still being debated today, particularly where participants and destinations are concerned. Additionally, the question of what is valued more, academic knowledge or experiential learning continues to be discussed and debated. These journeys abroad expose participants to unfamiliar contexts and new cultures. This exposure may be an essential way to help teachers understand both themselves and their students as cultural beings, leading to teachers considering how culture influences interactions within the classroom. Developing cultural understanding is more critical than ever given the rapidly changing racial, cultural, and linguistic demographics of students in U.S. schools, but the relatively stable demographic profile of teacher education candidates.

Through my initial understandings of international experiences for pre-service teachers, I was led to examine the development of intercultural competence, a common goal of pre-service teacher education abroad. Intercultural competence has affective, cognitive, and behavioral elements, and experiences abroad may be the best way for people to develop all three aspects. It has been suggested that international experiences may help aid in intercultural competence development. In this literature review I have shown that there are a wide array of program styles and elements that constitute an education abroad experience. Program designers must make intentional decisions to craft a program that has clearly defined program goals and experiences to support these goals. It can be easy to fall prey to the immersion assumption and believe that simply by being abroad participants will learn about another culture, but intentional program design is key to maximizing learning and ensuring that their time abroad does not lead to the reinforcement of negative cultural stereotypes. Without scaffolding and support during this time,

pre-service teachers may view their learning abroad as too different from the U.S. schooling system and think that it cannot be applied, thus losing transformative potential.

However, as noted in the final section of this literature review, the current understandings of long term impacts of study abroad leave much to be desired. It is generally agreed that education abroad offers personal, professional, affective, and behavioral growth, but significant questions remain. The concepts explored here, of intercultural competence, transformation, memory, and identity form the cornerstones of my conceptual framework, which guided my inquiry into this realm. My approach to answering these questions will be discussed in the next chapter, which outlines the method that I used and the principles that guided me as a researcher.

# Chapter 3: Methodology

*To my mind, the greatest reward and luxury of travel is to be able to experience everyday things as if for the first time, to be in a position in which almost nothing is so familiar it is taken for granted.*

– Bill Bryson –

## Overview of the Study

The purpose of this research is to reflect with former participants of a pre-service teacher education abroad program and explore how they consider the program to have impacted them. Often education abroad participants use phrases such as "life-changing" to describe their experience, but there is a lack of systematic investigation into the ways in which these participants conceptualize impact and how they consider the program to be impactful to them. A key element of this research is the longitudinal nature, as it reconnects with participants five or more years after their experience in the program. Using the UConn Education in London program as the research context, this study examines the experiences that participants consider to be most meaningful and the program elements that they report shaped these experiences. As this research seeks to understand long-lasting impact and change, concepts relating to memory and identity formation are central to this research. Additionally, theories of transformation and intercultural competence play a fundamental role in shaping this study. The specific research questions guiding this research are:

1. In what ways do participants in a pre-service teacher education abroad program say the experience of participating in an education abroad program impacted their personal and professional selves?

    a. How does it impact their classroom practices and career trajectory?

    b. How does it impact their relationships with students, colleagues, or community?

    c.   How does it impact their personal relationships?

2.  In what ways do they say the experience of participating in an education abroad program impacted their developing views of culture and their intercultural competence?

    a.   How does it impact their values, attitudes, skills, knowledge and critical understandings?

3.  What are the self-defining memories that participants in a pre-service teacher education abroad program identify and how are they connected to program design?

    a.   What experiences and components of program design, school-based or non-school based seem to impact their growth?

This research draws on a variety of data collection methods to provide a multi-dimensional perspective on impact, including a questionnaire and semi-structured interviews. This chapter begins with some of the philosophical and epistemological views that I hold. It then describes the methods employed: the research context and participant selection criteria, the use of a pilot study I completed, data collection methods, and data analysis and synthesis processes. The chapter concludes with a discussion of ethical considerations, issues of trustworthiness and limitations of this research.

**Philosophical Values and Methodological Justification**

The summer after I completed my undergraduate degree I worked in a feed mill where we processed corn, soybeans, and grains and turned them into chicken and pig food. At that time, I was enrolled in the Integrated Bachelor's/Master's teacher education program so I knew that at the end of summer I would return to school to complete my master's degree. Education has always been a central value of my family. Growing up, I always felt that the question wasn't *if* I would go to college, but *where* I would go to college. I had always been surrounded by high

achieving students who looked like me and saw the world in similar ways. So, early in my time

working at the feed mill, when I explained that I would be heading back to school for my

master's degree I was utterly unprepared for the response of, "Why? You already have one

degree, don't you? Why would you want another?" While I didn't fully recognize it at the time,

this was an early lesson in how our experience and our background shapes our view of the world.

I believe that our experiences, our background, and our cultures shape how we see the

world and how we interact with others. This is one of the reasons that I am drawn to qualitative

research. Brinkmann and Kvale (2015) note that qualitative research should seek to describe

phenomena in the world. As they describe it, qualitative research highlights the cultural,

everyday, situated aspects of the human experience. It seeks to understand one as a person and a

human. In this view, even if two people experience the same thing, they will perceive it

differently given their identities and cultures.

Further, I believe that the best way to understand how someone experiences and

perceives a situation is to listen to their words and their stories. I agree with Seidman, who

quoting Reason (1981) notes that "the best stories are those which stir people's minds, hearts,

and souls and by doing so give them new insights into themselves, their problems, and their

human condition" (2019, p. 8). Stories, for me, are central to how I conceptualize qualitative

research. McAdams (2008) highlights six principles about stories: (1) the self is storied and

stories are part of every culture; (2) stories integrate lives, entertain, education, inspire, disrupt,

and organize, bringing together different ideas and characters; (3) stories are told in social

relationships and the sharing of a story may help the teller clarify meaning; (4) stories change

over time as events gain or decrease in importance to the teller; (5) stories are cultural texts that

reinforcing cultural, gender, and class constructions; and (6) some stories are better than others.

The telling of stories helps us make sense of our world and helps us define how we see ourselves and what we consider to be important. The stories we share allow us to see ourselves more clearly and help refine who we wish to be in the future. These stories capture our experiences. We learn from what we experience and that becomes the foundation for our truth about the world.

Since that summer working in the feed mill, I have come to better understand how my background, my culture, and my experiences shape how I interact with the world and my truth about the world. I experience the world as a queer, white, man. Each of those identity markers are things that I have had to reconcile for myself, and, in doing so, I have come to understand how they shape the relationship between myself and any research endeavor.

The first of these identity markers that I deeply considered was whiteness. As a member of the dominant culture, I was privileged to move through the world not questioning my racial identity for much of my life. Reading Peggy McIntosh's 1988 article "White Privilege: Unpacking The Invisible Knapsack" as a graduate student was one of the first times that I was confronted with my privilege as a white person. The statement about flesh toned Band Aids reasonably matching my skin is one that still sticks with me. Though this piece was impactful in helping me understand that I carried unrecognized privileges simply because of my skin tone, it didn't help me fully understand what it meant to be white.

For me, that learning began after completing my master's degree, when I moved to Casablanca, Morocco. For the first time in my life, I was not part of the dominant culture and I began to notice both my own race and others' races. Helms' (1990) outlines a model of nonracist white racial identity development. As Helms's model is situated within a white-dominant space, the stages don't fully align with my lived experiences, but while I was living abroad I

experienced something akin to what Helms calls disintegration, where I began to recognize that cultural and institutional racism existed. Once I returned to the United States, I began to see the U.S. in different ways and recognize inequalities I had previously been unable to see.

Encountering the work of Jones and Okun on white supremacy culture (2001) I began to really understand how my whiteness shaped my worldview. In particular, I came to recognize how perfectionism, paternalism, fear of open conflict, and individualism had characterized my experiences and how I had internalized these ideas as universal truths. In this framework an emphasis on perfectionism leads to the perception that mistakes reflect on the quality of the person and the conflating of a person *doing* wrong with a person *being* wrong. Paternalism leads to those in power making unilateral decisions and not considering or informing others about how those decision were reached. Power is consolidated in the hands of the few. And those who hold power avoid conflict out of fear. In white supremacy culture, politeness is very important, so asking questions or bringing up issues that are difficult is considered rude and improper, which reinforces the idea that questioning those in power is not appropriate.

Lisa Delpit's work regarding linguistic differences along lines of race and class was also instrumental in how I understood whiteness. Delpit describes how white middle class individuals adopt indirect speech patterns in which questions are often actually directions but are phrased as questions to appear more polite (2006). Additionally, whiteness centers the individual, with an emphasis on competition and individual accountability, which isolates people and makes them feel like they must do everything alone. These themes were at work in my life without me recognizing it; they shaped how I approached schoolwork and how I viewed myself. If I didn't succeed at something it was a reflection on me and my family. If I was unhappy with something I felt I was expected to swallow that unhappiness and not discuss it. Learning to name these

elements of white supremacy culture was the first step in considering how they impacted my perception of "good" work and my interactions with others.

These tenets of whiteness also made it difficult for me to face and recognize my queer identity. My whiteness suggested to me that I was not supposed to be different from the norm and I was not supposed to ask uncomfortable questions. This meant that when I started to feel that heterosexual relationships were not for me, I immediately suppressed that part of myself as acknowledging that part of me would have created waves and marked me as different. I didn't view anything other than a heterosexual relationship as viable or possible. I worried about how that would have been received by family members and the community. It took time for me to find the courage to address my sexuality. It is important to note that coming out is a unique process shaped by the intersectional identities of each person. For me, as a white male, my concerns about coming out were related to my family and social circle, they were less related to structural oppressive systems, which is not the case for all individuals.

At the core of that process was questioning myself, and questioning my space in my family, in my career, and in society. Walton and Cohen (2007) describe this as "belonging uncertainty" where one feels unsure about the strength of social bonds leading to a self-perception that they don't belong. This process of questioning was uncomfortable, and during it I often felt alone. In the aloneness, trying to learn about what it means to be a queer man takes on a secretive and shameful quality, which must also be confronted. But the process of questioning was necessary. As Jackson (2009) notes, being queer forces people to examine and confront almost everything about their identity, something that straight people don't have to do. Of course, this experience of feeling tension between one's developing sense of self and the

expectations of the dominant culture is not only experienced by queer individuals, but also by people of color and those in minority religious, ethnic, or linguistic groups.

Morris (2000) discusses how developing a queer identity requires one to grapple with the complex question of what it means to be a person. In a white and heteronormative society, that question has only one anticipated answer, and heterosexuality is assumed, normalized, and reinforced through law and policy. Queer theory interrogates this assumed normativity and brings light to the power imbalances within systems. Queer theory embraces the nuance and complexity of life rather than relying on binary opposites and oversimplifying the human experience (Jackson, 2009; Morris, 2000). Through exploring my queer identity, I also came to better understand my relationship to masculinity. The notion of the American male is steeped in the history of our nation, drawing on the image of the rugged frontiersman and the militia soldier. Michael Bronksi, author of *A Queer History of the United States,* describes how historically this idea of the American man was framed in opposition of the British gentleman, who was viewed as soft, effeminate, and ineffectual. The American man was strong, brave, and ready to fight. The creation of the idea of the American man led to the creation of the American woman, who was framed as opposite to the man – as meek and needing protection (Bronksi, 2012). These binaries and dichotomies of man and woman didn't feel authentic to my experience. Working as an elementary school teacher, in a female dominated field. I was surrounded by strong females who showed a full range of what it means to be a woman. As I negotiated my sexuality, I was also negotiating what it means to be a man.

I recognize that this work to understand myself and my relationship to the world is, and must be, ongoing. I come to my research with a deeper understanding of who I am. My identity influences the types of questions that I wish to ask about the world and also the methodologies

that I am drawn to. Additionally, this deeper understanding of myself has allowed me to recognize how I am perceived by my participants. I know that my identities may serve to foster connection with some participants, but at the same time it may serve to distance me from other participants. I can only ever know my own experience. I can never fully know the experiences of another. And that is essential to remember as I engage in research.

By taking the time to establish who I am and how I see the world as I outline my methodology, I hope to frame my approaches to research within my values. I value honesty and humility. I value justice and innovation. Engaging in honest research requires me to be open with my research participants and with the readers of my research. This includes how I choose to share the results of my work. I must resist the temptation to turn my interviews into standalone blocks of text and always remember that they are the words of real people with their own unique lives who have trusted me enough to share their stories and trusted me to be responsible with their stories.

As I engage in research I strive to remain humble. Humility requires me to recognize that this process of research is collective and that I have learned and will continue to learn from many people. This is central to how I try and engage with my participants, never framing myself as more knowledgeable than them, but honoring them as experts of their own experience. Humility requires me to ask questions and engage openly, resisting the normative academic culture of competition and secrecy. Research emphasizing justice embraces critical theory and questions the structures of inequality in our world. It requires me to consider deeply who I partner with and how my research connects with ideas of service to a larger community. Finally, I value innovation. I strive to try new ideas and resist the emphasis on perfectionism. This requires me to be open to the results of my research being different than anticipated and adjusting as required.

In this view, I also draw on Oldfather and West's (1994) metaphor of qualitative research as jazz. They describe it as such:

> As the deep structure of jazz guides the unfolding music, so the epistemological principles, socially constructed values, inquiry focus, and emerging findings guide the unfolding of qualitative research processes. As jazz is collaborative and interdependent, so are the dynamics of qualitative research. As each improvisation is unique, so are the contextually bound findings within each research setting and the peculiar adaptive methodologies of each qualitative inquiry. (p. 22)

Of central importance in this conception is the idea of educated listening and learning to "read" the participants. This notion of "reading" the participants requires researchers to be able to put aside their preconceived notions and respond to the participants, by following them down pathways that they identify as important.

I strive to bring each of these values to my interactions as a researcher. It is my hope that outlining these values in conjunction with my identity will help readers understand the perspectives I bring to this research and also that declaring these values will also serve to help them to hold me accountable to them as I engage in this research.

These values frame the methodology that I apply. This project seeks to understand participants' experiences and the ways that their abroad experiences were impactful to them. As this research emphasizes people's experience, a qualitive research approach was most appropriate. Williams and Moser note that "qualitative research provides opportunities to locate the genesis of a phenomenon, explore possible reasons for its occurrence, codify what the experience of the phenomenon meant to those involved, and determine if the experience created a theoretical frame or conceptual understanding associated with the phenomenon" (2019, p. 45).

Gill et al. (2008) suggest that qualitative research, and, in particular, interviews, are most appropriate when detailed insights are required, or when little is known about the study phenomena. This approach fits well with my research aims as there are no long-term impact studies to draw on and capturing participant's detailed recollections was important to begin to understand impact. Interviews play a prominent role in this research. Brinkmann and Kvlae's (2015) perspective on interviews was influential in the formation of this research. They consider the interview to be an interaction and exchange of views, a collaborative experience between two people. I also agree with Gill et al,. who consider the research interview to provide a window into the "views, experiences, beliefs and/or motivations of individuals on specific matters" (2008, p. 292). With these values and commitments in mind, I next outline the program context in which my research occurred and the approach I applied.

## Program Description and Context

The Neag School of Education at the University of Connecticut features a five-year Integrated Bachelor's/Master's (IB/M) program. Students enter the university as pre-teaching students and spend their first two years completing their general education requirements and subject area courses, preparing to apply for admission to the Neag School of Education. Students apply in the winter of their sophomore year and begin the program as juniors. The first year in the program thematically explores "student as learner" and features courses centered on understanding how students learn (i.e., learning theory, assessment, exceptionality, etc.). As juniors, pre-service teachers spend four to six hours weekly in professional development center schools, applying their coursework learning by observing and assisting in a real world classroom setting.

The senior year of the program, termed "student as teacher" features coursework on aspects of teaching and begins to specialize their study to their certification area. In the fall semester students engage in professional development center schools at least six hours a week, and in the spring semester they engage in full-time student teaching.

The master's year of the program is thematically titled "teacher as leader" and engages students in dual themes of leadership and inquiry. Pre-service teachers engage in an internship of 18 hours a week and also engage in an inquiry research project. Their post-graduate internships do not usually tie them to a single classroom, but rather allow them to engage in work that may include curriculum development, support of students with specific learning needs (emergent bilinguals, etc.), after-school community projects, and other leadership-focused efforts beyond whole class instruction. The inquiry research project challenges students to address issues impacting schools and helps pre-service teachers learn how and why to use inquiry as a tool of professional practice. Fifth-year students in the IB/M program have the option to complete their study in the United States or apply for the international track which offers a suite of programs across the globe, including sites in London, Cusco, and Cape Town (for more on the suite of programs offered, see Moss et al., 2021).

The UConn Education in London program includes three key components that are cited as important underpinnings of education abroad program design: (a) experiential learning opportunities that provide a context for intensive immersion into the local culture, (b) credit-bearing coursework grounded in cross-cultural issues, and (c) support for guided cultural reflection (Engle & Engle, 2004). The program occurs post-student teaching, allowing participants to build on the foundations they established during student teaching and begin to think more broadly about schools and the purpose of education. Although the cornerstone of the

London program are 15-week internships in state funded primary and secondary London schools, where participants engage in approximately 20-hour-per-week internships, the internship does not stand alone. Course work and inquiry project work with an international focus are also designed to provide participants with purposeful opportunities to reflect upon schooling and their roles as educators. The London Program is classified as an "island program" (Norris & Dwyer, 2005), in which students stay together as a cohort for classes and share living accommodation while abroad, and they are not affiliated with a host-country institution. In the London Program teacher candidates remain together as a cohort through an initial summer class taken before traveling, their study abroad in London, and a post-trip seminar during their spring semester back on their home campus. Although the time abroad is central, the program is conceived of and designed as a cohesive and coordinated full-calendar-year experience. The combination of pre-departure and re-entry seminars that bracket the international experience semester are equally as important to participants' intercultural learning as their time abroad (Marx & Moss, 2016).

The UConn Education in London program began over 20 years ago. In the initial years of the program, it ran for two years under the umbrella of a larger UConn in London program, run by the English department and providing courses in British history, and experiences designed to help participants develop a sense of London as a unique global place. It soon became clear that issues of education and intercultural learning needed to be more centrally located. Thus, the program went through a redesign that separated it from the larger UConn in London program and resulted in a specialized UConn Education in London program. In this program, developing culturally responsive teachers and studying culture and schools became the central aim of the program. As a location, London offered multiracial, multinational, and urban cultural contexts without the added challenge of linguistic barriers. Partner schools are purposefully selected and

designated as high performing schools by the Office of Standards in Education (Ofsted). The Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS) serves as the theoretical framework guiding program participants in the development of intercultural competence (Bennett, 1986, 2004). Presently program participants take the Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI; Hammer & Bennett, 2003) at three points across the duration of the program, during their pre-departure orientation, at the end of their time abroad, and four months post the abroad experience, at the end of their re-entry seminar. The results of the IDI are used by program directors to shape learning experiences for participants and facilitate discussion. This dissertation research does not consider the IDI scores, but Back, Kaufman and Moss (2021) offer a discussion and investigation into participant IDI scores.

As the UConn Education in London program has run for more than 20 years, it is one of the longest running pre-service teacher education abroad programs, making it an ideal context for this research. Further, the program director has been the same individual for more than 20 years, which has resulted in consistent support over time. The program director has a substantial amount of institutional knowledge about teacher education, international programming, and intercultural competence development. As this program offers stable longevity, a clear theoretical framework to support intercultural competence development, and participants dating back more than 20 years, it was selected as the site of study for this dissertation research.

**Pilot Study**

As has been previously noted, there is a significant gap in the literature exploring long term impacts of pre-service teacher education abroad, and this dissertation represents an important initial investigation into this realm. Thus, as I began to formulate the plans for this dissertation research, it became clear that conducting a pilot study would be an important step.

Van Teijlingen and Hundley (2001) and Doody and Doody (2015) offer twin aims of conducting a pilot study. Van Teijlingen and Hundley note that "one of the advantages of conducting a pilot study is that it might give advance warning about where the main research project could fail, where research protocols may not be followed, or whether proposed methods or instruments are inappropriate or too complicated" (2001, p. 1). Doody and Doody offer that a pilot study can also be used to support researchers, especially for novice researchers, providing them ways to self-assess their readiness, ability, and commitment (2015). Thus, with these aims of refining my initial ideas about research and gaining experience, in the summer of 2021 I embarked on a pilot study of the long term impacts of pre-service teacher education abroad.

It is important to note that the aim of this pilot study was not to test a hypothesis, but to gain a clearer understanding of concepts to be explored further in the dissertation research. The aim was to develop a clear definition of the focus of the study, and as Teijlingen and Hundley describe it, "to concentrate data collection on a narrow spectrum of projected analytical topics" (2001, p. 3). The 2011 cohort was selected for the focus of this pilot study for two reasons: first, the pilot study occurred 10 years after their time abroad, offering sufficient time and distance from their international experience; second, this was the cohort that I participated in as a student, so I already had existing relationships with the members of this cohort. Additionally, as I was already in contact with this cohort, the recruitment process could be expedited. In the spring of 2021, the Institutional Review Board formally determined the study as Exempt from necessary review and approval (reference code X21-0122) and interviews were conducted beginning in May 2021.

The pilot study drew on McAdam's (2008) life story interview protocol. At the time of developing the pilot study, I was developing my stance as a narrative researcher and was

particularly interested in how participants framed their international experience as a part of their life stories. Narrative inquiry is concerned with meaning making (Adler et al., 2017) and explores how participants reconcile their past and present and formulate their future through the telling of stories (McAdams & McLean, 2013). Pinnegar and Daynes (2007) consider the story to be one of the fundamental units that accounts for human experience. McAdams developed his life story interview protocol as a way to understand the myriad ways that people make sense of their own lives. McAdams asked participants to consider their lives as chapters; identify peak experiences, low points, turning points, challenges, and influences; and imagine their next chapter. I adapted these questions to frame them explicitly around the international experience, asking participants to identify a peak experience while abroad, a turning point that changed their thinking while abroad, and influences and mentors that impacted their international experiences. Additionally, I asked participants to reflect on how their experiences in London changed the way they saw themselves, the classroom, culture, education, or the world.

Through the analysis of the pilot study interviews, there were clear patterns in the ways that participants were thinking about their experience abroad. Some participants situated the impact of their experience abroad in the professional realm, discussing the ways in which it changed their career trajectory or their classroom practices. Other participants framed impact in a personal sense, discussing how their time abroad changed how they saw themselves and how they interacted with the world. A third group of participants discussed both personal and professional impacts. From this analysis, I developed the concept of "pathways of impact" that defined a professional path, a personal path, and a hybrid path (Simmons & Moss, 2023). The pilot study also revealed that there were moments that stood out to participants as extremely significant. These were moments that they could recall in great detail.

This pilot study was important in framing the dissertation in a few ways. First, I realized that framing the experience within the context of a broader life story was not the best approach for this research. I realized that by asking the questions that I asked I was assuming that they had all integrated their education abroad experience as a chapter in their broader life story, as I have considered my own experience as a chapter within my life story. However, from the pilot interviews, it was not clear that all participants viewed their experiences in the same way that I did mine. As I came to understand this, I also thought about those moments that participants shared about in great detail. While some participants had trouble identifying a single high point, low point, or turning point, all participants were able to easily recall moments they considered significant. This led me to change my approach. Rather than giving participants categories of moments to share, I decided I was better to simply ask what moments were meaningful, which led me to Singer and Salovey's (1993) concept of self-defining moments. Through piloting, I realized that I was allowing my own experiences to shape how I asked about others' rather than providing them with a space to talk about their experience on their own terms. The three pathways of personal, professional, and hybrid revealed that there was rich enough data to be explored just by discussing impact rather than attempting to contextualize the experience in a broader life context. Additionally, the pilot study confirmed that topics such as living in London, extracurricular travel, coursework and mentorship were perceived as important and worth further investigation in the dissertation study.

Additionally, while conducting the pilot study I wondered if some participants were holding back during the interview. While I acknowledge and respect each participant's right to not share elements of their experience or decline to answer a question, I wanted to uncover the most complete picture of their time abroad. I was unsure if the questions I was asking were

limiting them or what might be the reason I felt participants were holding back. I pondered this as I continued to take courses and develop as a scholar. Thus, the pilot study was instrumental in allowing me to refine the topics of interest, research questions, and approaches used in this dissertation.

**Method for Data Collection: Instruments and Protocols**

This research draws on multiple methods of data collection: a questionnaire protocol and a semi-structured interview protocol that included what I have termed as an "identity cartography process." As discussed above, data collection took place in two phases. The first phase consisted of participants completing a questionnaire and the second phase consisted of participation in a semi-structured interview. Figure 7 shows the timeline of instrument and protocol development, data collection and analysis.

*Figure 7*
*Research Timeline*
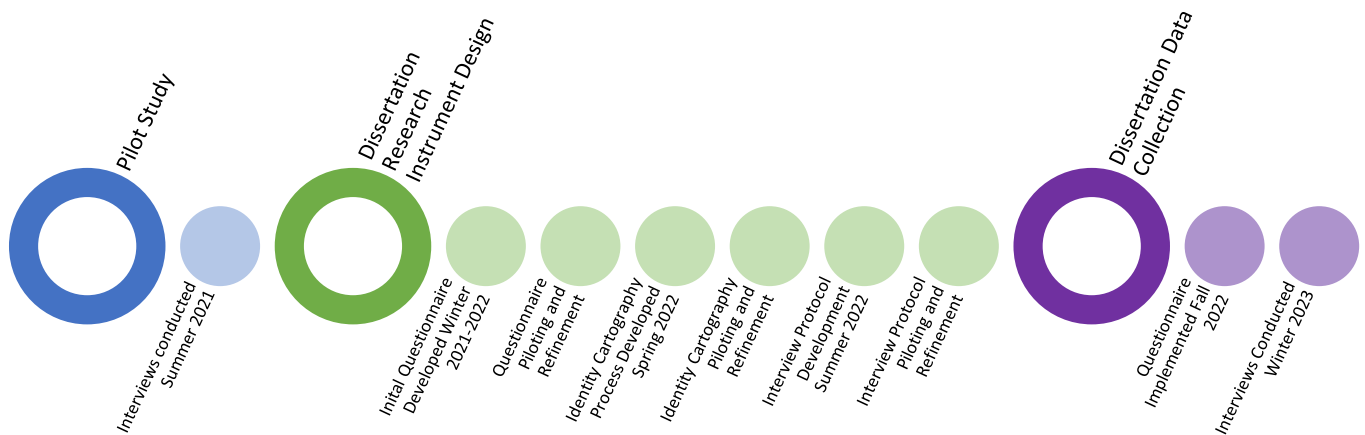


As described above, the pilot study, represented in blue in Figure 7, was conducted in the summer and fall of 2021 and was instrumental in the shaping of this dissertation research. The institutional Review Board at the University of Connecticut reviewed this research and formally determined it as Exempt on September 15, 2022 (reference code X22-0230). The green section in

Figure 7 outlines the process of designing and refining the data collection methods for this research, which began in the winter of 2022 and continued through the summer. As seen in the purple section of Figure 7, dissertation data collection began with a recruitment email, sent to participants in October. Participants completed the questionnaire in October and November. Interviews were conducted in January 2023.

*Criteria for Selecting Participants: Phase One*

The primary aim of this research is understanding the perceived long-term impacts of pre-service teacher education abroad. For this research, "long-term" is conceptualized as having participated in the program five or more years ago. Vande Berg, Paige, and Hemming Lou (2012) and Paige et al. (2009) both suggest that learning during an education abroad experience is more developmental than transformational, with the effects taking years to materialize. They suggest that rather than coming home as changed individuals, participants need time to reflect on their experiences before changes in perspective begin to appear. Further, Okken et al. (2019) found that participants struggled to apply their abroad learning in their first year of teaching. Following this guidance, five years was selected as the minimum number of years post-experience for participants to be included in this research. Five years offered enough time for them to have moved beyond the "survival mode" of the first year of teaching and develop their pedagogy more deeply. Thus, the first criterion for participant selection was that they had completed the UConn Education in London program between 2000-2017.

I calculated that there were 190 participants within that date range. All 190 participants were eligible to complete the questionnaire in the first phase of data collection. Participants were recruited through an email sent by the program director. The program director maintained contact information for most cohorts in his records; however, there were five cohorts for which

full contact information was not available (2001, 2002, 2004, 2006, and 2008). These five

cohorts are an estimated 50 participants to whom I was unable to send the questionnaire.

However, I was able to uncover email contact information for four members of the 2006 and

2008 cohorts from a previous program evaluation survey, conducted in 2015. The questionnaire

was sent to 153 program participants. Additionally, I applied a version of snowball sampling,

asking participants to forward the questionnaire to other members of their cohort (or others) with

whom they were still in contact with.

*Questionnaire Development*

The primary aim of the questionnaire was to provide an overall understanding of the

ways in which participants conceptualized impact five or more years after their international

experience. A secondary aim of the questionnaire was to identify participants for inclusion in my

phase two sample. In this way the questionnaire is both data for analysis and a tool for

participant selection. First, I will discuss the process of developing the questionnaire. In the next

section I will discuss how the questionnaire responses were used to select phase two research

participants.

In designing the questionnaire, I drew on Kelley-Quon's (2018) notion of a descriptive

survey. Kelley-Quon notes that a descriptive survey "does not assume a hypothesis but instead

serves to collect data that will be reported to understand overall trends, incidence and prevalence

of the outcome of interest" (2018, p. 361). The addressed all three research questions guiding this

study and is organized into five sections. In developing the questionnaire, I drew on theories of

intercultural competence, transformation, and existing research on pre-service teacher education

abroad as will be described in the following paragraphs. (See Appendix B for the questionnaire.)

I strategically designed the questionnaire to allow participants to complete it in a timely fashion. It contains a mixture of question types including 5-item Likert scale questions, ranking questions, demographic questions, and constructed written response questions. The questionnaire's five different sections addressed: 1) demographic and background information, 2) perceptions of impact, 3) intercultural competence impact, 4) personal and professional impact, and 5) self-defining memories. (See Table 1 for the number and types of items in the questionnaire and the research question they address.)

The section of the questionnaire that collected demographic and background information relied solely on constructed response. This was a conscious decision that allowed participants to self-identify in whatever way they felt best aligned with their own personal conception of their identity as standard categorial approaches to race and ethnicity often do not reflect participant's lived experiences (Eisenhower er al., 2014).

Table 1
*Questionnaire Item Breakdown*

| Questionnaire Section | Number of Items | Type of Items | Research Question Addressed |
|---|---|---|---|
| Demographic and Background Information | 9 items | Constructed written response | Study Context and Background |
| Perceptions of Impact | 15 items | Constructed written response<br>Likert scale<br>Ranking | RQ 1<br>RQ 3 |
| Intercultural Competence | 25 items | Likert scale | RQ 2 |
| Personal and Professional Impact | 9 items | Likert scale<br>Multiple-select | RQ 1 |
| Self-defining memories | 6 items | Constructed written response<br>Likert scale | RQ 3 |

The questionnaire section that explored intercultural competence impact drew on the Council of Europe's Competencies for Democratic Culture model, which defines competence as

"the ability to mobilise [sic] and deploy relevant values, attitudes, skills, knowledge and/or understanding in order to respond appropriately and effectively to the demands, challenges, and opportunities that are presented by a given type of context" (2018, p. 32). This model splits competence into four categories and 20 key descriptors. For each element of competence, the framework includes a series of key descriptor statements which guided the formation of questions for this section. For example, in the category of "knowledge and critical understanding" the key descriptor "Can reflect critically on his/her own prejudices and stereotypes and what lies beneath them" became "London helped me critically reflect on my own prejudices and stereotypes and what lies beneath them" in the questionnaire. I created one question for most key descriptors, with three key descriptors having multiple corresponding questions: tolerance of ambiguity, knowledge and critical understanding of the self, and knowledge and critical understanding of the world. Across the literature, these three descriptors are commonly associated with proposed outcomes of education abroad experiences; therefore, I felt it appropriate to include multiple proficiency level statements.

The questions reflecting perceptions of impact and personal and professional impact drew on previous research about pre-service teacher education abroad. Many of these questions are drawn from work completed by Simmons, Moss, and Marx (2020) to determine key themes for participant growth in a comprehensive review of pre-service teacher education abroad research.

The final section of the questionnaire applies Singer and Salovey's (1993) concept of self-defining memories: memories of significant personal events that people perceive as contributing to their overall life story or sense of identity. I asked participants to identify one or two self-defining memories from their time abroad. They were asked to rank each memory as having, on a 5-item scale, from "a small impact" to "a great impact" on them. Additionally, I

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asked to rate how much or how little they felt the following emotions at the time of the event: fear, guilt, happiness, love, pride, sadness, shame, anger, disgust, and embarrassment. Early examination of the data about emotion and how much the event impacted them yielded no useful information, so it is not included in the findings or analysis for this research. As shown in Figure 7 (p. 119), an early version of the questionnaire was pilot tested with members of the UConn Education in Nottingham program, a sister program to the London program focusing on Social Studies education. After pilot testing, the questionnaire was streamlined, the number of questions addressing intercultural competence was shortened, and several questions that had been identified as confusing were reworded.

Table 2 shows the demographic breakdown of responses to the questionnaire by year of program participation, number of respondents, self-reported gender and race, as well as their current career. There were a total of 54 respondents, however 10 of them were incomplete and excluded from analysis, so 44 responses are included in the analysis of the questionnaire data.

Table 2

*Questionnaire Respondent Demographic Data*

| Year | Number of Respondents | Gender | Race | Current Career |
|------|----------------------|--------|------|----------------|
| 2002 | 1 | Female | White | Classroom Teacher |
| 2003 | 5 | Female | 1 Caucasian<br>4 White | 2 Administration<br>1 Other School Based Role<br>2 Other |
| 2005 | 5 | 1 Cisgender Male<br>4 Female | 1 Asian<br>1 Half Caucasian, Half Hispanic<br>1 Human<br>2 White | 1 Administration<br>1 Classroom Teacher<br>2 Other School Based Role<br>1 Other |
| 2008 | 2 | Female | 1 Caucasian<br>1 White | 1 Classroom Teacher<br>1 Other School Based Role |

| Year | N | Gender | Race/Ethnicity | Role |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 2009 | 6 | Female | 1 Asian<br>2 Black<br>3 White | 1 Administration<br>1 Classroom Teacher<br>1 Other School Based Role<br>2 Other |
| 2011 | 6 | Female | 5 White<br>1 Did Not Respond | 4 Classroom Teacher<br>1 Other School Based Role<br>1 Other |
| 2012 | 4 | Female | 1 Hispanic<br>1 Multiracial (Asian, White, Cherokee Nation); white-assumed<br>2 white | 3 Classroom Teacher<br>1 Other |
| 2013 | 1 | Female | White | Classroom Teacher |
| 2014 | 3 | 2 Female<br>1 Woman | 1 Mixed<br>2 White | 2 Classroom Teacher<br>1 Other |
| 2015 | 4 | 2 Female<br>1 Male<br>1 Woman | 1 Caucasian<br>1 Puerto Rican<br>1 White<br>1 White/Latina | 2 Administration<br>1 Classroom Teacher<br>1 Other |
| 2016 | 5 | 4 Female<br>1 Male | 1 Caucasian<br>4 White | Classroom Teacher |
| 2017 | 2 | 1 Female<br>1 Male | White | Classroom Teacher |

### Criteria for Selecting Participants: Phase Two

The second phase of this research, the semi-structured interview protocol, sought to provide a detailed exploration of the ways in which participants recalled meaningful experiences and discussed transformation and impact. In this phase I sought to select a purposeful sample of participants for whom participation in the program appeared particularly impactful. As will be discussed more in the Findings section, when answering the selected response question "Participating in the UConn Education in London program had a big impact on me" all

participants selected "somewhat agree" or "strongly agree." Given this evidence that all participants considered the program impactful to some degree, it was necessary to define additional criteria to select a purposeful sample for interviews and identity cartography. As this research aimed to provide a detailed description of the ways in which participants considered the program to be impactful and the specific experiences they associated with impact, I sought to identify participants who identified the program as impactful above and beyond the selected response questions.

To identify these participants, I drew on two constructed response areas of the questionnaire. In one section, participants were asked to "Think about your experience abroad and please share up to four keywords or terms that you consider relevant to this experience." In another section, participants were asked to define a self-defining memory from their time abroad that held significant meaning and significance to them. These two questions served to identify participants for phase two of this research. Prior to analyzing the questionnaire data, I had created a list of words that I considered to be synonymous with "impact." This list included words such as: "life-changing, eye-opening, growth, transformative, impactful, change, powerful, and influential." Using this list as *a priori* codes, I examined the keywords and self-defining education abroad memories to identify participants for phase two of data collection. 21 participants identified a keyword that signified impact. Next, I analyzed the self-defining memories. Here, I looked for two pieces of evidence: identification of impact or change and connection to my research questions. My research questions served as codes to organize the self-defining memories. If a participant mentioned a change in their personal self, view of self, or teaching practices and career trajectory, this information addressed Research Question 1about the impact on personal and professional self. If a participant's self-defining memory indicated a

change in how they thought about culture, then it provided evidence connected to research question 2 and intercultural competence development. If a participant mentioned a particular program element such as the inquiry project or the internship, I considered that as evidence that this participant may provide more direct answers to Research Question 3 the connection of program elements to their self-defining memories.

In the initial coding, several participants' self-defining memories were coded under multiple research questions. Once I had completed this initial coding of the self-defining memories using the research questions as codes, I removed participants who did not indicate that they were willing to complete an interview, leaving 29 participants eligible for participation in phase 2 of this research. From these participants, I identified 11 participants who had 3 or 4 codes that were connected to the research questions - the highest frequency. Creswell (2007) suggests that six to ten participants are sufficient to reach saturation and I used that number as a guideline for selecting the number of participants to include in phase two. A secondary consideration was the year of participation: I wanted to ensure that I had a range of perspectives, not only those from participants from the most recent cohorts. (Table 3 shows the demographic information of the participants selected for interviews.) These participants were purposefully selected as offering insight into multiple research questions and indicated impact and change in their constructed responses. An initial email was sent to them in January to schedule interviews. One week later, a follow up email was sent to those who had not responded and scheduled an interview. A third and final follow up email was sent one week after that.

Table 3:
*Interview and Identity Cartography Participant Demographic Data*

| Pseudonym | Year of Participation | Race | Gender | Current Occupation |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Olivia | 2003 | White | Female | Other |
| Amelia | 2005 | White | Female | Administration |
| Jocelyn | 2011 | White | Female | Classroom Teacher |
| Ruby | 2012 | Multiracial | Female | Other |
| Georgie | 2012 | White | Female | Classroom Teacher |
| Emma | 2014 | White | Female | Other |
| Anne | 2015 | Caucasian | Female | Administration |
| Eleanor | 2016 | Caucasian | Female | Classroom Teacher |
| Henry | 2016 | White | Male | Classroom Teacher |
| Lily | 2017 | White | Female | Classroom Teacher |

To summarize, for phase one of this research the criteria for participant selection was completion of the UConn Education in London program between 2000-2017. For phase two, there were three criteria that guided participant selection: completion of the UConn Education in London program between 2000-2017, identifying impact keywords in the constructed response portions of the questionnaire, and connection of self-defining memories to the research questions.

### *Interview Protocol Development*

Kallio et al. (2016) note that interviews are the most commonly used data collection method and that semi-structured interviews are both flexible and versatile, allowing for an exchange between researcher and interviewee. At the core, interviews are used in an attempt to understand the lived experience of other – as a valued story – and the meaning they make from their experiences (Seidman, 2019). I elected to conduct semi-structured interviews that asked a set of neutral, sensible, understandable key questions but provided flexibility for the interviewer to ask additional follow up questions that allow for the discovery and elaboration of information that the participants considered to be important (Gill et al., 2008).

As I formed the questions for this semi-structured interview protocol I drew on the work of Kallio et al. (2016) and Brinkmann and Kvale (2015). Kallio et al. offer a framework for the development of a qualitative semi-structured interview guide that was developed from a comprehensive review of interview-based studies. They suggest beginning with what is known about the area of research through the completion of a literature review and an extensive accounting of previous knowledge. This leads to the formation of a preliminary interview guide exploring the main themes in a progressive and logical order. This initial guide was then pilot tested and refined to create the complete interview guide.

To aid in the creation of questions, Brinkmann and Kvale (2015) offer an informal typology of questions including introductory questions, follow up questions, specifying questions, direct and indirect questions. "Introductory questions" initiate a new topic and are broad to yield spontaneous and rich descriptions. "Follow up questions" can either be asked directly to extend the participant's answer or probe more deeply. Seidman (2019) however suggests that the word "probe," which conjures a sharp medical instrument, may not be appropriate if we seek to view our participants as human. He suggests the term "explore" to honor the humanity of participants and frame them as partners and not as objects. Brinkmann and Kvale (2015) suggest that a nod or silence can also prompt participants to go further and share more. "Specifying questions" ask participants to share the specific actions or feelings they experienced in a given situation. "Direct questions" ask participants to respond directly to a dimension of the research. "Indirect questions," on the other hand, rely on projection in their answers. As I developed possible interview questions and follow up questions I created a map that connected the interview questions to the research questions. The interview covered topics relating to the participants' experiences in the city of London and during other travel, their self-

defining memories, perceptions of culture, and views about teaching and schools. (See Appendix C for the semi-structured interview protocol used in this study.)

It was also important to consider my role in the interview. Building rapport is an essential part of the interview process. An interviewer must build trust with their participants and make them feel safe to share. The primary task of the interviewer is to explore participants' responses and respond with skill and tact (Seidman, 2019). As an interviewer, one must listen actively. Active listening includes focusing on what is said, but also on the "inner voice" (Steiner, 1978) and paying attention to the nonverbal cues of the speaker. Brinkmann and Kvale (2015) suggest an identity of "deliberate naivete" to allow interviewers to remain open to new and unexpected responses. Further, Brinkmann and Kvale (2015) offer three different roles that an interviewer can position themselves as: pollster, prober, or participant. The pollster keeps the most distance and seeks to capture the opinions and attitudes of interviewees. The prober seeks to dig into the deeper layers of the world of the interviewee and may frame themself as a friend to gain access to this world. The participant role conceptualizes the interview as a shared conversation that is constructed and the interviewee's statements may be challenged by the interviewer. In my interviews I attempted to embody the roles of pollster and prober. In this, I considered the interview as a collaborative space between two people where knowledge was constructed.

### *Identity Cartography*

As discussed earlier, the pilot study suggested that there was a need for participants to be able to be able to reflect and choose the topics they wanted to discuss without specific questions to guide their reflection. To facilitate this reflection process I drew on ideas from visual method. Pain (2012) notes that visuals and language are situated in different parts of the brain and "the two in combination could provide additional cues for understanding and encourage new

connections between the two patterns of thought, thus facilitating insights" (p. 309). In this process of shifting between the part of the brain that deals with language and the part of the brain that deals with images, dissonance is created, leading to more critical thinking (Berg & Pooley, 2013). Here the visual created is important as a standalone artifact, but it is equally important that participants have the opportunity to discuss and explain their image.

Christancho suggests that visual methods may reveal disruptions which "are game changers: events that transform our way of seeing and thinking about a situation. Looking for *disruptions* allows a more dynamic, contingent and situated understanding within and across complex situations" (2015, p. 139, emphasis in original). As disruptions are "not normally *observed* but *felt*" traditional methods of research such as surveys may not reveal them, leading us to consider alternative approaches and methodologies (p. 139, emphasis in original). In order to capture these disruptions, we turn to the idea of 'rich pictures' (Berg & Pooley, 2013; Christancho, 2015). Rich pictures are "an unstructured way of capturing information flows, communication and human activity" (Berg & Pooley, 2013, p. 363). Christancho (2015) suggests rich pictures can be used as a tool for understanding and to enhance dialogue allowing researchers to gain insight into multiple perspectives and the complexities of a phenomenon. Avison and Woodharper (1991) suggests that the physical boundaries of the paper force people to evaluate what is really important to capture in their rich picture. Berg and Pooley (2013) offer the following guidelines for creating rich pictures:

- Try to represent everything you know about the situation

- Artistic ability not required

- Title the picture

- Everyone should draw

- Draw people doing things, give context and include objects and processes

- Show interconnections and relationships

- Make observations about culture, emotions and common beliefs

- Text to be kept to a minimum

- Use color

As the final piece of the interview I asked participants to complete the identity cartography protocol. First, participants were provided with a piece of blank paper and markers. They were asked to create a visual representation of "their London," showcasing the parts of London that were important to them. They were prompted to reflect on places and experiences that were important to them and encouraged to represent them as a part of their "map." Once participants had drawn and mapped the important locations to their experience a semi-structured interview protocol guided them as they discussed the elements of their visual, their perceptions of change, and how the process of creation helped them make meaning of their time abroad. (The semi-structured interview protocol accompanying the identity cartography process is included in Appendix C).

**Data Analysis**

The data analysis and synthesis process occurred in multiple steps. Data collection began in November 2022 and continued through February 2023. I collected consent through Qualtrics, a widely used data collection program prior to participants completing the questionnaire. I then administered the questionnaire over a period of several weeks, also using Qualtrics. At the end of the questionnaire, participants indicated if they would be willing to complete an interview. Interviews were conducted in person and virtually, depending on participant location and preference. Four interviews were conducted in person, five through Zoom, and one as a phone

call. Of the 10 interviews conducted, 9 of them also completed the Identity Cartography protocol.

I audio recorded each interview and transcribed them. I transcribed the data by hand without the use of a transcription service or software. Transcription turns what people say into forms of text and is what Vanover (2022) considers to be the act of professional listening. Vanover considers transcription to be an intimate act, writing that "the work of transcription provides occasions for researchers to immerse themselves in their data and develop insight. By seeing and hearing recordings of their interviews and building text from that content, researchers deepen their comprehension of the materials they study. The work of building these meanings and insights lies at the heart of the analytic work" (2022, p. 64). The first step in any data analysis process is organization of the data. This is of particular importance for studies that engage in multiple methods of data collection. Johnson, Onweugbuzie, and Turner (2007) highlight how multiple methods of data collection allows for improved triangulation, leading researchers to make claims more confidently and eliminate bias from a single method by confirming and corroborating claims.

I approach data analysis as an iterative and non-linear process, in which each new insight can shape both future insights and previous conclusions. Vanover (2022) notes that qualitative researchers learn continuously from their data, and throughout the process of analysis they return to the data with increasingly deeper understandings. The process of memoing was essential for me during data analysis. Mihas (2022) considers memos to be a complement to data analysis in which the researcher engages in a "conversation" with the data at all stages of analysis seeking to understand what the data, quotations, or transcripts teach them about the research question. Mihas explains, "by writing about a quotation – not just reading it – we document our thoughts

and see how participant narratives can activate an intersection of values, beliefs, behaviors, and emotions; these are sometimes competing discourses, revealing intricate layers of a participant's lifeworld" (2022, p. 243). My memos captured both my initial thoughts about elements of possible significance and also questions that I asked about the data.

Further, throughout this research I engaged in both inductive and deductive practices. Bingham and Witkowsky (2022) suggest that using both yields a more organized and rigorous analysis. The deductive approaches organize the inquiry and provide boundaries while inductive tools guide the construction of themes based on emerging topics and the application of existing knowledge and theory. In the following section of this chapter, I will outline the processes taken to analyze and synthesize the data to yield answers to the core research questions of this dissertation.

*Questionnaire Analysis*

The questionnaire included five thematic sections: 1) demographic and background information, 2) perceptions of impact, 3) intercultural competence, 4) personal and professional impact, and 5) self-defining memories. The first section of the questionnaire collected basic demographic information, as well as information about related concepts that may have impacted their time abroad, such as prior international experiences and multilingual skills. It also provided a brief synopsis of their career pathway. This information provided context for the findings of this study and in some cases was discussed further in participant interviews.

The second section of the questionnaire sought to collect information uncovering participant's perceptions of impact. This section consisted of multiple styles of questions: Likert scale questions, ranking style questions, multiple select questions, and constructed response

questions. For Likert scale questions and ranking style, descriptive statistics were calculated and analyzed.

The final section of the questionnaire asked participants to share two self-defining memories from their time in London. Singer and Salovey (1993) define self-defining memories as memories to which we assign significant meaning to and that help us shape our perception of ourselves. As described above, I used *a priori* codes drawn from the research questions were used to code self-defining memories. Of particular interest were the ways in which participants' self-defining memories were connected to program elements, thus program elements such as living in London, internship/school-based experience, extra-curricular travel, inquiry project, coursework, mentorship, and re-entry seminar were used as *a priori* codes.

### *Interview Analysis*

After all interviews were completed and transcribed, I listened to each interview again, re-reading the transcript and pausing to write a memo about my response to the interview, noting preliminary thoughts about ideas or concepts that stood out to me. I engaged in multiple rounds of coding of interview and identity cartography discussion data.

The first round of coding used deductive analysis to sort and organize the data through the lens of my research questions. Bingham and Witkowsky (2022) recommend deductive analysis using codes based on the research questions to organize and sort the data. Saldaña defines a code as a "word or short phrase that symbolically assigns a summative, salient, essence-capturing, and/or evocative attribute for a portion of language-based or visual data" (2021, p. 5). Coding is the essential link between data collection and the explanation of meaning (Charmaz, 2001).

As I moved into my second and subsequent rounds of coding, I embraced an inductive approach, which employed "detailed readings of raw data to derive concepts, themes, or a model through interpretations made from the raw data" Thomas, (2006, p. 238). My background and creativity shapes how I construct and revise codes (Saldaña, 2021). Thus, my identity, values, and theoretical perspectives all shaped the codes I developed. For example, Eleanor shared, "I think about my placement and I think about what I did outside of that time and traveling." In coding this, to capture the idea of placement I could have used words such as "placement," "internship," "school" or "learning." I selected the code "internship." Marshall's (1981) essay, "Making Sense as a Personal Process," was helpful in understanding how my own experience and process shaped sense-making. Marshall emphasizes that our own experiences deeply connect us to the topic of research. My second round of coding used descriptive coding, where the codes that were developed reflected key ideas and topics drawn from the interview. Where possible, I used in vivo codes. In vivo, referring to "in that which is alive" draws from the actual language used by participants and prioritizes participant voices. For example, Eleanor shared, "Oh gosh, that's a big question. I think it was very perspective shifting." This became the code "perspective shifting," using the participant's words.

A third round of coding employed emotion coding (Saldaña, 2021) which labeled the emotion recalled by participants, highlighting the emotions connected to social relationships. For example, lyn shared, "I think I was just nervous for myself to connect with anybody." This statement captures the emotions that the participant was feeling. I coded this as "nervous" and "isolated."

I began each round of coding with a clean copy of the interview transcript. At the end of third round of coding, I began the process sorting and organizing codes, combining codes into

categories. Throughout this process, I continued engaged in memoing, noting my initial thoughts

about the relationships I was seeing develop between concepts. As I developed themes, I also

relied on critical friends and my own subjectivity audits to identify negative examples that would

challenge my emerging themes. I would discuss my initial ideas with critical friends or ask them

to read sections of transcripts. Once I derived a set of themes, I shared them with my participants

for member checking. Once I had settled on the themes, the final step was to decide how to best

present the data and select quotes that were particularly illustrative of the theme and to write up

the findings.

For the identity cartography process, the image created served as a catalyst for

discussion. In this dissertation, the image itself was not analyzed. (The identity cartography

images are included in Appendix X). The discussion about the creation of the image was

included with the interview transcript and coded as described above.

## Ethical Considerations

Tracy (2010) emphasizes the need for sincerity and consideration of procedural,

situational, and relational ethics in research. In this section I will outline how I strove to embody

Tracy's (2010) conception of ethics in high quality qualitative research. In qualitative research

the concept of "trustworthiness" is of critical importance (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Qualitative

researchers must constantly engage in critical self-reflexive practices (Yoon & Uliassi, 2022).

This notion of trustworthiness can be broken into four dimensions: credibility, transferability,

dependability, and confirmability. Credibility can be bolstered through emphasizing connections

to existing research and theory and contextualizing the research within a broader field of study.

Confirmability is achieved through a thorough recounting of the processes taken and decisions

made throughout the research. Dependability is reinforced through the completion of a pilot

study and through triangulation. Collecting multiple sources of data allowed me to look across the data to see patterns. Additionally, the identity cartography process served to help triangulate data by offering a new approach for participants to share about their experiences. Often participants shared additional insight about things that they had previously discussed.

Central to all qualitative research is the concept of "the researcher as instrument," yet Yoon and Uliassi (2022) and Peshkin (1988) urge researchers to dive deeply into the complexity of this notion. Yoon and Uliassi (2022) describe the ways in which researcher positionality not only affects the design of a study, but also the interpretation and presentation of the data. For example, I selected the Council of Europe's model of intercultural competence which is not a developmental model. While it guided the formulation of questions, those questions did not seek to capture the process of growth. Yoon and Ulissai (2022) emphasize the necessity of researchers acknowledging their complex identities and how they approach all aspects of the research.

Peshkin (1988) highlights the need for one's subjectivity. He recommends employing a subjectivity audit where the researcher considers their relationship to the research. In response, I created my own subjectivity audit. First, I employed what I call "the mirror" considering my own experiences as I analyzed what the participants shared. I participated in the UConn Education in London program in 2011 and for me the program changed not only the trajectory of my career but also what I thought it meant to be a teacher. Therefore, I had to be cautious not to look for reflections of my own experience in what participants said. This affected how I structured the questions and follow up question I asked in interviews.

Second, I attended to what I call "the melting pot." A central aim of this research was to understand how their international experience impacted their intercultural competence development. Often, people speak of the "melting pot" of culture as a good thing and I had to be

cautious both to overstate the positive view of culture and instead to focus solely on participants' understandings of culture and interculturality.

Third, I addressed what I term "rosy colored glasses," reminding myself to recognize and critically consider the potential of both positive and negative abroad experiences. Often, participants in education abroad programs are conscious of the limited time they have abroad and the financial commitment they have made. Thus, they seek to make meaningful memories, reframing negative experiences within a positive overall sentiment. I had to attend to the small clues that indicated the nuanced relationships between negative and positive experiences that compose an education abroad experiences. I also had to not let my own positive experiences prevent me from seeking to understand the negative experiences of others.

Fourth, I attended to what I term "the traveler in a bar." Travelers love to share stories and I could not allow myself to remain at the surface level of these stories. Instead, I had to remember to ask questions that revealed not only what a participant experienced, but also what each experience meant to them. My job was to listen actively and I must be thoughtful about what stories of my own I shared. While I might share personal stories that could help create a relationship with participants, I could not allow my sharing to detract from my researcher's role.

Fifth, I addressed what I term "the David effect." David Moss has been the Director of the UConn Education Abroad in London program for more than 20 years, so every research participant had him as an advisor and mentor and has their own relationship with him. David looms large in the described experiences of participants. I could not let my own relationship with David cloud how others saw him. Further, the participants were aware that David is my doctoral advisor and therefore is connected to this research, so I had to look for any self-censorship by participants.

Finally, it was critical during analysis that I did not seek only to find evidence that supported my developing themes and conclusions; I also had to formally look for examples that challenged or contradicted them. Throughout this process I engaged in memoing; writing, recording, and drawing my initial ideas about conclusions and about process. These memos are a valuable tool capturing my developing thoughts throughout this research. I also made use of critical friends (Schuck & Russell, 2005) who asked questions and challenged my emerging speculations and assertions. Engaging in all these steps promoted research trustworthiness.

**Limitations**

This research describes perceived impact of a particular program which enrolls masters' students teaching and studying in London. However, its findings are not generalizable and do not indicate that impact would be perceived in identical ways in different programs. Additionally, the 44 respondents represent a 28.7% response rate, so it is likely that additional perspectives were not shared in this research.

There were two elements of the research design that unintentionally limited its scope and depth. First, participants were explicitly asked to share self-defining memories only of their time in London. This removed any self-defining memories from pre-departure orientation or from re-entry, which may have been important to consider. Second, I only interviewed each participant one time and I did not engage in follow up interviews. It is possible that after their first interview participants continued to reflect on their time abroad and recall additional experiences or recall shared experiences in greater detail. By not conducting follow up interviews, I may have missed learning about other memories that were triggered by the reflection of the first interview. For example, in several interviews, participants mentioned that they still had the journal that they kept as a part of one of the classes in London, or that they mused that they should have look at

their final inquiry project again. However, I have no way of knowing if they returned to those documents and could now articulate additional insights. Future research design should consider providing multiple opportunities for participants to reflect.

Additionally, as already discussed, memories are fickle, and this study relies on self-report of our memories. Our recollection of memory is shaped both by our present contexts and our understanding of ourselves, which may spur us to edit our memories, emphasizing certain pieces while de-emphasizing elements we may not be as proud of. Further, time, itself, distorts our memories: what participants shared may not accurately reflected actual events. However, the memories shared, even with their inaccuracies reflect the important aspects of their experience.

I am also an alumnus of the program that I am studying. I feel strongly that my experience in the program impacted my career trajectory and how I see the world. Ultimately, I do not consider my relationship to the program to be a limitation. I believe that it helped me build rapport with my participants and offered me insight into their experiences. However, I recognize that my own identity and experiences, including my time as a participant in the program, shaped the decisions that I made about the theories that I applied, the codes I developed, and the conclusions that I drew.

Finally, as with any research, there are power dynamics and it is possible that participants self-censored their thoughts in order to say what they thought was expected of them or in an effort to present themselves, the program, or their journey in specific ways.

# Chapter 4: Research Findings

*We travel, initially, to lose ourselves; and we travel, next to find ourselves*

– Pico Iyer –

The purpose of this research was to explore the ways in which former participants in a pre-service teacher education abroad program to London reflect on their experience and what they consider to be impactful about their time abroad. Data was collected through two primary means, a questionnaire, and semi-structured interviews. The questionnaire included a range of question styles and explored four key concepts: general perceptions of impact, intercultural competence, personal and professional impact, and self-defining memories. The questionnaire drew on the Council of Europe's Competencies for Democratic Culture model of intercultural competence (Council of Europe, 2018a; 2018b). This model considers competence along four domains: values, attitudes, skills, knowledge and critical understanding. The questionnaire also drew on Singer and Salovey's (1993) concept of self-defining memories, which are memories that hold significant meaning for individuals and help define their sense of self. The semi-structured interview protocol expanded on these ideas and offered a more in-depth exploration of participant's perceptions of impact. This chapter presents an overview of the findings that answered the questions guiding this research:

1. In what ways do participants in a pre-service teacher education abroad program say the experience of participating in an education abroad program impacted their personal and professional selves?

    a. How does it impact their classroom practices and career trajectory?

    b. How does it impact their relationships with students, colleagues, or community?

    c. How does it impact their personal relationships?

2. In what ways do they say the experience of participating in an education abroad program impacted their developing views of culture and their intercultural competence?

   a. How does it impact their values, attitudes, skills, knowledge and critical understandings?

3. What are the self-defining memories that participants in a pre-service teacher education abroad program identify and how are they connected to program design?

   a. What experiences and components of program design, school-based or non-school based seem to impact their growth?

This chapter provides an overview of the five major findings that emerged from participants' responses in the questionnaire and the interviews. Table 4 shows how the findings corresponded to the research questions. The major findings are as follows:

Finding 1: Participants identified the experience as both personally and professionally meaningful. While abroad, participants engaged in an exploration of the self.

Finding 2: Participants understanding of intercultural competence is most centered in the domains of attitudes and skills.

Finding 3: Program elements, such as living in London, the internships, coursework, the inquiry project, extracurricular travel, and the re-entry seminar offered the opportunity for meaningful engagement, but participants engaged in each element in different ways and to different extents

Finding 4: The cohort and program mentors were important sources of support while abroad

Finding 5: Participants created cinematic moments to reflect on themselves and their time abroad

*Table 4*
*Research Findings Corresponding to Research Questions*

| Research Question | Finding(s) |
|---|---|
| 1. In what ways do participants in a pre-service teacher education abroad program say the experience of participating in an education abroad program impacted their personal and professional self? | Finding 1: Participants identified the experience as both personally and professional meaningful. While abroad, participants engaged in an exploration of the self.<br><br>Finding 4: The cohort and program mentors were important sources of support while abroad<br><br>Finding 5: Participants created cinematic moments to reflect on themselves and their time abroad |
| 2. In what ways do they say the experience of participating in an education abroad program impacted their developing views of culture and their intercultural competence? | Finding 2: Participants understanding of intercultural competence is most centered in the domains of attitudes and skills |
| 3. What are the self-defining memories that participants in a pre-service teacher education abroad program identify and how are they connected to the program? | Finding 3: Program elements, such as living in London, the internships, coursework, the inquiry project, extracurricular travel, and the re-entry seminar offered the opportunity for meaningful engagement, but participants engaged in each element in different ways and to different extents<br><br>Finding 4: The cohort and program mentors were important sources of support while abroad |

The first research question examines the ways in which participants make sense of their time abroad and how they perceive it as impacting their personal and professional identity. As will be discussed, Finding 1 shows that participants identified the program as personally and professionally meaningful. Participants engaged in an exploration of self where they critically reflected on their experiences and beliefs, leading to the development of new insight about how

they wanted to engage with their work and with others. As shown through Finding 4, the cohort and program mentors offered support, guidance, encouragement and aided in the questioning process. Participants identified them as important to their growth and the impact of the program. Relationships within the cohort helped participants consider their future relationships As will be discussed in Finding 5, reflection was an important part of this growth process.

The second research question seeks to understand how their international experience impacted their understanding of culture and their intercultural competence. Finding 2 reports that the intercultural competence domains of attitudes and skills were impacted by their time abroad. This can be seen through their definitions of culture, which recognized both individual and communal levels of culture and encouraged questioning to understand other's cultures.

The final research question sought to understand the connection between program elements and the self-defining memories of participants. Finding 3 notes that all program elements offered the potential for meaningful engagement, but participants engaged with them in individual ways. This will be further discussed below. Of particular significance though, as seen through finding 4 is that the cohort and program mentors were two important program elements that significantly shaped participants' experiences.

**Finding 1: Participants identified the experience as both personally and professionally meaningful. While abroad participants engaged in an exploration of the self.**

This finding shares the ways that participants conceptualized their time abroad and discussed how they considered their experiences to impact their personal and professional self. All participants identified the program as impactful, but they assigned different meaning to both the professional and personal learning. Participants identified different experiences that served as

a catalyst for their learning. As they engaged in the experience abroad, they self-selected their level of independence, using the cohort as a safety net. The following sections present participants' recollections and experiences. Where possible they are shared in participants' words and all participants have been assigned a pseudonym. (See Table 3 on page 127 for a list of pseudonyms.)

*All participants identified the program as significantly impactful*

Participants identified the program as highly impactful. As seen in Figure 8, all participants indicated that they agreed with the statement, "participating in the UConn Education in London Program had a big impact on me" with 91% of participants indicating they strongly agreed with the statement. When asked about their perception of the long term impacts of the program, Olivia remarked, "for me, it's so many areas of your life that like you can't even count." Participants often entered the program with a belief that it would be impactful, but the experience exceeded their expectations. Lily described it as such:

Well, I think it ended up being more impactful than I thought. I knew it was going to be, just being able to have an educational experience in a different country. I knew that I was going to take something away that would definitely change the way I look at education. I didn't know how impactful and how fond the memories would be.

*Figure 8*
*Participants' Perception of Impact*

## Participating in the UConn Education in London Program had a big impact on me

| Response | Count |
|----------|-------|
| Strongly disagree | 0 |
| Somewhat disagree | 0 |
| Neither agree nor disagree | 0 |
| Somewhat agree | 4 |
| Strongly agree | 40 |
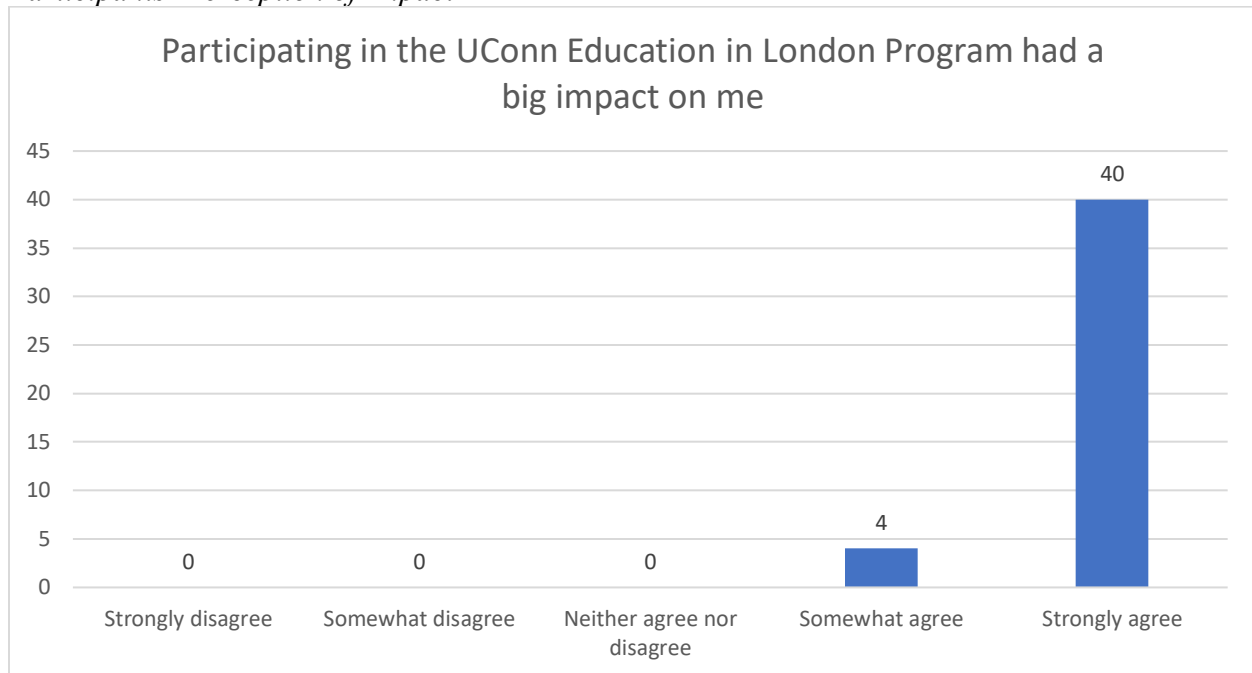
For some, this belief that the program was going to be impactful was a significant reason for them to apply for the program. In their interviews several participants mentioned that they "needed to go abroad" (Emma) or they "knew that [they] wanted to go abroad" (Olivia). Four of the ten interviews discussed their strong desire to go abroad. For some they had a sense that the experience abroad would change them significantly. Jocelyn described it as such:

> I think more so I needed something to change. Whether I really knew that I wanted to change or not, I was comfortable in my life that I had. It's like two lives here. I mean I sort of kind of was living two lives in a way, being in the closet. I wasn't fully out of the closet or anything. I'm not saying that London completely brought me out of the closet. I think it was just a necessary thing for me. I remember getting the acceptance letter and I remember thinking to myself, 'I want to do this.' You know, I've never been abroad. I need to do something different. I've lived in the same, grew up in the same small town my entire life. I want to live my life. I want to kind of do this. I think just kind of taking

that leap of faith, like going into this new experience just kind of altered everything that was going to happen after that in my life. It just did.

Reflecting on their time abroad now, after some years have passed, some conceptualized the experience as a "pivot point" or as a "door opener" to new understandings, as described by five participants. Jocelyn shared that, "I think of it in terms of a turning point, yes, my life kind of completely changed after it." Ruby also described it as a turning point:

London really was such a turning point in my life and I honestly do not know where I would be right now if it was not for that program, and for David, and for Beth, [program staff and mentor] and just the experience of being outside of the country. And if we could make it mandatory for everybody to do that in life. I wouldn't be me. And I'm so proud of who I am now. And I'm so confident in my ability to question myself. I don't have that insulated "I know everything" confidence that I had that was fake confidence before this program. Now, I am confident that I am going to make mistakes, and I am confident that I have the ability to figure it out.

While participants experienced both personal and professional growth, the personal growth seemed more meaningful for participants

The program offered opportunities for participants to engage in both personal and professional learning and reflection. And while participants shared examples of both personal and professional growth, they centered discussions of their own growth in a personal sense. Seven out of ten interviews discussed their personal growth. This is also seen through Figure 9 and Figure 10. All participants agreed that they have grown as a person as a result of participating in the UConn Education in London Program, with 91% indicating that they strongly agreed with the statement, "I have grown as a person as a result of participating in the UConn

Education in London Program." When asked if they had grown as a teacher as a result of participating in the program, 39 of 40 respondents indicated that they agreed, with 77% strongly agreeing. For Jocelyn, the growth was entirely personal. She explained it by saying:

This was more of a personal-social growth for me than it was academic… If I went back and did it again I could do it so much better.. I think I was just so young and so focused on personal things that growing as a teacher and pulling away the academics from the experience weren't as meaningful.

Ruby echoed this statement, saying, "Honestly the London trip was more of a self-journey than it was a teacher journey for me. But I don't think you can disconnect those things." Georgie explained that they weren't fully ready to think about the professional context:

I think it was definitely one of my, like transformative experiences in my young adult life. I don't think I knew what I was getting myself into as a teacher yet. And I was kind of doe eyed, like high expectations. Kind of went into it thinking that like, oh, I'm here to learn and this is going to be a great experience, but I don't necessarily think it truly prepared me for what being a teacher really was. You know, it was fun. It was thrilling. I learned a lot, not necessarily direct preparation for what I was going into.

*Figure 9*
*Personal Growth*
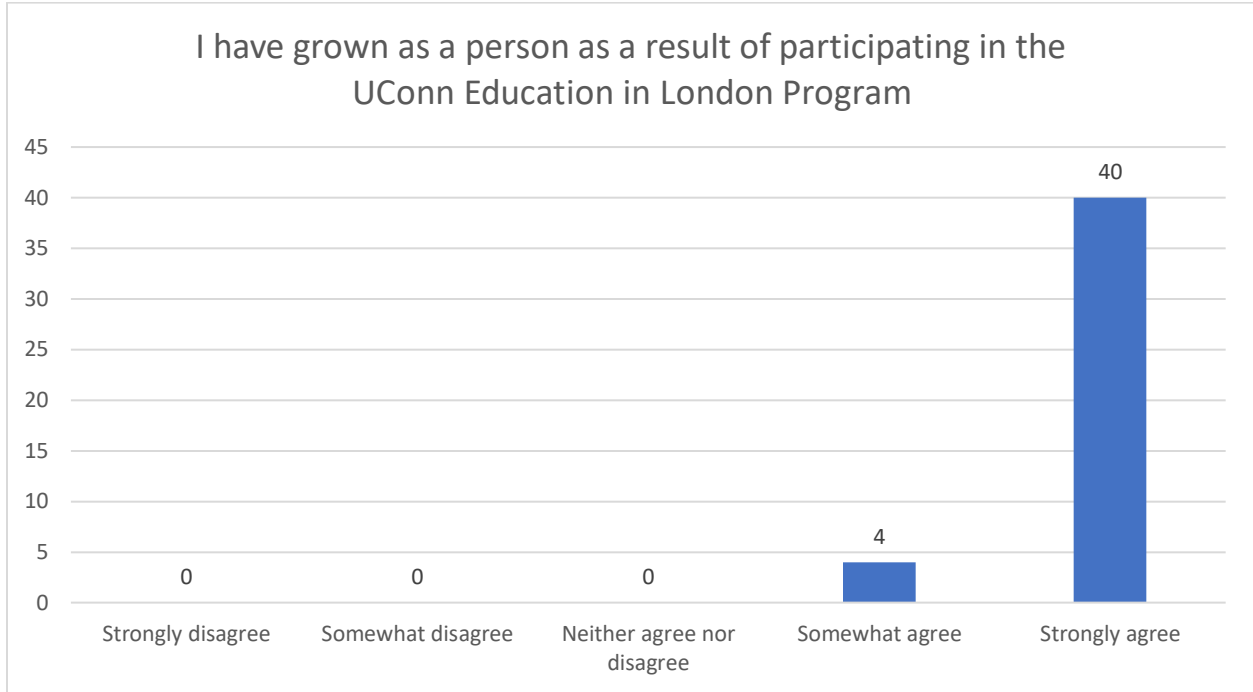


*Figure 10*
*Professional Growth*
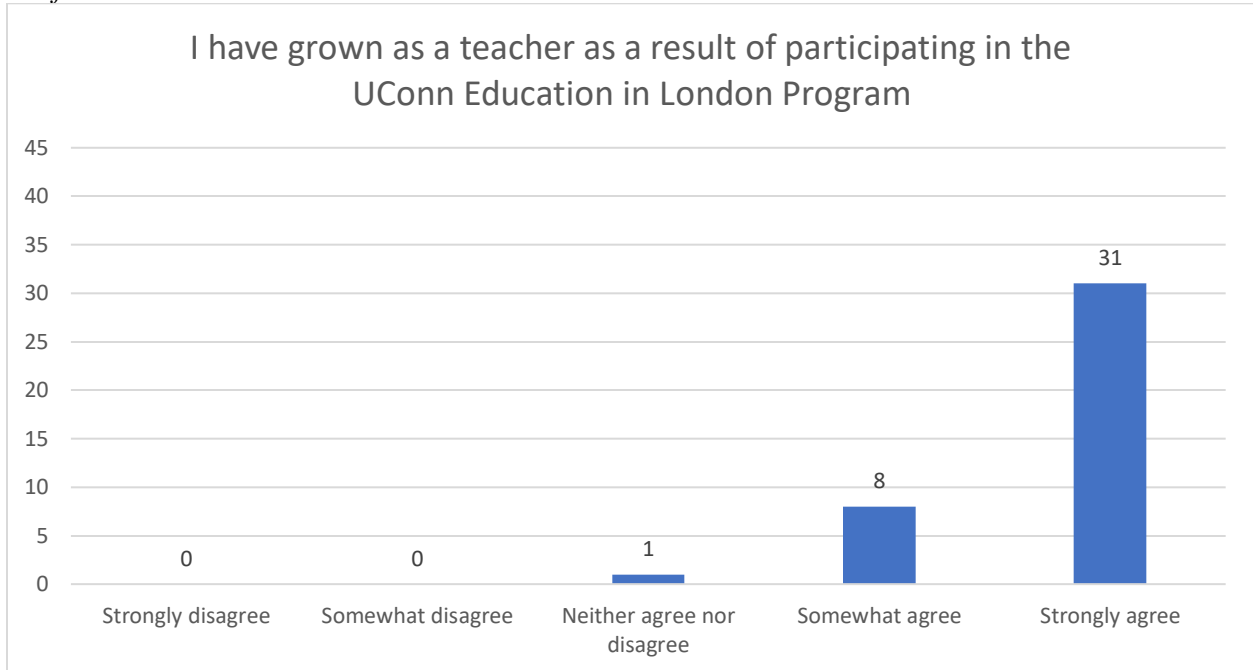


Olivia suggested that the personal growth must come before professional growth. They

explained that "you kind of have to know yourself before you can deconstruct it" and that it is a

challenge to deeply know yourself, but that the experience of being abroad helped her uncover a deeper understanding of her own identity. She shared:

> So, I do see in myself that the personal kind of needed to come before the professional. And for me that was that first experience that I had. And I think about that as who I was, morphed into who I am also as a professional. So, it's like I'm a person first. I'm a person who is also a teacher.

### *Being away from the familiar was an important catalyst for learning about oneself*

For many participants, their experience abroad allowed them to ask questions about themselves and better understand themselves. They engaged in a process of questioning that was unlike their previous learning. As seen in Figure 11, the experience gave them greater insight into themselves. 84% of respondents strongly agreed with the statement, "My time in London taught me a lot about myself." Henry described this as "an exploration of self."

*Figure 11*
*Learning about Oneself*

One important aspect of this questioning, for many participants, was being away from the familiar context of home and away from family. Half of the ten interviews discussed being in a new context for the first time. Ruby described how being away from her family and in a new place allowed her to ask questions she had never asked before:

So, when I think about my time there, it was the first time I had lived away from a member of my family in addition to living outside of the country. So, lots of questions were brought up, lots of me challenging my thinking and challenging myself. As far as being not with my family members. It was great. It was a transformational experience. Where I just had to answer a lot of questions about who I was, and what I valued and the country that I was coming from… I very much wanted to learn from different people. I wanted to be in diverse things or diverse settings… this experience, that was the door opener.

Coming from the relatively homogenous university context, and the even more homogenous teacher education program, the city of London seemed extraordinarily diverse for participants. Experiencing this diversity prompted participants to ask questions about their home and upbringing. Olivia described themselves at the time of program participation as sheltered. They shared, "I guess a word I could use is just sheltered. I was very sheltered in that time of my life." Leaving the familiar opened up a new world of possibilities. Amelia described it as an opening to the rest of the world:

I think it was like a huge like opening to the rest of the world. Because I mean, I grew up in southeastern Connecticut. I went to school at UConn, so 45 minutes away. So, it was all these ways of reflecting back on the United States and my experiences there that I

don't think I would have otherwise experienced without leaving their country. It didn't have to be London, but it had to be outside of the country.

Here, the international context is important, as it offers a point of comparison to the known life in America. Observing how this new context discussed diversity in and out of schools was powerful for participants. For Ruby observing how schools celebrated and discussed identity was unlike her experiences in America:

I think the fact that I was away from my family of origin and saw people who were multiracial, who were diverse, in the school that I was at, celebrating those identities and talking about those identities, that was a big thing for me because we don't do that here in Connecticut. We just don't, that's just not a conversation we have.

For Ruby, a significant part of her time in London involved her coming to embrace her multiracial identity, which she had previously not recognized. She shared that while in London she asked new questions about herself, "I think a lot of it was trying to come to terms with my own personal identity. I'm multiracial but white assumed. And because my Asian identity was never uplifted or seen or talked about, I melted into whiteness." Being surrounded by the diversity of the city of London, seeing that diversity celebrated in schools, and being challenged to think differently in her university courses spurred her to ask questions not only about America, but about her own identity:

I think in addition to kinda having me question my country, it was also kind of questioning the identity that I chose. Umm, being multiracial. So maybe that's why I was more combative. Because I was also feeling kind of, well wait a minute you know, by choosing this identity, by not really looking at my other identity, what has that cost me?

And so that kind of internal recognition along with the oh my god my country is so awful, was hard.

Even though they were away from the familiar context of home and family, participants often reflected on their home and family, as discussed in half of the ten interviews. At times this was spurred by things they experienced abroad. Some participants sought to connect to their family history and family roots as they engaged in their exploration of self. Amelia's mother had grown up in Scotland. So she had grown up with an image of her mother, "in my mind it had been something other than what it was. Like it was more fanciful, more elegant, more refined. I didn't think she came from money, but like in my mind I had built it up that she was a princess." So, visiting Scotland allowed her to walk the same spaces as her mother. She shared:

> You'd seen lots of pictures but it's so different experiencing it in real life. So, the first place I went was my mom's neighborhood in Glasgow. It's not the city center, it's one of the outlying neighborhoods and working class and I saw the house my mom grew up in and it was tiny… I walked the route that she walked to school… I got to see the beauty and the grit that is Glasgow, which is different than like Edinburgh with its fanciful castles. It is a gritty cold city, but then there's all these beautiful artists… It just made me so proud to like acknowledge all the things that have come out of Scotland and also made me connect with people who embrace me…I think there are aspects of myself I got from my working class background and there are aspects of myself that I got very much from my deep study of the world.

Being in an unfamiliar context led to participants developing confidence and independence and viewing themselves as adults

For some participants, the unfamiliar context was frightening and overwhelming as they came to terms with the fact that they were now on their own. For these participants, who often it was their first time away from home, and before they could begin to ask other questions, they had to grapple with the fact that they were now on their own and alone. At times the unfamiliar context of London and the distance from home was challenging for participants, as discussed in four of the ten interviews. For Henry the realization that he was so far away from home occurred on the first night abroad:

> And I still remember that first night that we stayed in the flat…I had like, almost a mini panic attack that first night. Because it was exciting in many ways, obviously was something I very very much was looking forward to. But it does kind of hit you. When you first get there, you know, you're tired. I couldn't sleep on the plane at all. So, I was working on very little sleep, waking up in the middle of the night and just realizing that that you're kind of off and on your own … It was the first time I really had to be self-reliant in many ways. Without that support that could be on call within an hour or so. It was exciting, like I said, in many ways, but it was it was kind of intimidating.

For Jocelyn, on one of their first nights abroad the program had organized a trip to go see the West End musical, *Billy Elliot*, but she could not focus on the show because she was grappling with the sudden feeling of being alone abroad:

> Honestly I can't tell you what *Billy Elliot* is about at all. Because all I could think about during that show was, 'Holy shit what did I do? I don't know any of these people. I've never been away from home before.' I guess that's what homesickness is. I don't feel like

I felt that as much when I went to college, and that's probably because you know I was still an hour from home, still in Connecticut… I felt like I wanted to cry during that show, I just didn't know what to do with myself.

Fear and uncertainty were common for some participants, and the experience challenged them in various ways. Anne noted "You're going out of your comfort zone in so many different ways, in so many different places. And so, it's something that you can come back and be proud of." Being proud of oneself, overcoming these challenges, and doing it all on your own allowed participants to gain confidence and see themselves in a new way. Jocelyn described it as such, "I do think the confidence thing is a huge factor for me. And one of the biggest things for me was just being more social, being more comfortable with myself, being more comfortable around people I don't know." Amelia shared how she gained confidence while abroad, "I think it made me realize I can do scary hard things. So, it just gave me a lot more confidence to be able to explore the world." Figure 12 shows that 32 out of 44 respondents strongly agreed that they gained confidence from the experience of participating in the program.

*Figure 12*
*Participant Confidence*



I am more confident because I went to London

| | Strongly disagree | Somewhat disagree | Neither agree nor disagree | Somewhat agree | Strongly agree |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Value | 0 | 0 | 0 | 12 | 32 |
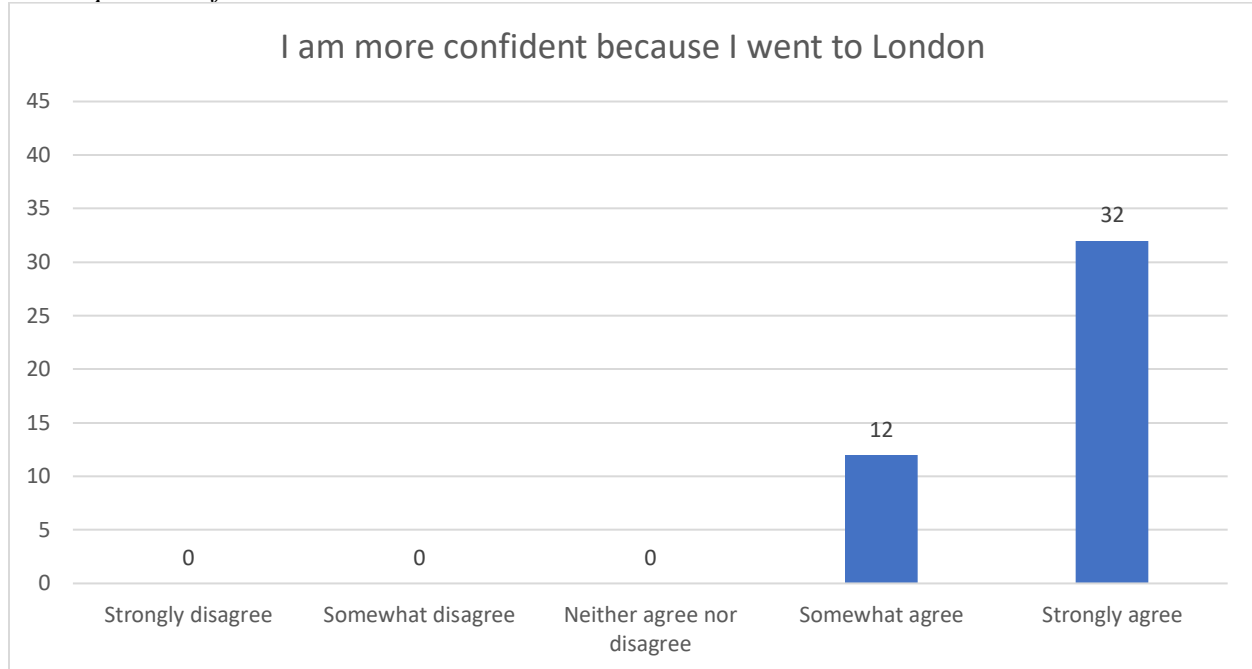
Similar to confidence was the idea of independence, which, as seen in Figure 13, 73% of participants strongly agreed that they were more independent because of their experience with the UConn Education in London program. For some, the sense of independence manifested itself as feeling like an adult, as described by Henry, who said, "to paint with broad strokes here, the whole program, it makes you feel like an adult, it was almost in retrospect like a rite of passage for me." Amelia described it as "the intersection of both my personal learning journey and learning to be an adult… so it was really the time to take risks in a way that I hadn't before." Altogether six of ten interviews discussed feeling more like and adult and feeling independent while they were abroad.

*Figure 13*
*Participant Independence*



**I am more independent because I went to London**
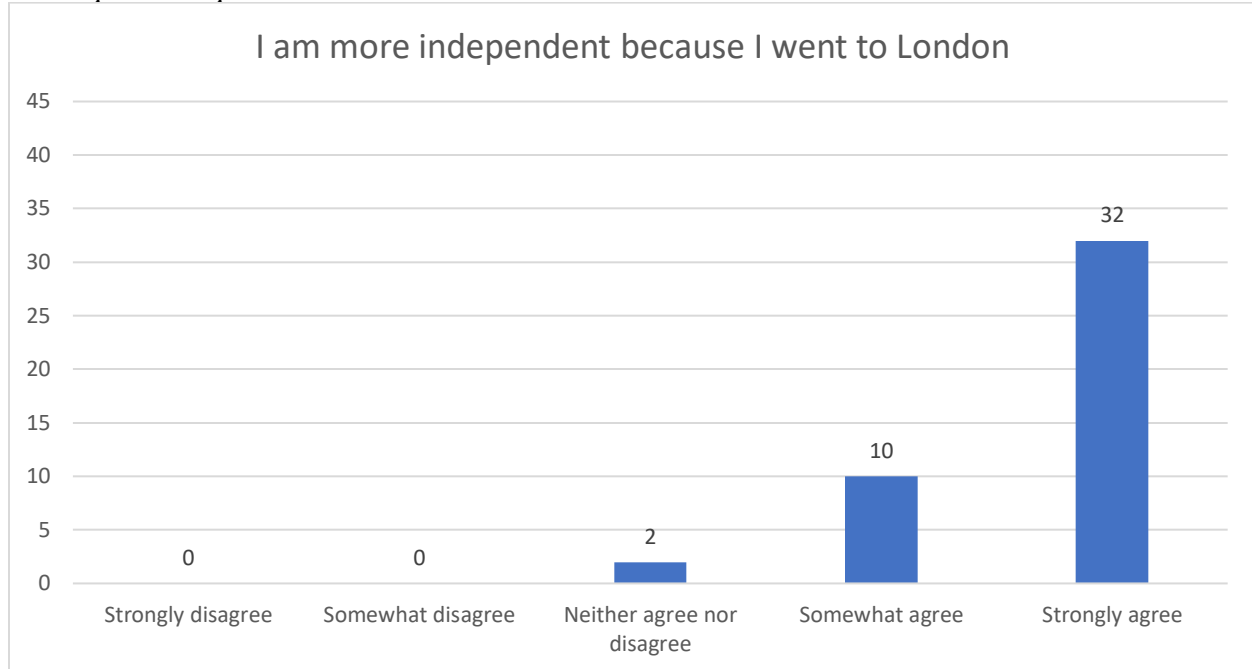
*Participants refined their understanding of the role of teacher and considered new ways to interact with students and support students*

Even though participants assigned more meaning to their personal learning, the experience did allow them to consider schools deeply and ask meaningful questions about what it means to be a teacher, the role of schools in society, and how they wanted to interact with their future students. Figure 14 shows the variety of ways that participants considered their participation in the UConn Education Abroad Program in London impacted how they thought about schools and teaching. Participants identified the program as most impacting their desire or ability to talk about culture in the classroom, understanding of themselves as teachers, interactions with students and the type of school at which they wished to work.

*Figure 14*
*Professional Role Impact*

## Categories of Professional Role that Participants Identified were Impacted by their Time in London

| Category | Value |
|---|---|
| The type of school at which you wanted to work, including: physical location, population of students, etc. | 22 |
| Interactions with students, including: multilingual students, BIPOC students, LGBTQIA2S+ students, students of… | 24 |
| Interactions with families and the community | 14 |
| Interactions with co-workers and other staff members | 17 |
| Curriculum | 9 |
| Views about the types of books you bring into the classroom | 9 |
| Desire/ability to talk about culture in the classroom | 25 |
| Ability to solve problems in the classroom | 8 |
| Your understanding of yourself as a teacher | 24 |
| Your views on the role of schooling in society | 19 |
| Your confidence as a teacher | 18 |
| Your views on work-life balance | 12 |
| Your desire to hold a leadership position in schools | 12 |
| Views or beliefs about assessment | 7 |
| Views or beliefs about behavior management | 16 |

This idea that the program shaped their understanding of themselves as teachers was one

of the most common themes from the interview data. Georgie shared:

I think we learned more of I mean, really, like, worldly, what is education? And can we

look at education from a perspective other than just our own. And I learned a lot about

like, how different cultures treat education and experience it in the classroom and think

about assessment. And what makes a good teacher.

For some, they came to London with one vision of who they thought they would be in

their future classroom and the experience showed them new possibilities. It changed their beliefs

about what it means to be a teacher. This was the case for Amelia, who shared:

I thought I would be like a 'leather patches on the blazer' kind of English teacher. I

wanted to expose my students in urban areas to great literature and have them discuss

it… I was teaching kids who had profound impacts of their poverty and of their

community in their learning process.

For Jocelyn, living in the city of London and taking public transportation to the grocery

store is an experience that gives her a greater understanding of the lives of her students today,

many of whom rely on public transportation daily. She shared:

I think about it now actually with my students. Not having cars and just going grocery

shopping was such a different experience for me, because you have to pack all your bags

and carry bags and everything and it kind of helped me see what somebody goes through

who doesn't have a car getting places you know, just using public transportation

Participants also reflected on how their actions might be received by students of different

backgrounds and students in crisis. Georgie, interning in a hospital school, learned a lot about

effective ways to support students who have experienced trauma. Her experiences completely

reshaped what she thought it meant to be a patient teacher:

I thought that patience meant when a kid gets a problem wrong, you say, 'okay, let's think

about this. Can we try it again?' And that's part of it… When students are in a crisis, how

you respond to that, it's not just about your own emotions, it's about being a guide for the

kids. If they are angry or upset or they start to fight in my classroom at the beginning of the year, instead of rising to their level with them, if you become that calm so that their mirror neurons can take over and pull in your calm and feed off of your calm… If you exude that calm instead of yelling or getting angry… It allows them to regulate… [my time in London] showed me what tolerant teachers look like, what patient teachers look like, and how to support people when they're not at their best.

One element that may have also helped participants develop a deeper understanding of the role of teacher, was the timing and sequence of the program. As their experience in London occurred after student teaching it allowed them to think about the role of the teacher in new ways, as they had already had the direct student teaching experience and practice. This was the case for Lily, who felt that in London she was able to explore what it meant to be a teacher in new ways:

I think, you know, compared to my pre-service teaching experience, like that was a lot of me getting to know the ropes of like okay, what does it mean to be a teacher? What are instructional strategies that are effective in keeping kids engaged? I feel like after going to London, it was more of thinking about the whole child and understanding who they are and where they come from. And how that shapes who they are today, and how and who they're going to be, and making sure that I'm honoring that and helping them in ways that they truly need to be supported.

Henry shared a similar view, that their time in London offered a richer experience than student teaching:

Student teaching, which happened prior to that, like, it's still teaching you that you're the teacher in the classroom, but you've got the cooperating teacher, and I had kind of a

cooperating teacher who preferred to stay in the classroom and to kind of keep a close

eye on things. It all went well and fine, and we had a good relationship, but I don't know.

There was just something about it to me that felt synthetic. In a way that wasn't… I don't

know, it just it wasn't as rich as that fifth year experience…

***Participants developed an understanding of differentiation and culturally responsive teaching***
***as student centered and fueled by asking questions***

Participants cited the experience in London as informing their perception about what

differentiation means in schools and how they can support their students. Six of the interviews

discussed how they developed a view of differentiation that felt different from how it was

discussed in their teacher preparation program. This view centered the student and considered

context. Lily shared that choice was a commonly discussed idea in her teacher preparation, but

she gained a more nuanced understanding of differentiation while in London.

> I think when I say choice, I always felt like that was like the 'go to thing' as an
>
> undergrad. It was always like, oh, student centered work. Are we giving kids choice?
>
> Like that's how we keep them engaged. And so, I felt like that was just the nail being hit
>
> on the head all the time. And so having that experience of seeing kids from other places
>
> and knowing the impact of trauma there are other effective instructional strategies to help
>
> students rather than choice.

> Emma shared a similar vision for differentiation, "It goes back to what I learned in

London, that differentiation starts by meeting the students where they are and building out. It's

more inquiry based and student centered than it is rote instruction or providing different

materials."

As participants considered how to best support students, they also reflected on culturally responsive teaching. This was shaped by their experiences in schools with diverse students. Asking questions and being curious were important strategies, as described here by Lily:

It means asking questions to understand their culture. To me, cultural competency is not just looking something up online and knowing the language that someone may speak in this country, or a food, or a tradition that they might celebrate within a country. It's understanding a person and their culture how they represent and celebrate their own culture, so I know how to best celebrate that and honor them. Because the last thing that I think cultural competency is, is a list of facts. Because everyone's culture is so different, like even within my own life, my culture is different from my neighbors culture, is different from my other neighbors culture.

Emma also shared that asking questions is crucial, saying, "it looks like asking people how they want to be treated, spoken to, how they want to work within their space. It means having clear and open communication in a way that checks for understanding and not just assumes understanding." The idea that part of teaching in interculturally competent ways involves understanding that there are differences in how people wish to represent their culture and how they wish to be treated also came up as a common idea. For Anne, the key to understanding these differences is being open and listening. She shared, "I think cultural competence is really knowing that you don't know, and being open to listening to things… being open to listening to hearing and then acknowledging that people have different histories for themselves." Amelia extended this idea to share that not only was being open important, but that it was also important to not force your views on others:

It's really about not asserting your framework of thinking on another culture, another experience, but also acknowledging that there's biases in the world. That students can be unapologetically them, whether in their linguistic choices or their dress or their cultural choices, and while there is an impetus, an outside force, especially in like middle school, high school, to be like everybody else, there is also a space for those students to be whomever they are. And my classroom, that's always been a safe space for divergent thinking. Divergent anything, right, like as long as it works within our set of norms. Or do we have to take a look at our norms to see did they actually make sense? …there's space for all of us here and how do we create a community that's open? And not just open but seeking those divergent ideas? …they know that no matter how everybody dresses or speaks or how much English they have or don't or how they style their hair Monday. It's not necessarily a testament to their culture or even to their individualism. It's just like, especially being a teenager you're free to try and like figure things out.

As a teacher, Ruby felt that her job was not only to create spaces that welcome all students, but to recognize the systems of oppression that exist and help teach her students about them and how to resist them. She shared:

It's being able to acknowledge the systems of oppression that are in this country in their intersectionalities – What does it mean to be a woman? What does it mean to be a black woman? What does it mean to be a black woman who is transgender? Like all of those things. Being able to identify those systems of oppression for our students, but then also identify where the resistance is and was. So that they can see that this wasn't just like a 'we lay down and took it for so long.' And finding those pockets of resistance and ways that they can continue to resist knowing unfortunately how the systems have worked

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against them and their families and their ancestors. And then again, joy. The joy that comes along with that. Finding joy. Reading texts that celebrate the diversity within students…Culturally relevant or culturally sustaining, yeah cool, but that critique needs to be there.

### *Participants self-selected their level of independence and exploration while abroad*

While they were able to have these fantastic and memorable experiences and while participants felt they gained independence and confidence while abroad, participants also limited the scope of their exploration of the city of London. This happened in two ways. First, in an effort to separate themselves from tourists, participants rejected tourist areas and tourist experiences. Second, participants created a "bubble" or "safety net" for themselves and often did not stray beyond it, as described in four of the ten interviews. Anne described how not wanting to appear like a tourist actually limited her experience:

One thing that I think was kind of surprising is that you didn't ever want to feel like a tourist when you were there. So, like we didn't go on those tour buses and so it actually took a while to figure things out and figure out where things were. For me personally, just because it had to be like in increments based on if I wanted to go somewhere and then and then I would figure that out. And that's one thing that I actually do regret. I wish I went on those tours just to kind of get a bearing of what city is actually like. Understanding like, where The Globe is, all of the different bridges and what those are next to. You know, when you're getting down to St. Albert's Hall and to know where the different locations, even Buckingham Palace, I was like where is Buckingham Palace and how do I go there? Big Ben, we could see Big Ben. I'm like, how do we get there. So

there's all of these iconic places. But I didn't go there for a while because I didn't want to look like I was a tourist.

The London Eye is another thing that participants often mentioned, but then would immediately say that they avoided while they were there. As shared by Georgie, "we looked at the Eye, but never actually went on it." These efforts to distinguish themselves from tourists were framed as an effort to make themselves live like 'real Londoners' and fully embrace life in London. However, they did limit participants ability to fully engage with the city.

As participants described life in London and drew their maps, it became clear that there was a sort of central circle between their flat, their internship site, and the building where the university courses were held that participants mostly lived in. Reflecting on this, Eleanor shared:

When I think of London, I think of where we lived, the classes we went to, and my internship…I don't think I really understood what life was like in London. I went to my internship every day and that was kind of far away. And then you come home and hang out with your friends. I guess this kind of feels like this was a bubble… You know we really traveled a lot on the weekends, I do wish I spent more time in London.

Anne shared a similar sentiment, and described how their cohort lived on Edgeware Road and for at least a month they only walked down Edgeware Road to get food. Then one day they decided to turn the other direction down the street and only a block or two away was Oxford Street, with its carnival of options.

While some of these little surprises are part of the excitement of discovering a new city, as participants reflected on living in the city of London they described the part of the city that they were familiar with and felt comfortable in and then the rest of the city was framed as unknown. By limiting the scope of the city, participants were able to create a safety net or bubble

where they felt safe and comfortable. This became home base and then they could adventure out from there when they wanted more adventure, but they could return 'home' to what was familiar.

Another aspect of this safety net was the cohort. For some participants they were comfortable navigating London or other destinations alone and they engaged in solo exploring or planned trips alone. For example, Henry took a trip to Paris solo and Amelia took several solo trips to Scotland. Other participants preferred the comfort of traveling with a companion. For example, one of Georgie's cohort members had previously been to London so when they explored the city, she took the lead, with Georgie following her. Similarly, Ruby shared that she never went anywhere alone until the last day of the experience when she took herself out to lunch and on a walk through the city alone.

In this way, through deciding how much or how little to explore alone and by the amount of the city they explored, participants were able to self-select their level of independence. For some participants, the London experience was their first time living away from home. For example, until going to London, Ruby had always lived with a family member, even living with her sister in college. So for her, going to London was a big step in creating independence and to be able to take that final day in London and explore alone for a few hours is something that she was very proud of herself for. But for other participants, for example Emma who had attended schools in several different countries as a child, navigating the city alone was not as big of a step for her.
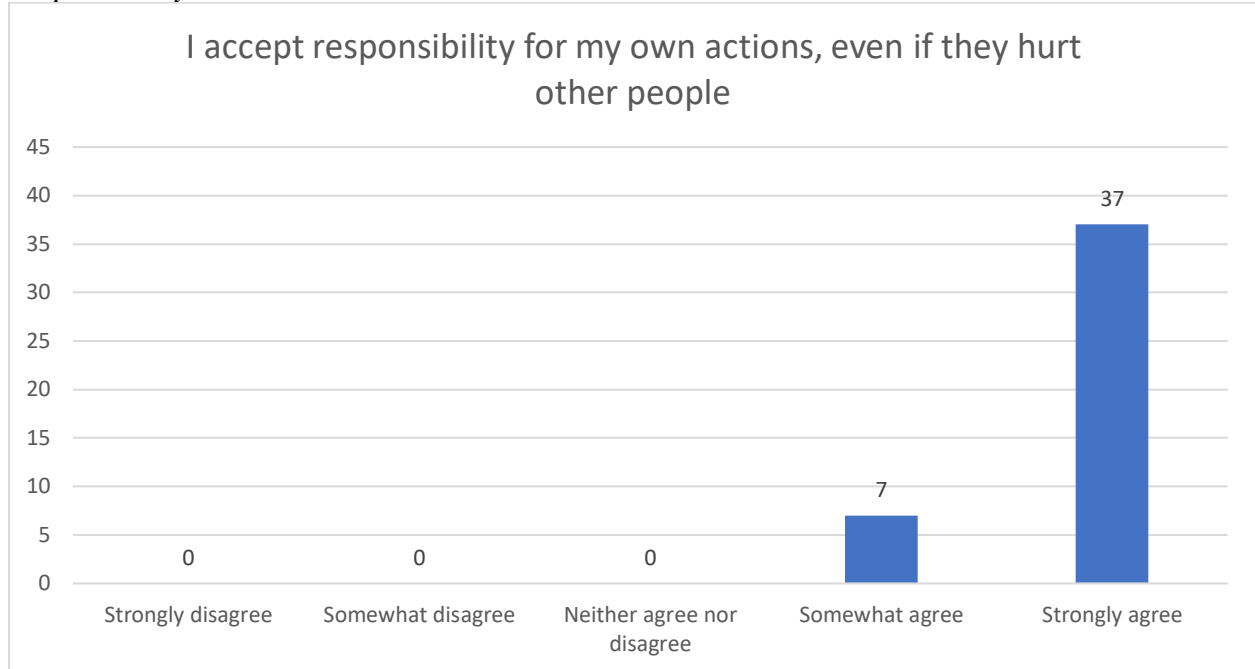
**Finding 2: Participants understanding of intercultural competence is most centered in the domains of attitudes and skills**

This research applied the Council of Europe's Competencies for Democratic Culture model (2018a; 2018b). This model considers intercultural competence as four domains. The

domain of values has three components: valuing cultural diversity, valuing human dignity and

human rights, and valuing democracy, justice and the rule of law. The domain of attitudes

contains six elements: openness to cultural otherness, respect, civic-mindedness, responsibility,

self-efficacy, and tolerance of ambiguity. The intercultural competence domain of skills includes

the following ideas: autonomous learning skills, analytical and critical thinking skills, skills of

listening and observing, empathy, flexibility and adaptability, linguistic and communicative

skills, co-operation skills, and conflict resolution skills. The final domain of intercultural

competence is knowledge and critical understanding. This includes knowledge and critical

understanding of the self, of language, and of the world.

Of the four domains, participants responses indicated that their understanding of

intercultural competence was most centered in the domains of attitudes and skills. As seen in

Figure 15, responsibility was strongly indicated, with 84% of respondents strongly agreeing that

they accepted responsibility for their own actions. Responsibility is commonly associated with

adulthood, and as discussed earlier, participants came to view themselves as adults during their

time in the program.

*Figure 15*
*Responsibility*



**I accept responsibility for my own actions, even if they hurt other people**

| Strongly disagree | Somewhat disagree | Neither agree nor disagree | Somewhat agree | Strongly agree |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 0 | 0 | 0 | 7 | 37 |

In the interview quotes shared earlier, curiosity and asking questions about other's cultures was a common idea shared by many participants. The Council of Europe model of Intercultural Competence considers curiosity as an indicator of one's openness to cultural otherness. This is reflected also in Figure 16, which shows that 82% of participants agreed that they are curious about other's beliefs and world views.

*Figure 16*
*Curiosity*



Because I went to London, I am curious about other's beliefs and world view

| Response | Count |
|---|---|
| Strongly disagree | 0 |
| Somewhat disagree | 1 |
| Neither agree nor disagree | 7 |
| Somewhat agree | 14 |
| Strongly agree | 22 |
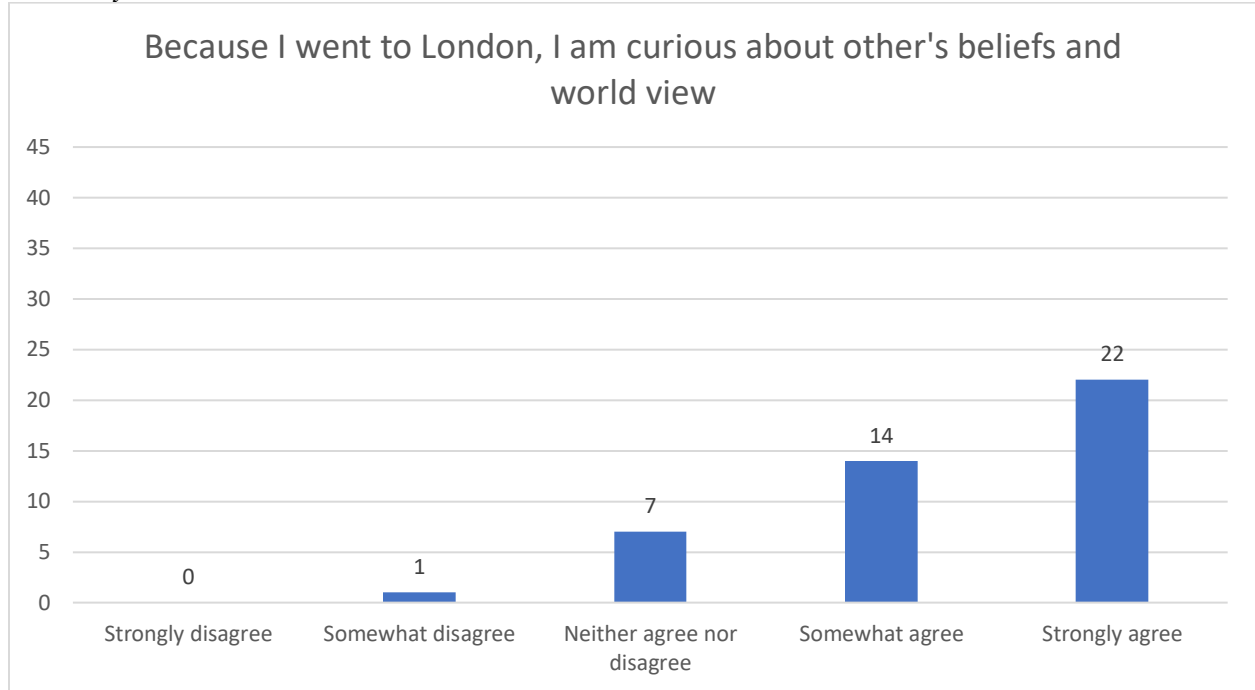
Another element of the domain of attitudes is self-efficacy, which we can consider as one's belief in themselves. Figure 17 shows that participants were confident in their ability to solve unexpected problems, with 39 of 44 respondents agreeing to the statement. This echoes the ideas shared earlier that they developed confidence in themselves while abroad.

*Figure 17*
*Confidence in Problem Solving*



I am more confident in my ability to solve unexpected problems because I went to London
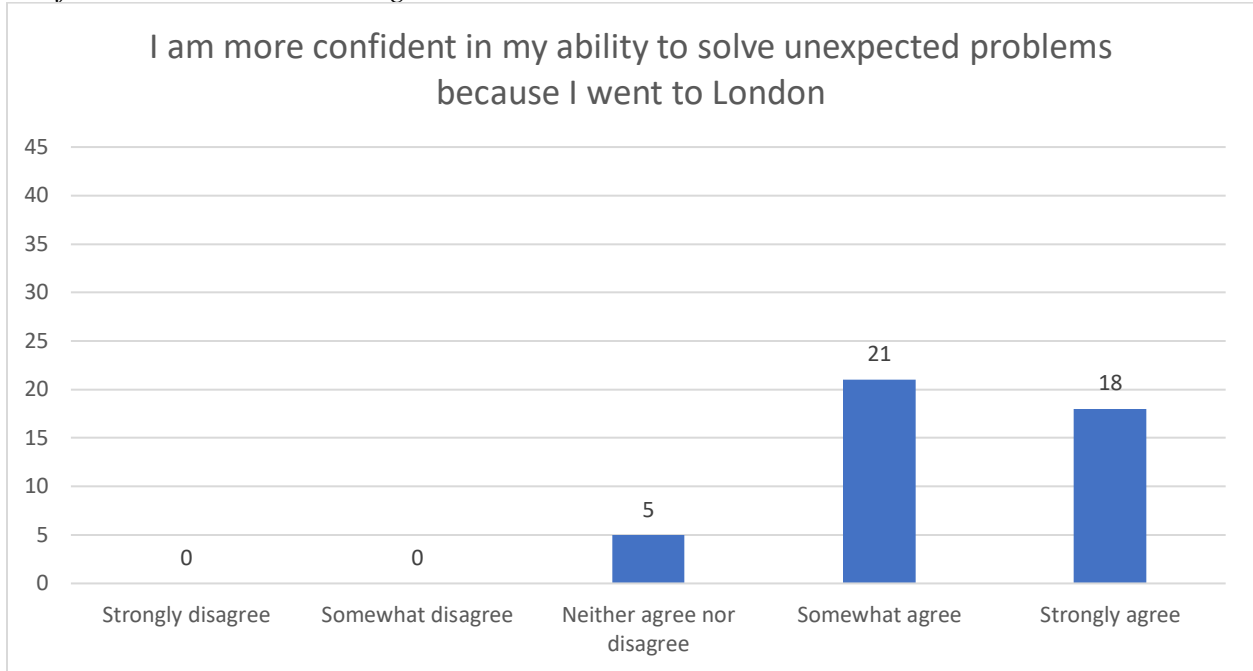
The question, "Because I went to London, I enjoy conversations and experiences that challenge my own ideas and values" corresponded to the indicator tolerance of ambiguity. As seen in Figure 18, 82% of respondents agreed with the statement. This echoes the idea the ideas discussed above about asking meaningful questions and reflecting on your own beliefs and values.
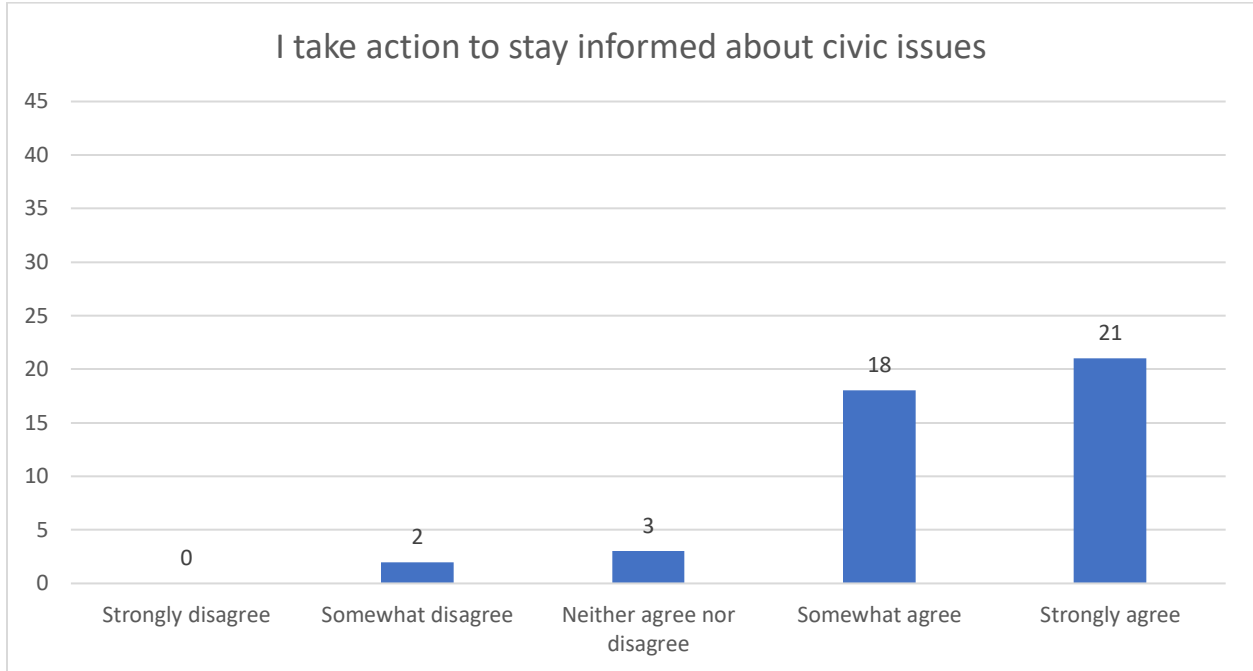
*Figure 18*
*Tolerance of Ambiguity*



Because I went to London, I enjoy conversations and experiences that challenge my own ideas and values
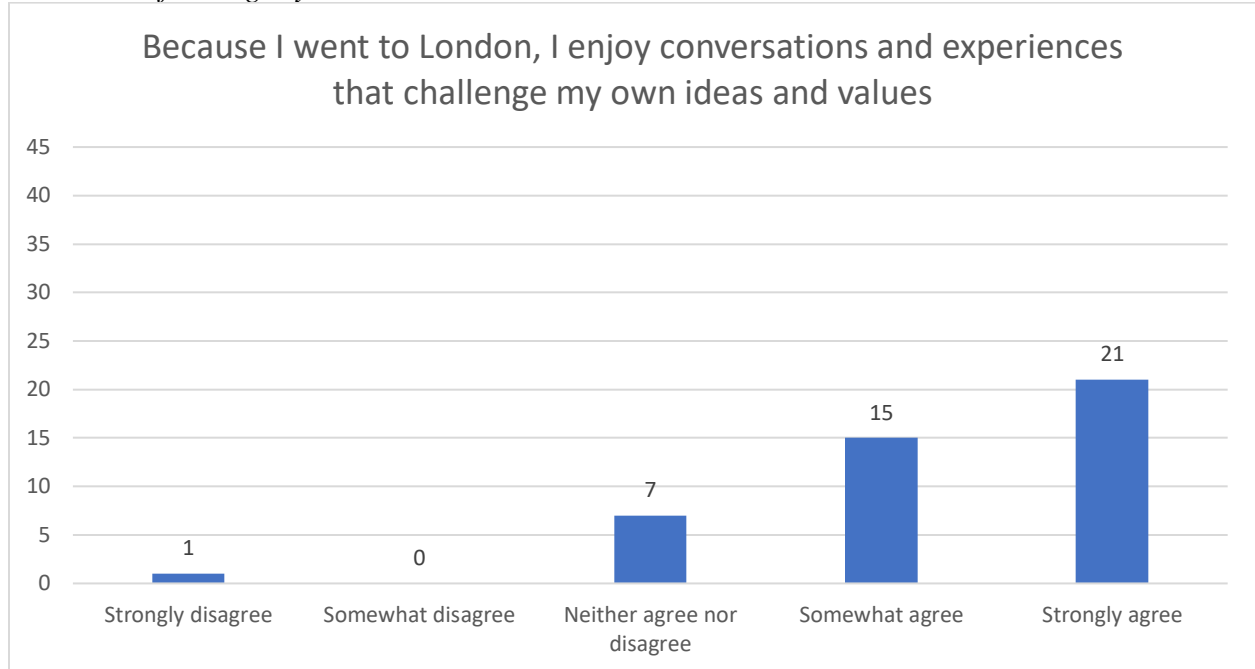
The final indicator in the domain of attitudes with strong evidence was civic-mindedness, shown in Figure 18. 39 of 44 respondents agreed to the statement, "I take action to stay informed about civic issues."

*Figure 18*
*Civic-mindedness*

## I take action to stay informed about civic issues

Participant's conception of intercultural was also strongly linked to the domain of skills. As seen in Figure 20, 91% of respondents agreed when prompted, "My time in London has a lasting impact on my ability to recognize how people with other cultural backgrounds react in different ways to the same situation." There was also strong support for the indicator of empathy. As seen in Figure 21, 95% of participants agreed that their time in London had a lasting impact on their ability to see things from different perspectives to understand the situation. These two graphs are consistent with how participants considered culturally responsive teaching. In their interviews they emphasized asking questions and understanding culture on an individual basis.
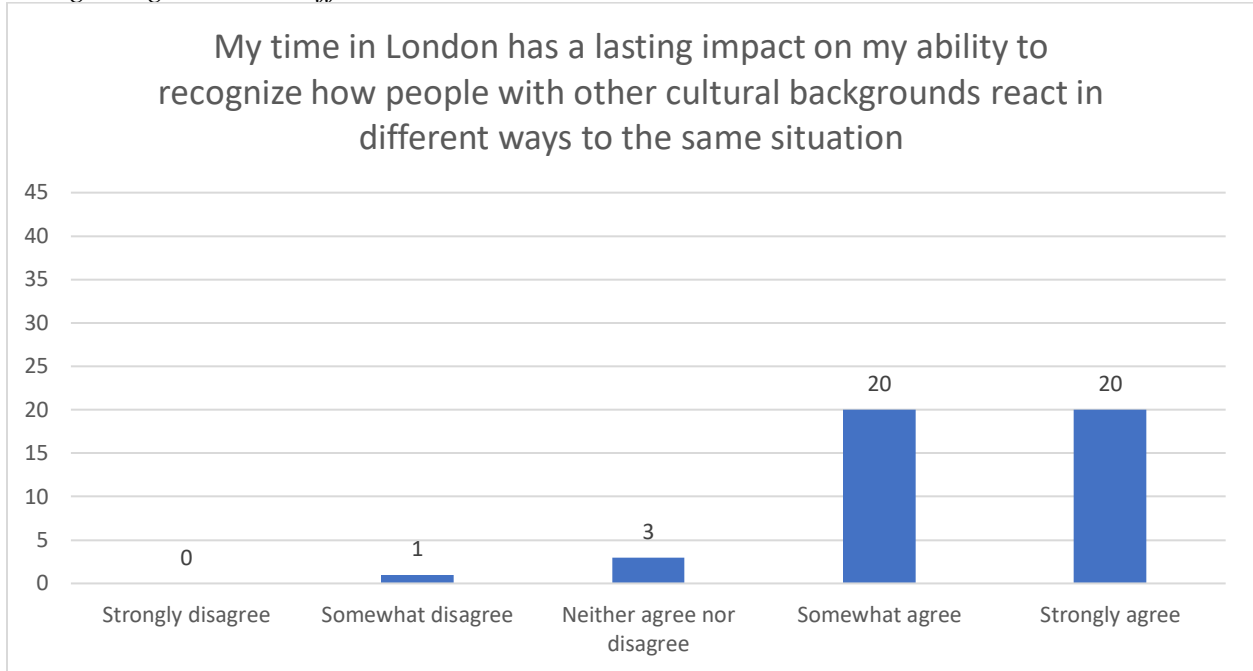
*Figure 20*
*Recognizing Cultural Differences*



My time in London has a lasting impact on my ability to recognize how people with other cultural backgrounds react in different ways to the same situation

| Response | Count |
|---|---|
| Strongly disagree | 0 |
| Somewhat disagree | 1 |
| Neither agree nor disagree | 3 |
| Somewhat agree | 20 |
| Strongly agree | 20 |

*Figure 21*
*Recognizing Different Perspectives*



My time in London has a lasting impact on my ability to see things from different perspectives to understand the situation

| Response | Count |
|---|---|
| Strongly disagree | 0 |
| Somewhat disagree | 0 |
| Neither agree nor disagree | 2 |
| Somewhat agree | 18 |
| Strongly agree | 24 |
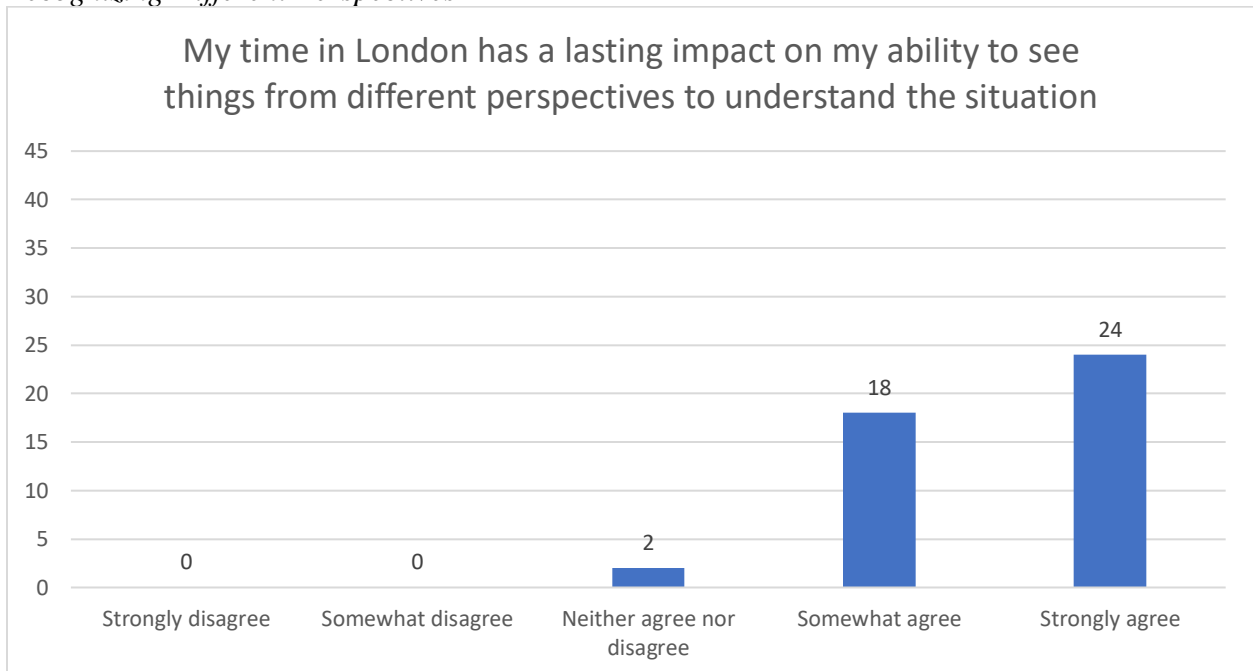
Participant's responses also emphasized conflict resolution and cooperation skills as elements of intercultural competence. As seen in Figure 22, 31 of 44 respondents indicated that

they strongly agreed to the statement, "I initiate communication to help solve interpersonal problems." Figure 23 shows that 37 respondents agreed to the statement, "Since going to London, when working in a group I support other people, despite differences in point of view."

*Figure 22*
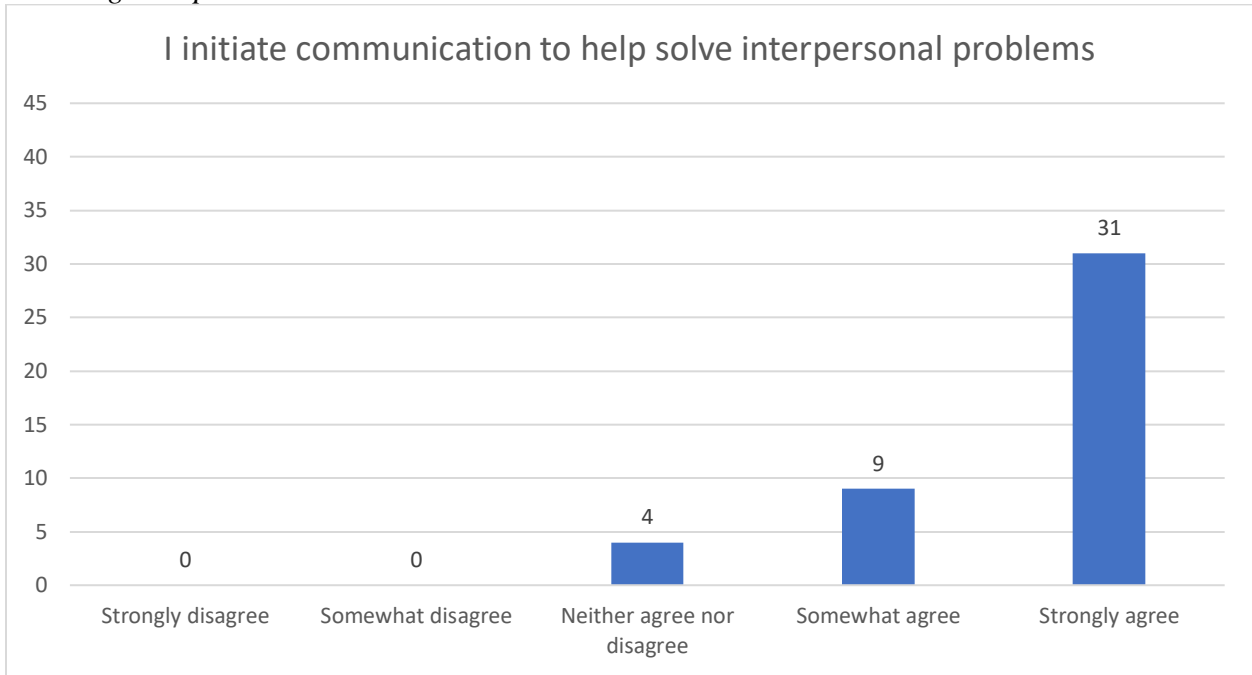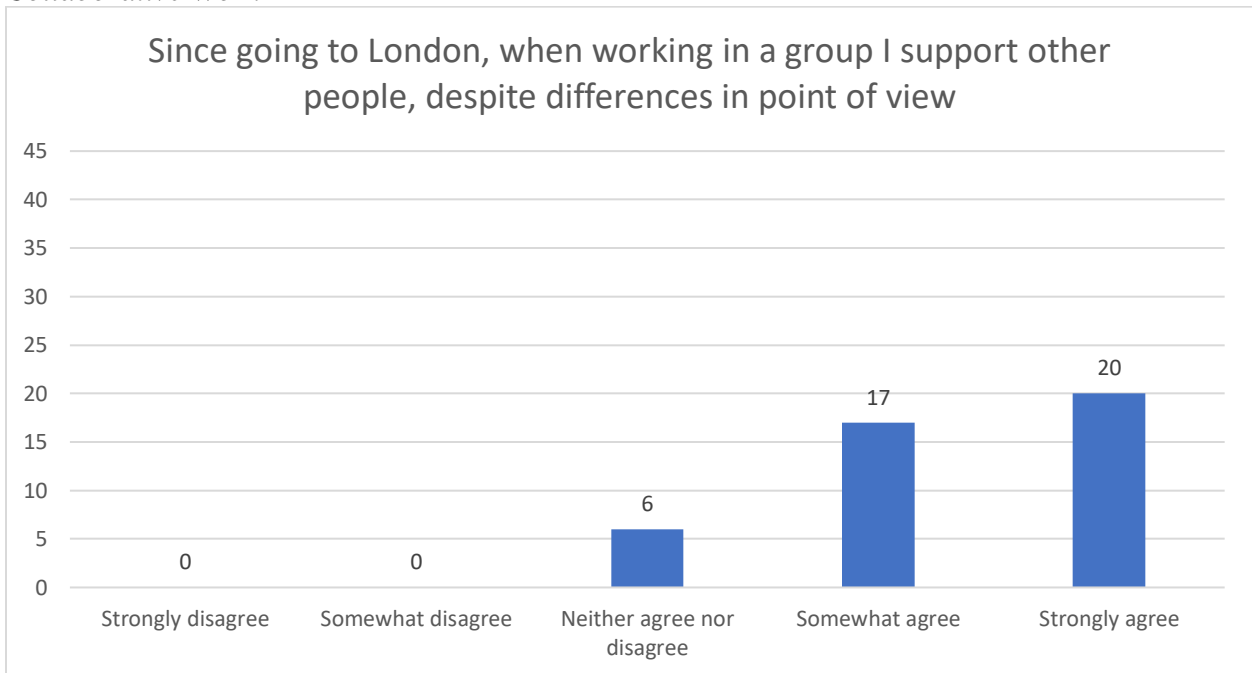*Initiating Interpersonal Conversation*



I initiate communication to help solve interpersonal problems

*Figure 23*
*Collaborative Work*



Since going to London, when working in a group I support other people, despite differences in point of view

The final aspect of the domain of skills with strong evidence of support from participants is flexibility, as shown in Figure 24 with 75% of participants agreeing to the statement, "Because I went to London, I can modify my own behavior to make it appropriate to other cultures."

*Figure 24*
*Modifying Behaviors*
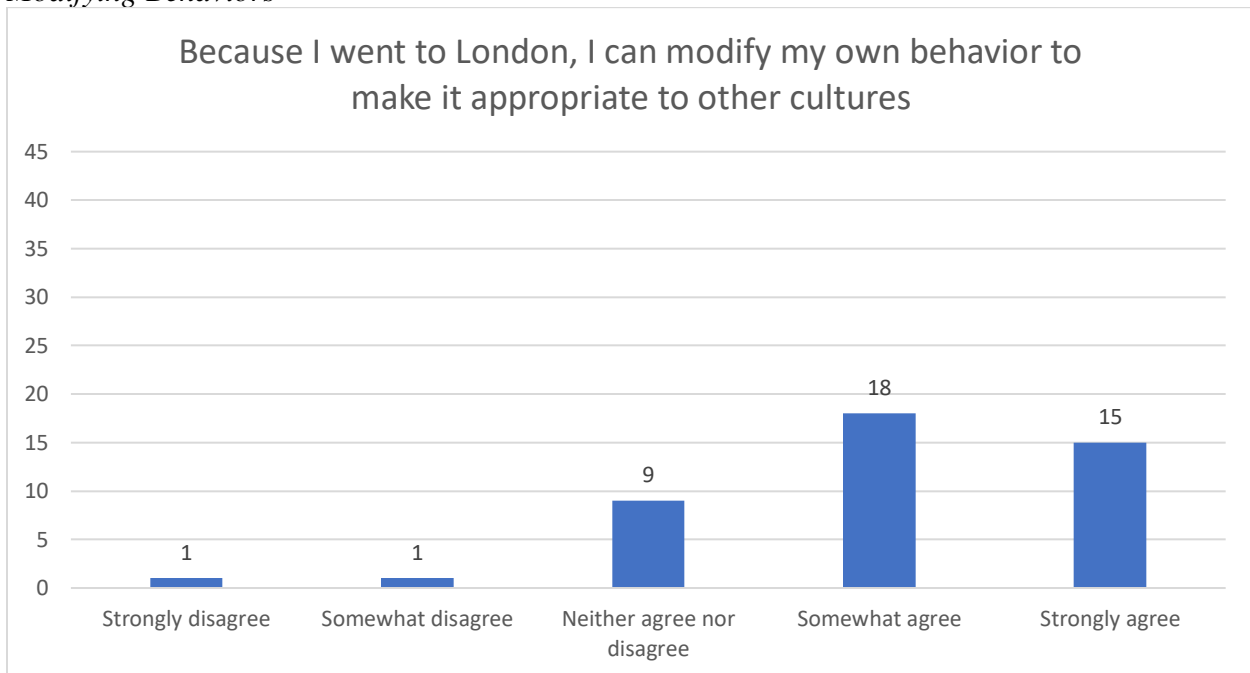


In the domain of values, valuing cultural diversity was strongly supported by participants, as seen in Figure 25. 84% of participants strongly agreed to the statement, "My time in London helped me understand and recognize different identities and cultural affiliations." While there results indicate that participants did also develop views in the value of human rights and law, they were less impacted than the value of cultural diversity. 17 of 44 respondents strongly agreed to the statement, "My time in London influenced my belief that human rights should be protected by society." And 10 of 44 respondents strongly agreed to the statement, "My time in London influenced my understanding of how schools teach about democracy."

*Figure 25*
*Recognizing Cultural Identity*
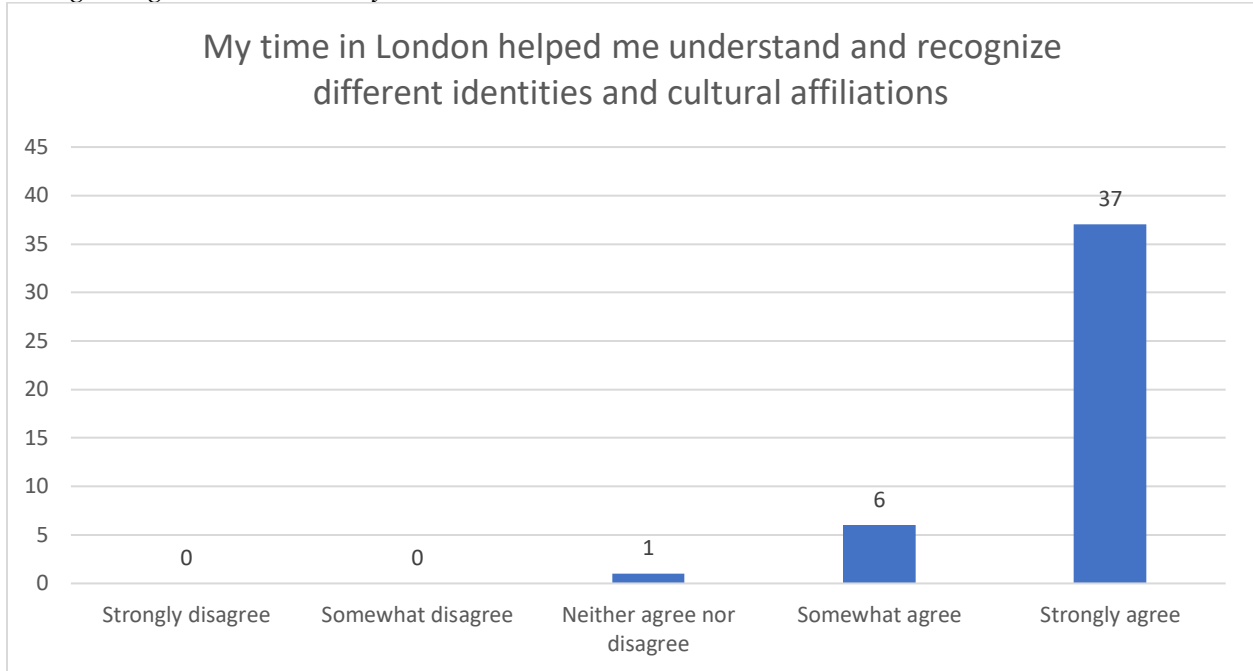


In the domain of knowledge and critical understanding, participants understanding of this area of intercultural competence was centered around their knowledge and critical understanding of the self. As seen in Figure 26, all respondents agreed to the statement, "London helped me critically reflect on my own values and beliefs." Further, 61% of respondents strongly agreed to the statement.

*Figure 26*
*Critically Reflecting on Beliefs*
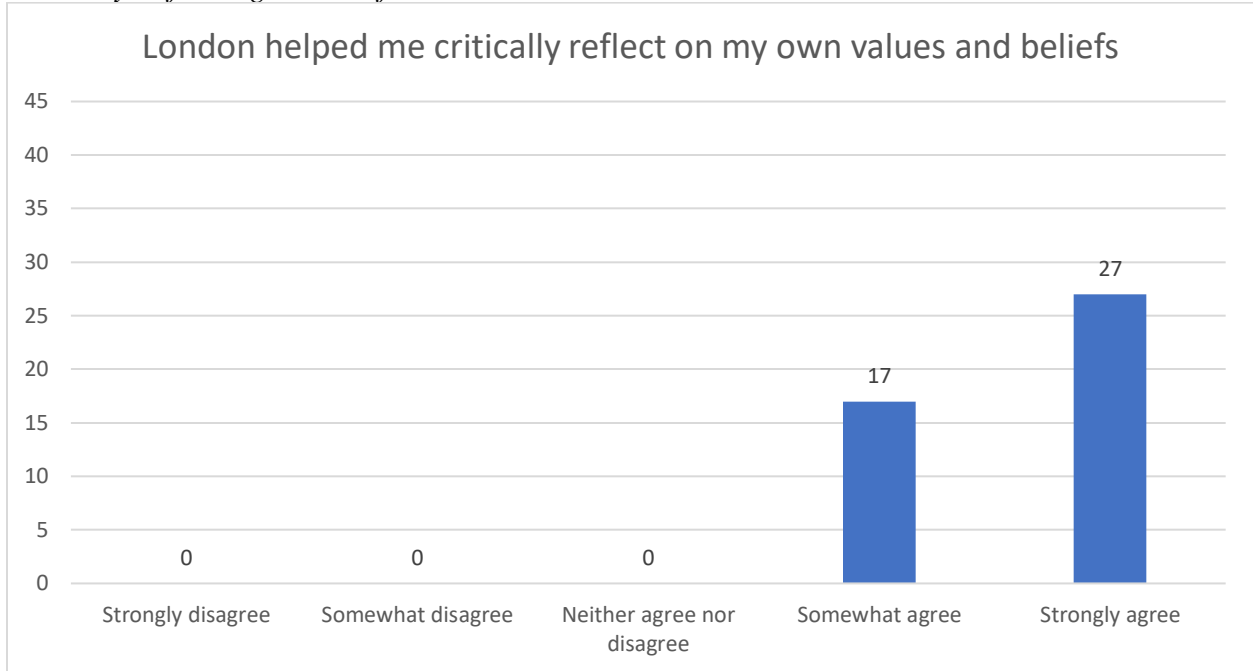
The domain of knowledge and critical understanding is also concerned with knowledge and critical understanding of language and of the world. When prompted with the statement, "London helped me reflect critically on the different communicative conventions that are employed by another social group or culture," 34 of 44 respondents agreed, with 15 strongly agreeing. Knowledge and critical understanding of the world includes a wide range of topics (i.e., politics, law, human rights, culture, cultures, religions, history, media, economies, the environment, and sustainability). Two questions on the questionnaire corresponded to this key descriptor. One asked, "Because I went to London, I can describe basic cultural practices (i.e., eating habits, greeting practices, ways of addressing people, politeness) in another culture." 31 of 44 respondents agreed to this statement, as seen in Figure 27. The other question asked, "Because I went to London, I can explain the dangers of generalizing from individual behaviors to an entire culture." 40 of 44 participants agreed to this statement, as seen in Figure 28. This is

consistent with how participants conceptualized culture, as both individual and communal, which

will be discussed more below.

*Figure 27*
*Describing Cultural Practices*

**Because I went to London, I can describe basic cultural practices (i.e., eating habits, greeting practices, ways of addressing people, politeness) in another culture**

| Response | Count |
|---|---|
| Strongly disagree | 0 |
| Somewhat disagree | 1 |
| Neither agree nor disagree | 12 |
| Somewhat agree | 16 |
| Strongly agree | 15 |

*Figure 28*
*The Dangers of Generalizing*

**Because I went to London, I can explain the dangers of generalizing from individual behaviors to an entire culture**

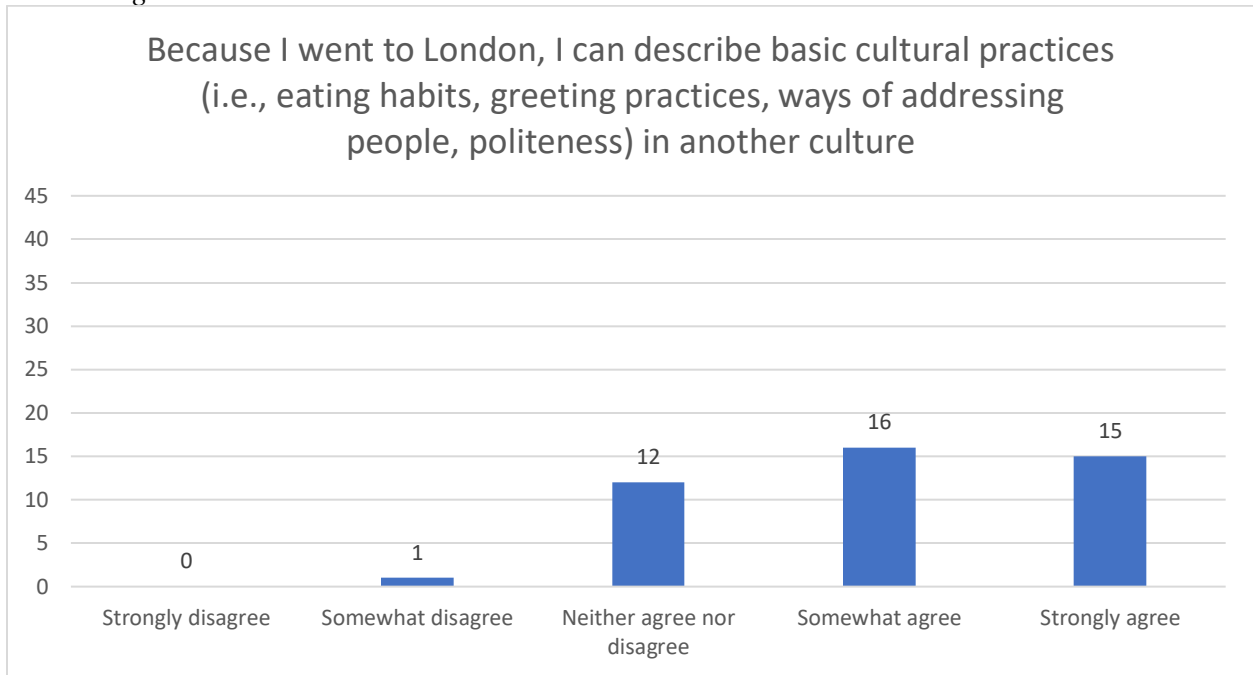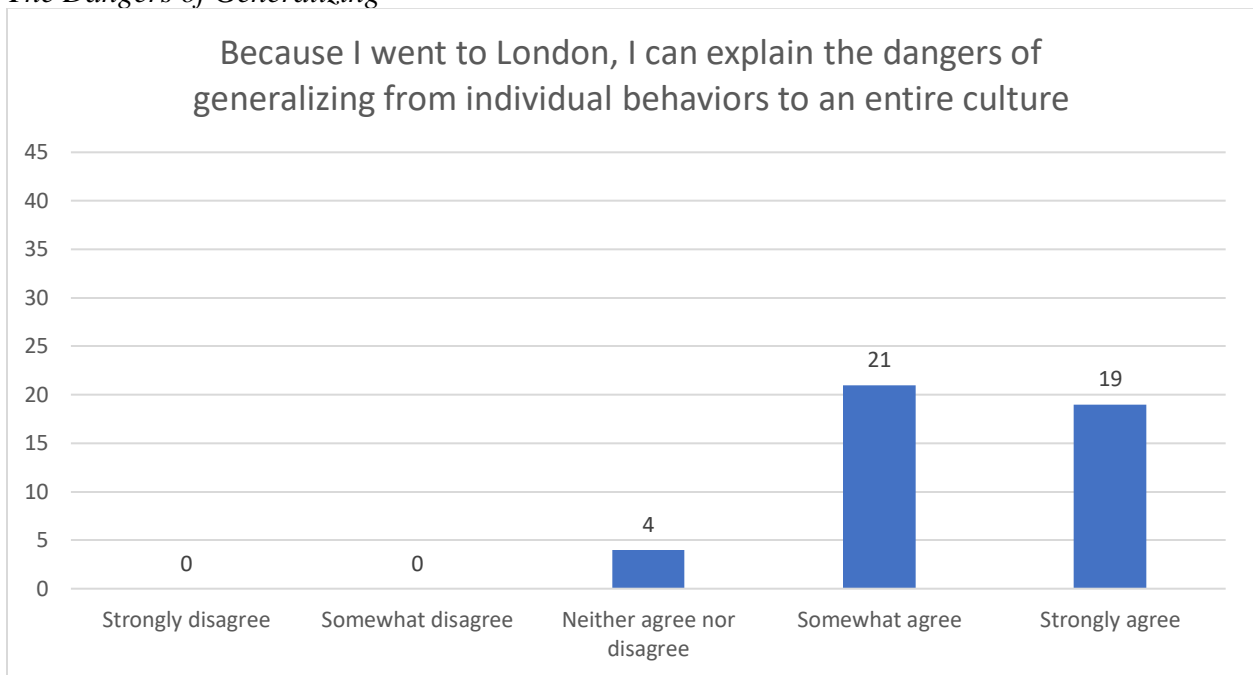| Response | Count |
|---|---|
| Strongly disagree | 0 |
| Somewhat disagree | 0 |
| Neither agree nor disagree | 4 |
| Somewhat agree | 21 |
| Strongly agree | 19 |

*Participants framed culture as both individual and communal*

Participants understanding of culture reflected an awareness that culture is both individually and socially situated. They described using words such as "classes" or "levels" and they were aware of the relationship between the individual and the group. Lily shared that she thinks "there's definitely classes of it. I think someone has their own individual culture. And then there's also group culture. And then greater community culture, because it's not just traditions. It's the way of living." Eleanor shared a similar understanding of culture:

I think culture can be so many levels. I think you can have your own individual culture and then your family has a culture. And then there's culture in terms of where you live. I think of culture as, it can be very big picture and then it gets more and more nuanced once you get down to the person.

This view of culture as encompassing a full range of personal and social identities that a person has is very aligned with the Council of Europe's conception of intercultural competence. This model of intercultural competence presents four domains: values, attitudes, skills, and knowledge and critical understanding. In the questionnaire, participants were asked questions to determine if or how their time in the UConn Education in London impacted their intercultural competence.

**Finding 3: Program elements, such as living in London, the internship, coursework, the inquiry project, extracurricular travel, and the re-entry seminar offered the opportunity for meaningful engagement, but participants engaged in each element in different ways and to different extents**

This research explored six elements of the program: living in the city of London, the internship, the inquiry project, coursework, extracurricular travel, and the re-entry seminar.

Figure 29 shows the program elements that participants described within their self-defining memories. The most frequently mentioned program element was the internship, mentioned by 20 people in their self-defining memories. Living in the city of London and experiencing the cultural diversity of London was the second most frequently mentioned program element, shared by 19 respondents.

*Figure 29*
*Program Elements Identified in Self-defining Memories*
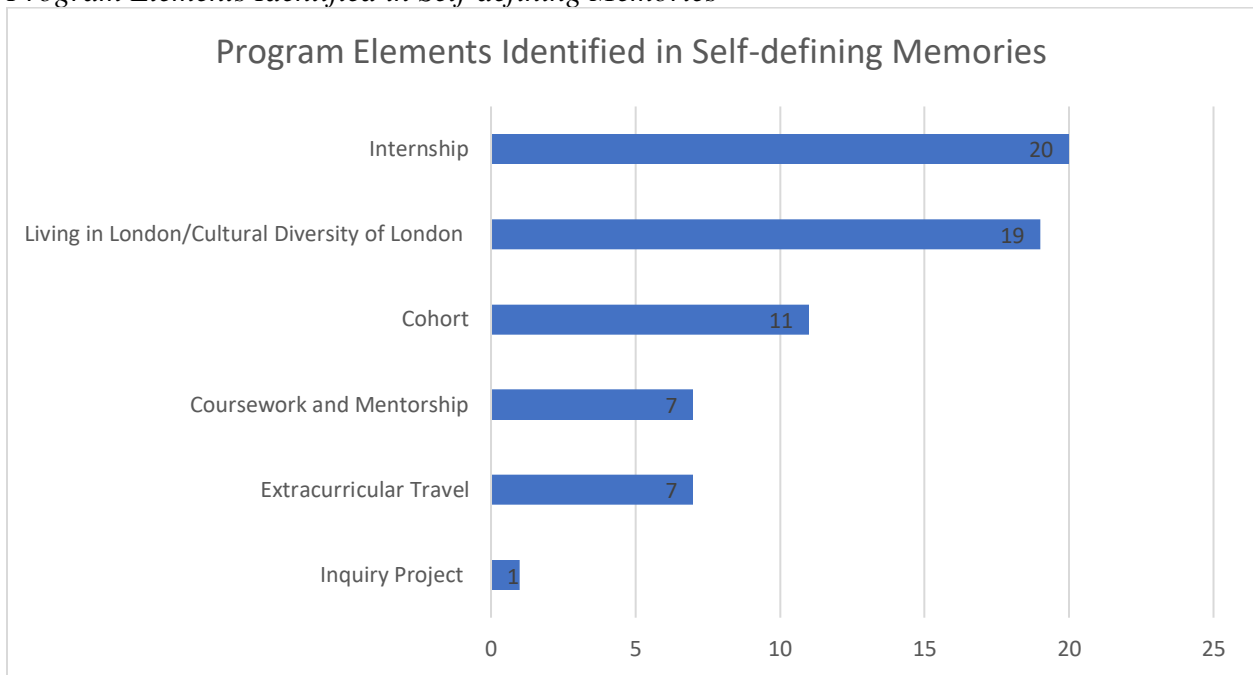


Participants were also asked to order program elements in order from least to greatest. Figure 30 shows how people ranked six program elements: living in London, school based internship, inquiry project, coursework, extracurricular travel, and the re-entry seminar. Living in London was selected as the first choice by the majority of participants, 26 participants. Additionally, eight of the ten interviews shared recollections of living in London. The internship was selected as a second or third choice by a significant number of participants.

*Figure 30*
*Ranked Program Elements*
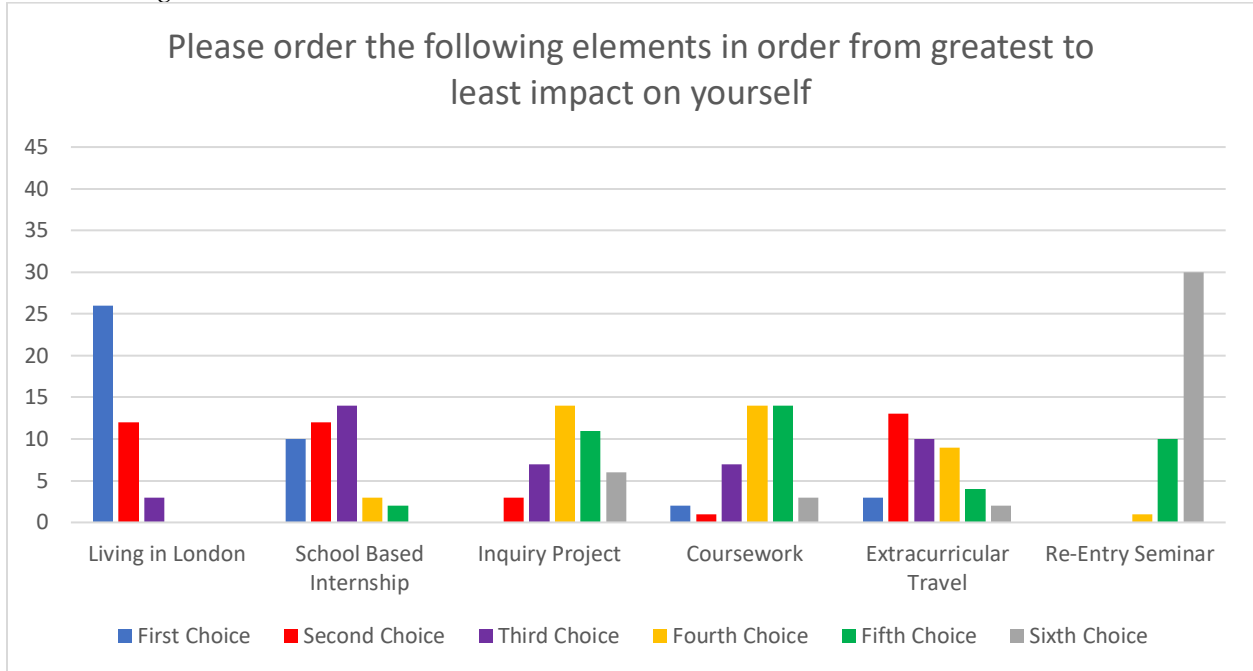


Participants also identified additional elements that they found to be impactful, including

the cohort, the intercultural development inventory, relationships with mentors, culturally

enriching experiences (i.e., museums, theater), not having technology, and family connections.

One participant who identified the cohort as impactful wrote, "I think more specifically living

with the other abroad students and being able to have a shared experience." Another wrote:

> Collaboration in London with my cohort had a huge impact on me. The experience of
>
> being together and bonding, learning together and working on a shared project was
>
> incredible. I am so appreciative that I was chosen to go to London, and I'll remember it
>
> for the rest of my life.

### *Living in London*

The city of London offered a new context and opportunity for participants to explore.

Unanimously, participants enjoyed living in the city of London and found it to be exciting and

thrilling. For example, Eleanor said, "London kind of felt like Epcot to me. Like everywhere had

a different personality." Lily reflected on the wide range of experiences she had while abroad her desire to take advantage of all the city had to offer. Describing her experiences with the Globe theater, the castles, all the pubs and cafes, she shared, "I think back to doing all those things, there was not a moment where I was in the flat. I really made it a point to get out and go and see everything." Georgie echoed the same idea, saying, "I feel like I went so many places, I mean there are just all these lovely streets around here where I would go into little shops." Henry and Amelia both discussed the food. Henry shared, "I readily admit that I'm kind of a foodie, so I love going out to just like the weirdest restaurants like trying different cuisines." Amelia shared how she took advantage of concerts in London:

> We went to see Madonna at Gay while we were there, which was amazing. We went out every single weekend so we tried to go to new places all the time… we went to this like underground rap scene concert, and we did so many things that were just out of my element when it came to music and clubbing.

While abroad, Emma took advantage of literary events, which as an English major and future English teacher she described as amazing.

> One night I went to this old cathedral and it was a Romeo and Juliet themed masquerade and they had a choir and an orchestra and there were candles all over this cathedral. And there was another one where I saw Othello in like the attic of this old bar that was 500 years old, and they were like on a stage that was like swinging from the roof. And obviously we went to the Globe a couple of times. And I was partying like crazy, but just going to these literature events. Oh my gosh! There was one under the London Bridge that was Alice in Wonderland themed and that was amazing. Because there were poets everywhere. It's the culture and art to me is the best part.

Another way participants took advantage of the culture was through visiting museums. Eleanor described the Victoria and Albert Museum, "that was the best museum I went to. And they had a whole exhibit on the 60s and it was the best exhibit I'd ever been to. It was just so interactive." The iconic London attractions were also memorable for participants. Henry shared:

One of the first days we were there I got to the tube station near Big Ben and I looked up and it looks so big, I just remember staring up at it. I'm very much swept up in like romanticism, like I watched Peter Pan growing up. And I think the opening scene of Peter Pan, it's like it's London. And Big Ben is ringing and, you know, I was four years old, five years old. I never thought I'd be living in London and seeing it up close for myself... I found it really hard that they did take my eyes off of Big Ben.

The tube was also a source of fascination and something very memorable for participants. Eleanor shared, "I loved the tube. It was just a magnificent piece of infrastructure. It was so fast and efficient." Many participants discussed taking the tube each day to their internships and enjoying using public transportation. Georgie shared, "I mean I had never navigated a subway before, like that all was new."

*Coursework*

Participants are enrolled in two courses taught by instructors abroad and a seminar course facilitated by the program director in the US. Their abroad courses typically include one course on comparative and international education and one course exploring the concept of cultural and intercultural competence. The intercultural course exposed them to new ideas and challenged their thinking and perspectives which led to meaningful learning for some participants. Learning new concepts was particularly engaging for Eleanor who recalled, "I had never felt that kind of excitement to learn and that kind of engagement in a class before." She went on to describe how

Beth's class exposed the limits of her own knowledge, but that this motivated her to want to learn more:

> I remember the first class we all got there and she told us to write everything you know about Islam down. And like no one knew anything. And that was kind of one of those moments that I was like 'I think I know more than I actually do.' And then I think what was so engaging about her class, what she was teaching us, I think, created so much cognitive dissonance in my own mind that it was sometimes hard for me to wrap my head around. But it made me want to understand it more and learn more.

> This was not the case for everyone. Eleanor recalled that one of her cohort members did not find the course to be impactful, "she didn't like how confused she was. I think it can feel uncomfortable to not know. And it's kind of like questioning your own identity which I feel like can be hard for people."

> Navigating the discomfort of having the limits of your knowledge exposed and being asked to grapple with difficult questions about yourself, your country, and your identity took time for participants. Some were willing to open up to Beth very early, others were more reticent to be vulnerable. Some participants never crossed that threshold and the coursework did not hold significant meaning for them. Ruby also shared that it took her most of the semester to open up, yet Beth kept showing up and asking important questions:

> She challenged those assumptions a lot. And like I said I came in very insulated from what other people in the world thought about [Americans]. And so that was the first time I'd ever thought about it and I had a lot of trouble. A lot of trouble… Going in to that I thought I was so incredibly intelligent that nobody could tell me otherwise, and so when Beth started to question, I shut down. And the way she described it, David actually told

me later in the program, the second week Beth said to him, this student has a wall and I cannot get through. And that was me…Beth was willing to challenge me. She knew to keep pressing. Whereas at that point I was like, why do you keep pressing on me right now? I think it was her person and her personality to keep pressing. And it was the way that she did the journals, so that we were talking about what we saw in schools, what we were feeling internally, our experiences outside of our schools as we traveled around, if we decided to do that or had the funds to do that. So that journal writing was a really big aspect of her class that she decided, and she wrote back to us every week. So that's obviously part of her pedagogy to get to know her students really well.

For Ruby, Beth's status as a British instructor was important, as it provided a counterpoint to her American experiences. She explained:

I almost felt like I had to defend my country because she was not from America. She's not American. So, her positionality, in relationship to the topics we were discussing was I think integral to me getting it at the end. Because it was topics with somebody who I considered an 'other' right, at that point in time. She was not from my country… It was all of those things really, and it needed to be. I felt like it needed to be all of those things. If one piece was missing, if I wasn't in London taking this course that would be missing. If she wasn't the type of educator to keep pressing and pushing, then it wouldn't have come together for me. So it was like this magical everything came together at the right time in that program. In order for me to grow.

*Internship*

For some participants, the internship was an important site of learning. Participants typically spend three days a week in British schools. As discussed earlier, the master's year of

the teacher preparation program is themed 'teacher as leader' and students are encouraged to learn about teacher leadership and also act as leaders. The internship experience typically begins with a week or two of observation within different areas in the school. During that time, participants are expected to get to know the school culture and the people that they will be working with. They are also expected to look critically at the school and consider ways in which they can be helpful to the school community. Then they work with their internship supervisor and the program director to craft the specifics of their internship. For some participants this freedom and lack of structure was overwhelming. Eleanor explained, "it was very open ended which was a little overwhelming." Jocelyn also struggled with the lack of structure. She shared:

> I tried to take away as much as I could… I do think that has to do with our program being like less structured, like what we had to do it or internship being less structured. It was more on us to come up with something to do and I think I just wasn't in the right like professional space to take the initiative to do something meaningful, unfortunately…Yeah, I think the impacts of that would have been greater [if it had been more structured] … Like, had there been a structure like, here's what you're going to do, here's the takeaways you're going to take from it. I think I would have taken more. I think maybe I would have grown more professionally.

For some, simply being in and observing diverse schools was impactful. Participant explained, "I think that those experiences with those children have definitely made a lasting impact on my teaching and how I approach students." Lily shared that she had never experienced schools with students from so many different places:

> It was the first time that I had really seen or thought about where people come from and how the U.K. is really accessible to different countries, where as compared to here, you

know, you can go up to Canada and to go to Mexico easier than other places. And so I think I didn't realize how much of a safe haven other countries played overseas for others.

For some participants, experiences with specific students stick out in their mind. Amelia described an experience in a geography class that made her realize how myopic her worldview had been and how important it was for her to check her own biases as a teacher:

I was sitting in a geography class with a girl dressed in a niqab. Despite her disability, she knew more about world geography than any student I've ever worked with. It was not just locations on a map but she understood and could explain to me complex cultural interchanges. She shared that people in the U.K. doubted her intelligence because of how she dressed, but she knew she was smart

For others, the context of a class was impactful for them. Ruby shared that she observed in a course titled Social Living:

And the teacher would just write a question on the board every day. And one of the questions was like: Your friend comes out to you as gay, what do you do? Your friend makes a racist comment, what do you do? It was literally just like a life course for these, I think they were year 7s. So what, sixth grade. Like big topics and we would never talk about that stuff here.

Seeing that students in year 7 could handle these big topics and that school could be a place where these ideas were examined was exciting for Ruby, who developed a desire to explore these social issues in her own future classroom.

Henry had the opportunity to observe a politics class for sixth form students (age 17-18) and he was astounded by their knowledge of American politics, which he considered to be deeper than most Americans. Sitting in that class he described, "there wasn't much direct

instruction on my part. And in some ways I felt like a student myself." Through his observation in that class, Henry learned that some students were applying to American universities and needed help navigating the application process. So he and another intern developed a series of workshops about the application process, provided feedback on application essays and personal statements, and celebrated with students as they received acceptance letters. He shared, "it taught me that there were lots of different ways to help. There's a lot of different ways to be involved in a student's education that doesn't involve direct instruction." This experience inspired him to become a class advisor at the high school he works at in the US.

*A meaningful question was important for the inquiry project*

In their summer pre-departure course, participants begin planning for an inquiry research project that they complete while abroad. The inquiry project is typically completed as a group, with data collected across all the school internship sites. For some the inquiry project was very impactful, while for others they did not take much away from the experience. Three interviews shared positive recollections of the inquiry project, while four shared negative impressions of the project. How they responded seemed to be related to two ideas, the topic of research and the process of research.

Selecting a research topic was important. Participants noted that David played a significant role in forming the research question. Lily recalled:

> He introduced us to human rights education and what it was and the idea of focusing in on this for our project. I don't remember having much choice. But I think it was a great topic and we really made the decision of what to focus on within our chapters. But I remember it kind of being given to us.

Anne agreed that David was instrumental in crafting the question. But for her, the power of the question was its relevance to American education. The question was something that she was likely going to have to navigate in her own career. She explained:

I think he crafts such a good question. And sort of like a context for the research… You knew why that's what you were researching. It wasn't just this floating question out there about the national curriculum. Our purpose is to bring back that information… He wanted to look at the national curriculum, and that was because we were also looking here. You know, this is before Common Core, and he had a superb crystal ball and could see that this is where we're going and, and this research might be really important to us, helping navigate our own education in America.

Not all participants felt like their inquiry research question was a meaningful question. Eleanor did not feel that the inquiry project was impactful. She shared:

Our thesis was something along the lines of do teachers interpretations of good teaching match their evaluations? And I feel like you kind of like know the answer of that in certain ways. And so we gave teacher surveys of what they thought good teaching was and compared it to their evaluations and it didn't really match. Kind of like how you would assume and so I don't really think that was impactful because I think we were looking for more like validation of something we already knew than a new discovery.

***Completing the project as a group was at times positive and at times a detriment to the inquiry project***

The other aspect of the inquiry project that participants often commented on was the process of completing research as a group. For some participants, the research felt new and exciting and added a layer of importance to their work, which further reinforced the sense of

"specialness" discussed above. Describing the research, Lily shared, "that was new and exciting because I really felt very like scholarly at that point. I felt like a master's student. It didn't feel like undergrad anymore." Lily's cohort researched human rights education and as they were analyzing the data, she started to realize how meaningful the research was:

> I was looking at it and I was like, 'oh this is really cool work, like this is also really important work.' And then it made me think like well why aren't we doing this? Like why didn't I know about this? And that's when I felt like the impact was setting in, like oh like this is important. Like look at what all these teachers are saying, look at what all these other educators and kids are saying. They're saying it's important, like why didn't I think about that earlier? And it kind of just like struck a passion in a way at the time.

Anne emphasized the collaborative group aspect of the project, saying:

> To do as a group was something very unique and different. And I thought it really went well. I thought that we all worked really well putting the pieces together and constructing an argument together, but I don't know if that's something that a lot of people experience… It came from many different sources and not just one person doing that research…So we had all of these different aspects, all this different research and all this different writing, because we each kind of wrote different sections too. But ultimately you had to put it in one voice, you know, it couldn't look like a patchwork paper. You had to have it in one. So just those practical skills from writing as a group, you know, they definitely carry over into our work here.

For Lily, another important element of collaboration was that you got to work across disciplines. As a music educator she was paired with a math educator, which allowed her to make new realizations about education:

I think working with other disciplines and seeing once we've done all of our coding, we were really able to see the trends between our disciplines and all the people that we interviewed were saying the same thing. How it's important and what it does to children and how it shapes and supports children. And it just, I think it just kind of showed us what that common goal is and it is to support a whole child… This is also the first time that I had a chance to work with other teachers outside of my discipline… I think that was mainly a super collaborative experience with other teachers.

However, not all participants found the group process to be productive. Eleanor noted, "I think that it's also harder because there's so many people working on one thing." Georgie shared that she expected to be engaged more meaningfully in the project but felt unable to contribute meaningfully:

Because I was one of 14 people that went in, I did 1/14 of the work. And that's not really that much work when you have a research paper… But I don't know, I felt like it should have been more rigorous in terms of like the products that we created… I mean maybe we could have pushed ourselves or maybe we could have been pushed towards something that was a little bit more meaty.

Georgie also struggled with the inquiry project because her research partner at her internship school completed all of the interviews without her. This left her feeling like she didn't have a role or any meaningful contribution to the project:

We had four interviews set up, and she was going to do two and I was going to do two She went on Monday and my day was Tuesday… I went in on Tuesday and said like 'Alright, you ready to do your interview' and they're like, 'oh, she did them yesterday.' It's like, wait a

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second. She just stepped on my toes. Like this was my job and I was really excited to do my 1/14 of this project and then because she did the interviews… what am I doing here?

Emma also struggled with the inquiry project, saying "the inquiry project was the bane of my existence. I was the absolute weight that they had to carry behind them." She felt that "it was just too big of a cohort to do an inquiry project. We had too many cooks in the kitchen and for me I think a smaller group would have been much more manageable."

Across all of their experiences, participants had varying opinions on how impactful and important coursework, the internship, and the inquiry project were for them. For some participants they provided a focus for the experience and led to meaningful learning. For others, the lack of structure, expectation for individual engagement, and group context inhibited their learning.

### *Extracurricular Travel*

The final component of the experience that participants discussed was their extracurricular travel experiences, discussed by seven of ten interviews. Figure 31 shows that 70% of respondents strongly agreed that their time in London changed how they think about and approach traveling.

*Figure 31*
*Changed Travel Approach*



**My time in London changed how I think about and approach traveling**
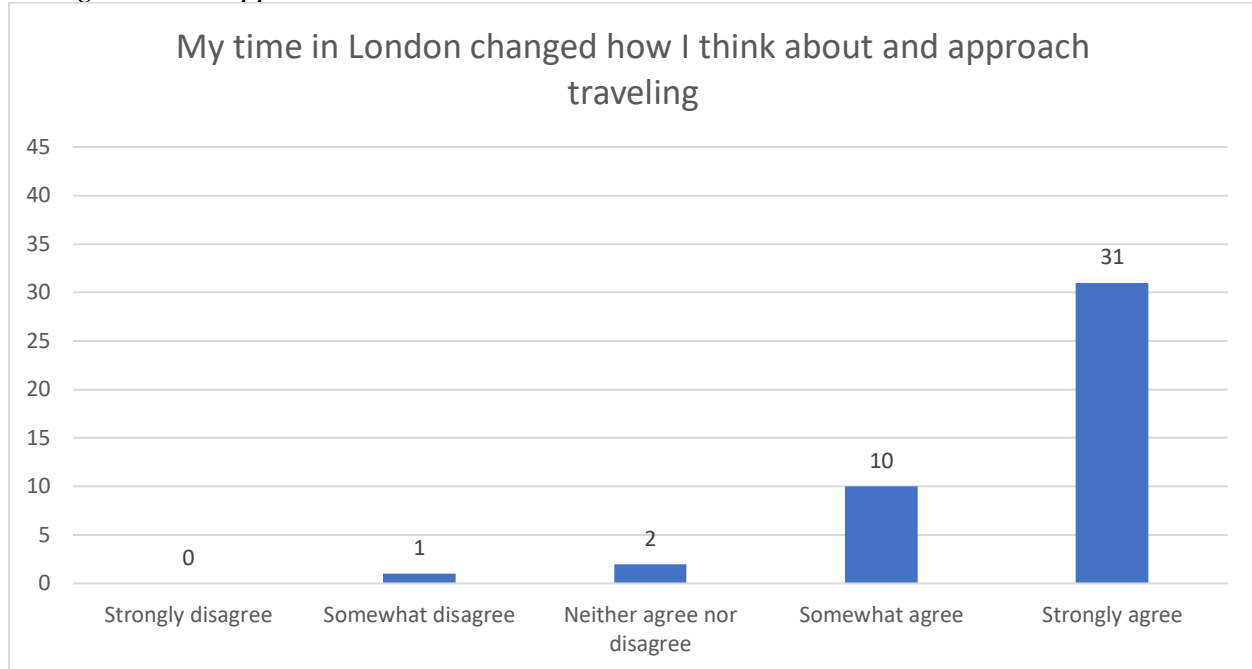
Trips outside of London were important for participants. Just as navigating the unfamiliar context of London was essential for their ability to gain confidence and independence, so too were trips abroad. Some trips provided fun and memorable experiences, while others led to more meaningful experiences for participants.

Jocelyn described how visiting Italy felt so scary because if felt much more foreign and no one spoke English. She recalled:

I think that was the first time in my entire life that I was in a country where we didn't speak English, nobody told me where to go. We didn't have any plans. It was so spontaneous. I've never done anything like that in my life. I think coming out of that so successfully with so many memories from it. Makes me now question why I don't do that stuff more often. It was honestly just fun and exciting and thrilling.

For Jocelyn, navigating Italy successful was a major source of independence and confidence. Anne described a similar experience in Germany, "I was so happy and so excited to

go and then I get off the plane and I'm literally like where am I going? I have no idea." She had

to figure it out on her own, leading to an increased sense of confidence and independence. Anne

also had an experience where she had taken the train up the coast on a Sunday to explore, not

realizing that there were limited trains on Sundays and she missed the last train back. She shared:

> That was interesting, not understanding that things shut down on Sunday. Nothing's
>
> open. I was like walking around this empty town for a whole day not knowing what to
>
> do, but you figure those things out. I think just finding out about myself, you know, that
>
> confidence that you can do that.

> For Eleanor travel was more for fun. She said, "traveling, I think, was more like pleasure

in my mind… I'm here to sightsee and less dive into the culture. Like you're going to Barcelona

to see the sights, it's not as much getting into the thick of it."

> For some, the fun aspect of traveling was the meaningful part. Georgie described how the

extracurricular travel was just as important to her as the school component. These experiences

were once-in-a-lifetime and important:

> Going on hikes in the lake district, and to the beaches and all of that was like really
>
> important, and meaningful. I don't think I would have gone if it was just go to school and
>
> come back. Like having the opportunity to go to Paris, and having the opportunity to see
>
> this beautiful northern region, even just sitting on the right side of David's car while he's
>
> going 90 kilometers per hour on the wrong side of the road. I don't even know how fast
>
> we're going right now. And I feel like I'm going to get hit. But like that's an experience
>
> right. And you don't really have that anywhere else.

For some participants their experience on an extracurricular travel trip offered them an important context for self-reflection. This was the case for Lily, who took a trip to Paris near the end of her time abroad.

It was a December weekend. And it was rainy. It was cold. And I remember standing in line for the catacombs. And it was one of those things where we had to get there early and it was cold and it was raining. And I was like just being patient with myself and waiting outside. I was like you can do this. You can do this and my feet got so incredibly cold, I actually think that I have nerve damage from my feet being so cold. And I was like complaining in that moment and then I remember there was a homeless man who was walking around looking for money and he was wearing no shoes. And I just thought to myself, and this will always stick with me, and I thought to myself, I'm okay, I have shoes on, they're cold but I have shoes on. My feet are protected. And that was such like a little thing. But I think about that all the time, just check yourself. Big problem, small problem? You'll be okay. So that's one that really stands out to me.

Henry had a meaningful learning experience also involving a trip to Paris. He had planned a solo trip and bought tickets to take the train the morning after Thanksgiving. And falling asleep the night before he forgot to set an alarm and missed his train. He shared his learning from this experience:

I was like, well I could just sit around and like mope all weekend, you know, and regret the fact that I overslept. I could be mad at myself for oversleeping and I could just be you know, insufferable… I was just so caught up in the fact that I made this mistake. And it took me like a half hour to realize like that's a sunk cost either way, you know, so ultimately, I should just do what I want to do. And I should just buy a ticket. Yeah, it was

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a lot more expensive and cost a lot more money. But I went and you know, I had a great time… I think that it sticks out to me because it goes back to the idea of being self-reliant. Like I made a mistake. Nobody was going to be mad at me other than myself… I was beating myself up about it… ultimately it's about getting the most of the experiences that you have and taking advantage of the time that you have.

While on a trip to Greece and the island of Zakynthos, Amelia encountered this teacher name Dionysus, who acted as a guide for her and her friends. He granted them access to parts of the island they would not otherwise get to experience. She recalled:

He called us into the outbuilding to see this gigantic cauldron of their traditional soup, it's the soup of the island. It's like a stew with meat and potatoes and beans and greens and stuff like that. It was absolutely amazing. But that whole experience of finding Dionysus and being able to work with somebody who is a teacher and who knows this island, knows this history, and is a musician. Like all of that was so appealing to us and he was struck by our willingness to learn about his island…he allowed us to see behind the curtain. Especially the time where we went to a pub and you literally had to pull the foliage aside to push in this wooden fence to go in because they didn't want tourist happening upon their spaces… his group performed traditional Zakynthian music for us… He took us to see the bioluminescent bays. He took us to where they get mud for spa mud facials… He did all these things for us just because he wanted us to experience what life was like.

**Finding 4: The cohort and the program mentors were important sources of support while abroad**

This finding outlines the importance of the program mentors and cohort in the experience abroad. The cohort members often, although not always, developed close friendships. This finding also illustrates the importance of the mentorship.

Developing close and meaningful friendships was commonly discussed, by seven of the ten interviews. Lily shared, "Oh my gosh, we had the best cohort… We got along so well. And I have a really strong friendship with some of the people that I went with. I would do anything to go abroad with them again." Amelia described the close bonds that they created, "It was everything that I wanted from my family, like camaraderie, a little wild… But just being able to live with people with such diverse backgrounds and interests and ideas led to really great dinner table conversation."

In their discussion of the cohort, participants shared little rituals or experiences that solidified the bonds. Henry shared about making paper hand turkey headbands and having a big potluck for Thanksgiving, for which he made macaroni and cheese. Amelia shared that they created a recipe book with treasured recipes from each person who lived in her flat:

> All of us who lived there, we actually came from different cultures too. So, one of my friends is Indian, one is Northern European, like Norwegian and Jewish. And then one girl is Taiwanese and the other kid Italian. The five of us would save money, we would cook dinner [together] often. And we all wanted recipes from home so we would email our parents, because it wasn't that easy to call at that time. And we would write down the recipes and try to find the combinations of things and cook all together.

These bonding experiences also happened on weekend trips away. Amelia described a trip to Paris and a train ride to Versailles that was particularly memorable:

Somehow we came upon this idea that we had to say the most beautiful characteristics about each other. And it ended up just being such a beautiful experience of, not just like picking out our own beautiful physical features to share with others, but also just like connecting as young women and feeling empowered… It was nice to be with a group of women who you know you could trust, and that they would also be gentle with you.

The connection of the cohort members was also felt in their university coursework. Participants were enrolled in a summer pre-departure seminar where they were introduced to ideas about culture and began planning for the inquiry research project they would complete while abroad. For Henry this summer session was important to begin to build friendships. These friendships were strengthened while abroad. Lily attributed this to the personalities of those in the cohort:

Yeah, I think a lot of it was that my group knew how to listen to each other and let people have their input. And I felt like that a lot in our class with Beth, which was kind of a heavy class…So, I remember through our conversations the professor would hit us with some pretty hard questions. And I never felt afraid to speak. And I never felt as though we would come away from one of those classes and they would talk behind backs, like I can't believe Lily said that. Everyone just really understood this as an opportunity to learn and understand more about others better. Actually, I think that our project really helped kind of shape that. I think if we were researching other topics, like just the overall structure of the English school system, I don't know if we would have been the same or if researching human rights and that topic really kind of made us focus on that… I felt like

in the London group, we were all coming in, in an uncomfortable situation where we were outside of our comfort zone. And so, I think that helped us to trust one another but also to be respectful.

### Program Mentors

David, as program director, and Beth, one of the university instructors abroad were important sources of mentorship and support for program participants. David was discussed by six of the ten interviews and Beth discussed in five interviews. Both of them challenged participants to think in new ways and supported their growth and development. Eleanor shared how Beth, as an in-country instructor or cultural guide was essential to her growth:

> I think a lot of it is people go on these abroad programs and they don't have that guidance to help you make those realizations. I think that's really powerful. I think if I had gone on the program as a senior and there was no Beth or not these classes, I probably would have just viewed it as like this is a big vacation. I learned some cultural things but I think there is a lot of power in not only how your experiences shift your perspective but how someone helps you along that process.

Beth was the instructor for the intercultural course that students were enrolled in while abroad. The course explored cultural differences between the United States and England. As one of her teaching techniques, Beth had each participant keep a journal and she would respond to each journal entry, discussed by five participants in their interviews. In this way participants were engaged in a shared dialogue in the class and they were also engaged in an individual dialogue with Beth. At times the journal was frustrating for students, who were sometimes unsure what Beth expected them to write about. This was the case for Henry who shared:

I found the journaling process in Beth's class very interesting. I use that word now, but at the time, very frustrating. I remember every week or so we had to write in our journals, and then Beth would respond to them and so we would have this correspondence but I remember writing stuff and I didn't know what she wanted from me. And I think that was the point of the exercise. It was like kind of freeform… she was pushing me to think about things. I think school uniforms came up as a topic. You know, and obviously there's very different philosophies with school uniforms there as opposed to school uniforms here. But it was, really interesting in retrospect, because I think it was very valuable to have that dialogue with someone. You don't often get that in a regular class at UConn or wherever.

Beth challenged students assumptions, which was uncomfortable at times for participants. For Ruby, who was grappling with her identity, Beth's questions were difficult and she shut down. Beth described it that Ruby had built a wall and it took a long time to break down that wall. Ruby described Beth's persistence:

She just kept showing up. She kept showing up. She kept challenging me. And I'm so so thankful that she did. Because it took me almost an entire semester. It took me 13 weeks before I was like 'oh my god okay. I'm going to break down that wall and I'm finally going to show up and be vulnerable and tell you what I'm feeling and thinking.'

Ultimately she was very grateful that Beth kept pushing her to think in new ways as that yielded significant learning for her. The combination of Beth's challenging their thinking and David provided a source of support. Ruby described David's role as an anchor:

David was my contact back in the US. I felt like David was my anchor, so whenever I felt like I was having issues with what Beth was bringing up in class, I would reach out to David… David has never been anybody but himself. And I cling to that. No matter what your

personality is because I know you're going to be honest with me and I know you're going to like keep me grounded. So, David was kind of my sounding board between the two. And you know when we got back to America. I feel like part of David's job is helping us with that feeling of estrangement.

David's support was invaluable as participants navigated returning to life in the United States. Ruby described her struggle to readjust after her time abroad and David's guidance:

I remember coming back and going up to my room the night we came back and just crying because I felt like the space didn't fit me anymore. I'm like, who lived here? Not me! And then [realizing] oh shit, I'm different. How am I going to interact with my family and my friends and like all of my classes? How do I interact with them after going through this life changing experience? I'm not the same person. I was so thankful for the course that we had with David after because that was a very kind of gradual easing back into [life in the US]. And so Beth opened the door. David made sure it stayed open. And he was here for us, and me, when we were struggling with comments maybe our teacher said at our placement or you know a professor, or another student, or just anybody a family member said and helping us work through that feeling… we would bring it to David when we were like what in the world is going on and he'd be like well let's remember we are back in America.

David played a significant role in helping participants to make sense of their international experience within a U.S. context.

It is important to note that there were two other program adults, a second university course instructor, Charles, and an in-country program coordinator, Julia. Participants' experiences with Charles and Julia illustrate the importance of the role of a mentor and highlight

what can happen when mentorship falls apart. Emma shared an example where her thinking and learning was not supported by Charles, "I was presenting that night and ten minutes before class he felt like it was the appropriate time to not only tell me I failed the essay but that I was insolent basically." Where Beth relied on asking questions or seeking deeper exploration of student's perspectives, Charles rejected answers that he did not approve of.

During Georgie's experience another cohort member experienced a traumatic incident that could have escalated to sexual assault. In response to this incident, Julia did not support the student, but rather blamed them for the incident and threatened punitive action. Julia should have been a person that the cohort members could turn to for support, but this student did not feel supported. Georgie struggled to understand why the program was not more supportive of a young woman in a strange city who had undergone a traumatic experience. She shared that the experience changed the rest of her time abroad:

> It really soured I think the rest of that portion of the program for me… Why did the adults in the situation, the leaders of the program, the directors, not protect the young women that were there? … You don't expect it from a group of people that are technically there to support you… I think at the time it kind of felt like we were kind of alone on our island and we were adults and we had to navigate this really horrible, strange new experience on our own. We didn't have anybody to be there for us.

### *Fostering a sense of "specialness" with the cohort*

Participants framed these experiences with their cohorts in a way that made them feel special, as though their cohort was unlike other groups that they were connected to. This was discussed by four of the interviewees. One of the most common ways that participants

highlighted the specialness of the cohort was through emphasizing that the group could both

work hard and still enjoy their experience. Lily discussed this balance:

It was just such an awesome group. Everyone was just so kind and like really hard

working. But not to the point where it became all about the project. We still had fun and

really got to experience being abroad… we were also selected. It wasn't like oh anyone

can sign up and be a part of it. You know, you had to really show that you wanted to be

in this and do the work that went with. It wasn't just a fun semester abroad like we did

really great work, and really important work.

This idea that the participants were doing important work was used to further illustrate

this sense of specialness. It gave meaning to their time abroad and elevated them to a different

status. This was also seen in the way in which participants spoke about the other groups of

students abroad. There are two programs that have run concurrent to the UConn Education in

London Program, a program for students studying business and the general undergraduate study

abroad program. Often these programs lived in the same buildings. As they talked about these

other students, program participants highlighted two stark divisions. First, they emphasized that

they were in their graduate year of study. They also emphasized the motivation and seriousness

with which they approached their time abroad compared to the other program participants. Anne

shared:

We were all in the Masters year. The other students that went were just English majors.

And I don't know if they were seniors, they weren't graduates yet. And their experience

was to have fun. Like classes were secondary. You know, they were really just there to

have a good time. And so, it was very obvious the Masters year students, and the just

English major kids all hanging out and being in the same place. You just kind of got to

see there's a huge difference in motivation for being there. And also, what you're taking

out of the experience.

Amelia echoed this idea, saying:

We were grad students and so there was a difference, like we weren't trying to get blitzed

every night, trying to like drink our way through London. Even though we did drink our

way through London, we did so much more responsibly. Because I think we just had the

wherewithal of taking care each other and ourselves.

Jocelyn also felt the difference between the different groups, saying, "I do remember

feeling that. Like people wanted a divide between [the two groups] like a sense of 'we're

better.'"

This sense of specialness was also fostered by the program director, starting at the very

beginning. Anne shared how she felt he fostered a sense of direction and purpose within the

cohort that felt special:

He really set such a good tone. You know, we had this summer session before we went

and he just set this calm but productive tone, like you're gonna go in there, you're gonna

have a great time, but you have a mission when you're going there as well. And so you

knew what you were getting into. You might not have known exactly what it was but you

knew you're getting into something and you had a job. You have an obligation to find

some of this information.

**Finding 5: Participants created cinematic moments to reflect on themselves and
their time abroad**

For participants, self-reflection was a central component of their experience abroad. They

were prompted to engage in reflection activities through their coursework and their experiences

in schools. However, participants created additional moments of self-reflection for themselves as they navigated life abroad. These moments took on a cinematic quality. They involved either an awe-inspiring setting, or assigning meaning to a mundane and everyday activity. Eight of the ten participants discussed some form of cinematic reflection, with five discussing running and the parks of London, and six discussing hilltop vistas.

The parks of London, especially Hyde Park was a common setting for these cinematic reflective moments. Olivia often went running through Hyde Park. For her it was a way to process what she was experiencing. She shared, "I'm just going to run this and picture the possibilities of my life." Amelia described how she was at Hyde Park almost every day:

That was like our place to exercise, to hang out, to just relax and be alone. It was such a crucial part… There was something so open about it and the fact that its slightly elevated than its surroundings. It just added such clarity to the air and clarity of thoughts. And even when it got cold it was like just a place to go and clear your thoughts and think about things.

Hilltops often provided the backdrop for these cinematic moments of reflection. Georgie described taking a trip to the top of Prospect Hill towards the end of her time abroad:

I walked up Prospect Hill and I just like stood there and was like, 'wow, why have I never done this before?' Prospect Hill is so beautiful and now it's like my last week here and I'm standing there looking at this incredible view and now I have to say goodbye.

Henry described a visit to the top of Muswell Hill:

It was a long day and I wanted to stop and check it out because I heard the view was beautiful from the top of Muswell Hill, and I stopped and I got some fish and chips from

a fish and chip place. And I just stopped sat on a stone bench and just ate my fish and

chips. I remember it to this day it was just a really kind of serene experience.

Ruby recalled her visit to the top of Primrose Hill:

Primrose Hill is outside the city and you're on a hill, obviously, and you just see the city.

You see the skyline… It was really cool. And so, I think of this as the ability to see

London from far away. And that's what I think what London meant to me, is the ability

to take steps back and kind of readjust my thinking and get out of the grass, the weeds,

whatever, to see the forest… It's like a metaphor, I feel like it's going to take me years

and years and years and years to be the person who I want to be, but I can get there. I just

need to remember the larger picture and keep taking steps. Just keep moving towards it.

These cinematic moments also happened while abroad. Standing in historical places

offered the context for participants to recognize that the world was vast and big. Anne had this

realization while in Dover:

The setting itself is kind of one of those existential settings, you know, you're on top of

the cliffs and you're near the castle, and it was just one of those, those moments where,

you know how much history has happened there and you're there and it's more than just

being by yourself to have that experience. I thought was, was really special.

Emma had a similar experience in Morocco, visiting one of the oldest universities in the world:

I think in a place that old you get so much inspiration just by walking around, and in

London as well.  In the U.S. it's not like that. Everything is quite new and has like a

greenness to it, versus somewhere like Marrakesh. And the smells and the tastes and the

colors and the culture differences for me evoked a lot of poetry, art, and that's something

that I brought to my students afterwards and so that's what Morocco and London did for me. It like helped me bring a lens of different cultures to the classroom.

Henry summed up these cinematic reflective moments by saying:

It's like you think about movies of people moving to like new cities and new places. And they have a really like reflective moment. Like on top of the hill or whatever… I just, I think people look for those moments for themselves, because they've been attuned to kind of thinking that they have like some kind of, you know, weight to them, some significance… I think sometimes people, when they have certain experiences, they want the right song to be playing in their head if they have their headphones in. Because I feel like it's almost like the score of the movie. It's the song that's playing while the magical moment is happening. And the vibe does need to like match up in the right way.

# Chapter 5: Discussion, Implication and Conclusion

*"The real voyage of discovery consists not in seeking new landscapes, but in having new eyes"*

– Marcel Proust –

## Overview of Research Study and Findings

Education abroad provides the opportunity for university students to engage in both academic and experiential learning in a new country. Formal programming for education abroad in the United States dates began in the early 1900s and grew to the industry it is today, sending nearly 350,000 students abroad. These international experiences have been suggested to aid the development of intercultural competence; instill confidence, flexibility, and independence in participants; develop language skills; and foster an understanding of new pedagogies (Batey & Lupi, 2012; Clarke et al., 2009; Simmons, 2021). Claims of impact are common. In 1934, Smith College's president said, "In my opinion it is in practically every case much the most valuable year spent in College" (Hoffa, 2007, p. 77). However, there are significant unanswered questions about the long term impacts of education abroad programs. This study examined the ways in which participants in a semester-long pre-service teacher education abroad program considered the experience to be impactful. Rather than seeking to prove impact, this study sought to explore perceptions of impact and better understand participants' reflections on their experience. Drawing on data from a questionnaire and semi-structured interviews, this study suggests five major findings.

The five major findings of this research present evidence that the experience of participating in a pre-service teacher education abroad program was meaningful and impactful in unique and individual ways. The results of this research suggest that participants found the experience to be both personally and professionally impactful but they identified personal growth

as more meaningful, and each participant experienced distinct individual growth. The new and unfamiliar context was considered an important aspect of this growth as it prompted them to ask questions about themselves and their beliefs. Additionally, participants described how living in a new context allowed them to develop independence and confidence. Many participants shared how they came to view themselves as adults in ways that they had not previously considered themselves. As participants engaged within the host country and particularly within host country schools they began to consider culture in new ways and began to recognize the influence of culture on one's schooling and perspectives. This research reveals that participants conceptualized culture as both individual and communal and that their understanding of intercultural competence was centered on attitudes and skills. The domain of attitudes can be thought of as viewpoints and includes openness to cultural otherness, civic-mindedness, self-efficacy, tolerance of ambiguity, respect and responsibility. The domain of skills includes co-operation skills, conflict resolution skills, analytical and critical thinking skills, flexibility, empathy, and skills of listening and observing (Council of Europe, 2018a; 2018b).

The findings of this research emphasize the individual nature of an education abroad experience and highlights personal growth as described by participants. This research suggests that each program design component afforded the potential for meaningful learning, yet participants engaged with program elements in individual ways and to different extents. For example, some participants identified the internship as a significant site of learning while others felt that the internship lacked structure and they were unable to take much away from the internship experience. This finding highlights how impact is individually situated and suggests that participants author their own experience within the context of the program elements. Further, this research suggests that participants self-select their level of independence and

exploration while abroad. Program participants had a range of prior experiences, some with

extensive international experience and some who had never left the country. Thus, participants

described different levels of comfort abroad. Participants indicated that they felt that the program

stretched them beyond their comfort zone, however this looked different for different

participants. For example, some participants were very comfortable navigating the city alone,

while for other participants that was too much independence for them and they preferred to move

through the city with others from the cohort. All participants indicated that the cohort and

program mentors were important sources of support during the international experience. Finally,

this research suggests that participants engaged in reflection through a variety of ways,

recurrently creating cinematic movie moments to reflect on their life and their experience abroad.

Taken holistically, these findings support claims that pre-service teacher education

abroad experiences are impactful and offer a set of potential pathways towards growth. The

findings of this research show impact as an individual phenomenon and explore the contextual

and relational elements that participants found to be important in their development. There can

be no one singular definition or expectation of impact. Rather, the distinctive identity,

background, and experiences of each participant meld together into a personalized experience

that occurs within the constructs of program design. This chapter offers greater insight into these

findings and a set of considerations for program design that capitalizes on the potential for

impact and provocations for future education abroad programing and research.

## Discussion of Findings

These findings illuminate several key considerations including the importance of program

cohesion and the importance of mentorship across the experience. Further, the findings

emphasize the individual nature of impact and the intentional moves made by participants to

author their own experiences abroad. Here these findings will be discussed further and then in the next section I present some considerations for future programming and research.

Impact is individually situated for each participant therefore participants need individual support

The most salient finding of this study is the individual and personal nature of impact. While all participants identified the program as impactful, they also defined and situated impact in their own ways. Thus, two participants in the same cohort would not experience the program in identical ways. How the program impacted each person was influenced by not only their background and prior experiences, but also by their willingness to engage in learning and the experience offered by the program elements.

Ciftçi and Karaman (2019) reported academic, cultural, linguistic, pedagogical, and personal growth as impacts of short-term international experiences for language teachers. Okken et al. (2019) suggested levels of outcome: reaction, learning, application, and organizational. The research presented here both supports and challenges these claims. Participants in this research study shared a wide range of ways that participation in the program impacted them. For example, Henry shared that he uses the pedagogical practice of journaling in his English classes because he found it to be impactful as a part of his education abroad coursework. This is an example of pedagogical impact and characterized the application outcome described by Okken et al. (2019) where his experience translates into behavioral changes. For another example, we might turn to the case of Jocelyn who shared how the experience of navigating public transportation both helped her develop a sense of confidence in herself and also helped her better understand the lives of her students in the urban district where she teaches. She shared that the experience abroad helped solidify that she wanted to work in an urban district. Here we see personal growth and evidence of what Okken et al. (2019) consider learning and organizational outcomes.

Learning outcomes include skills, knowledge, and attitude changes, seen through Jocelyn's

increased self-confidence and empathy for her students. Organizational outcomes included career

choices such as the location of the school where someone works.

However, a significant finding of this research is that participants assign greater meaning

to their personal growth than any other type of growth, which challenges previous claims of

impact presenting the different domains of impact as equal. This is shown through Figure 9 and

Figure 10, with 91% strongly agreeing that they have grown as a person compared to 70%

strongly agreeing that they have grown as a teacher. Participants discussed their time abroad as

an exploration of self which allowed them to better understand their own identity. This is

consistent with the research of Maynes, Allison and Julien-Schultz (2013) who found that after

four years, participants had internalized the experience as part of their life story. Understanding

one's life story goes hand in hand with understanding their own identity. For the participants in

this program, considering their identity was necessary before they could begin to think about

other contexts. Pedagogical growth and conceptions of culture were all filtered through the

understanding of self. For example, very few participants shared specific pedagogical strategies

that they employ in their classrooms, but many participants discussed how they better understood

their own perspectives and that their time abroad shaped their philosophy of teaching. This

reinforces the notion that teachers must first understand their own identity as teachers bring their

own socialization experiences and perspectives to the classroom (Arthur et al., 2020).

Additionally, organizational outcomes such as increased job competitiveness were not

frequently discussed by participants. Here I think a major consideration is time. As this research

offers a longitudinal perspective it presents new ways of viewing impact. Previous findings by

Okken et al. (2019) and others emphasize the ways in which participants in an education abroad

experience emphasize that it made them more competitive in the job search. This was not found

in this research, which begins at least five years after participation. It may be that finding a job is

a more immediate impact of an international experience, but over time, participants minimize

these outcomes in favor of more personal impact. Finding a job is a major concern of pre-service

teachers, and often during their re-entry semester they discuss how their international experience

makes them a more competitive candidate. However, for someone who has been teaching for

five or more years, finding a job is less of a concern, and the impact of the program has shifted to

be more personal.

The findings of this research make it clear that not all experiences are equally impactful

for all participants. For example, some participants found the process of engaging in an inquiry

research project to be meaningful. They learned not only about a new educational idea and

reflected on how it connected to their own experiences, but also learned how to collaborate with

a research team that spanned multiple disciplines. However, for other participants, the inquiry

project had too many voices and the question lacked significance. Similarly, for some the

internship offered the opportunity to engage in schools in meaningful ways, however the open

and unstructured nature of the internship prohibited others from profoundly engaging. This

suggests that participants need individual support and that different students may require

different levels of structure in order for the program to be impactful.

Here, I think it is also important that one interrogates their own beliefs about what impact

*should* look like. As I engaged in data analyses I found myself searching for evidence that the

program was more or less impactful for certain participants. I found myself tempted to view

impact as black or white – it either happened or it didn't. For example, I found myself looking at

the experiences of people like Jocelyn or Ruby or Georgie who talked about not exploring

London on their own until the very end of the program. It was tempting for me to look at that and not see evidence of impact. However, one of my critical friends helped me recognize that I was letting my own international experiences and preconceived notions of impact limit my analytical lens. For someone like Ruby who had never been away from her family, she didn't need to explore on her own to find impact, she found it through engaging in a personal process of questioning and self-reflection. The deeper I engaged with the data, the clearer it became to me that impact is a complex and nuanced concept that is applied to different individuals in unique ways.

As the UConn Education Abroad in London Program is a program for pre-service teachers, it may be tempting to assume that the impact should be predominantly pedagogical and related to one's professional practice. However, the findings of this research suggest that many participants consider their growth to be mainly personal, and that personal and professional growth are intricately intertwined. This is seen through the reflections of Ruby who noted that their experience abroad "was more of a self-journey than it was a teacher journey for me."

However, it is also important to consider the social context of education. The more we know about our identity and ourselves as teachers, the more able we are to recognize other's identities. McBride, Bellamy, and Knoester (2020) remind us that in order to develop intercultural competence, one must first consider their own journey and deeply reflect on themselves. Xu, Hao, and Huennekens (2016) echo this, suggesting that culturally responsive teaching must begin with recognition of one's own culture. When one understands their own identity and their own worldview deeply, it influences their actions within the classroom. This is particularly important, as Yuen (2010) suggests that teachers serve as gatekeepers determining if culture is discussed and valued in the classroom. Therefore, we cannot only consider pedagogical

impacts and ignore the personal journey that participants undergo, as these experiences to explore one's identity ultimately shape both our personal and professional self. The findings of this research suggest that participants may need additional help to transfer their personal learning to a professional context.

### *Towards new directions for research and considerations for program design*

The findings of this research recognize the individual nature of impact and call for a fundamental shift in the ways in which education abroad research is focused and conducted. This research emphasizes the need for a new question, shifting from research that seeks to ask, "Was it impactful?" towards research that seeks to ask, "How was it impactful?" and describe the myriad possibilities of impact. Throughout this research I have shared how participants described the impact of their experiences. Yet, this study represents only the beginning of the possibilities for research that explore impact. Shifting towards a new paradigm in research that begins with the recognition of impact and seeks to describe and explore impact opens new methodological doors. Case studies, participant profiles, and research that explores and describes participants individual experiences will be crucial to better help understand the ways in which education abroad experiences have been impactful. The findings of this research make it clear that impact is individually situated and constructed and that participants are active participants in the creation of their own experiences. Participants self-selected their level of independence and engagement while abroad. This suggests a need for consideration of program participants on an individual level. There is a need for additional research that describes individual perspectives and learning journeys. Currently, much research occurs at the cohort level or combines multiple cohorts into a single group for research. The findings of this study suggest that impact is individually defined, so in order to understand impact, one must understand the individual.

Therefore, there is a need for research and practice to center the individual within teacher education and study abroad. Across the findings of this research, three different groupings of people emerged. While this list is not intended to be comprehensive, it is intended to offer some initial thoughts about the perspectives that participants have prior to their education abroad experience and how their perspectives and experiences shaped their time abroad.

- Someone who has experienced significant adjustment or transition: This person may have had prior international experience or possibly even through attending an out-of-state university. These people may have already experienced some personal growth and may be willing to take risks abroad

- Someone who has lived a sheltered existence: This person may not have ever left the country before or have spent significant time away from their family. They may struggle to engage in identity work or question their home context

- Someone with questions about teaching: This person may have completed student teaching yet feel unsure that a career in education is right for them. They may be ready to look beyond individual classrooms and consider schools as systems.

Olivia is an example of a person who had experienced significant transition prior to her time in London. She had studied abroad as a sophomore and during that initial time abroad she began to resolve some questions about culture and develop a deeper understanding of culture, so when Olivia started the London program as a pre-service teacher she was already situated to examine herself in deeper ways. Plus, as she had already successfully navigated a semester abroad, she had already developed some confidence in her abilities to navigate the city. Jocelyn and Ruby exemplify the notion of people who had lived sheltered existence. Neither had left the country before and so their time in the UConn Education Abroad in London program introduced them to

new questions. However, this was challenging and at times uncomfortable for them. As Olivia had already developed the confidence to navigate a foreign city, Ruby had not, and she took most of the semester before she explored out on her own. Finally, Georgie and Emma can be considered people who had questions about teaching. Georgie wanted to better understand student mental health and Emma felt unsatisfied with the understanding of differentiation she had developed in her coursework prior to her time abroad. For these two women, they had questions that were unanswered, and they made moves to think about teaching in new ways while abroad. While these profiles are by no means complete or intended to encapsulate all participants in education abroad, they highlight the individual nature of the experience. Both research and program design must acknowledge and plan to support a wide range of participants.

For each of these three types of people, the types of questions they were asking and the things they were thinking about were individual. Each of these people would benefit from individualized learning and support to make sense of their own identity and their understanding of culture. This emphasizes the importance of identity work in education abroad. There is a need for further understanding of identity work. As noted, Mezirow's Transformative Learning Theory (1991; 2000) is one of the most commonly cited theories of transformation in education abroad. However, this theory is a theory of adult learning and transformation and may not fully capture the experience of university students who are at a unique stage in life. Additionally, this theory does not explicitly consider culture. There is a need for a framework that better aligns with the unique context of education abroad. Perhaps drawing from literature on transformative tourism, experiential learning, identity and adult skill acquisition may be helpful in developing this framework.

While it is clear from the findings of this research that participants reflected on both their personal and professional identity, there is a need for greater guidance as they engage in identity work. This is particularly true of the professional identity. Reflection is often discussed as an important component of the education abroad process, but the findings of this research suggest that participants need guidance in making sense of their personal journey and translating that to a professional context. Program directors should seek to incorporate identity work into their programming. I believe that a key part of the re-entry semester should focus on the development of one's professional identity. Additionally, the findings of this research, in which job competitiveness was not significantly discussed, suggest that professional identity work should emphasize more than simply helping participants consider how to capitalize on this experience in a job interview. Rather, it should help them name and create specific pedagogic strategies for engaging with a diverse range of students and help make sense of their international experience within a U.S. context. Here a major recommendation is to center identity work and explicitly plan learning experiences that explore identity both while abroad and after returning to the home context.

Finally, the individual nature of impact challenges program designers to consider the ways in which they design education abroad experiences. There has been significant critique of the "sink or swim" approach that assumes learning is an automatic response to immersion. And while this research extends our understanding of the importance of program design, it also challenges us to think about program design on both cohort and individual experience levels. Program designers build a set of program elements and experiences in which all members of the cohort engage. This research challenges us to ask what deliberate program design elements exist to support individuals within the structure of the cohort experience. As an example, we might

look at the inquiry research project experience within this program. All participants engaged in an inquiry research project. That is a program design element. However, as Georgie noted, she struggled with the inquiry project because of her limited participation in the group setting and a lack of academic challenge. So, what secondary or individual supports or intentional moves can a program director make to better support Georgie's learning through the inquiry research project.

This brings up a series of questions: 1) How do program designers assess or understand individual program learning during the program? 2) Is it important or even appropriate for each participant to engage to the same level in each program element? 3) If Georgie engages more deeply in a different program element (i.e., coursework, internship, etc.) does that balance less engagement in one program element? These questions currently are unanswered, but if we embrace the individual nature of impact, future research and program design must consider them. As we continue to develop more nuanced and individualized understandings of impact, we may also develop better understanding of the program design and implementation practices that help orient participants towards a pathway of impact that leads to meaningful learning for that unique participant.

**Program cohesion is important for the experience to be impactful**

As participants discussed their experience abroad and the impact of the experience it became clear that the program elements were connected in their minds. Rather than conceive of each element of the program as standalone, participants conceptualized each element as working together to create "the London experience." A crucial element of program cohesion is that it fostered strong connections between the elements which reinforced learning across multiple contexts. For example, in their university course they may have discussed differences in expectations for student maturity between the U.S. and what they saw in London schools. Then

in their internship the next day they may observe a teacher speaking to a student about maturity and conduct. On the tube ride home from their internship they might discuss the incident with one of their fellow cohort members and then they might write about it in their course journal later that night. Their learning was not divided among the program contexts, rather, the cohesive set of program elements and experiences ensured that participants have multiple opportunities to engage in learning and reflect on their learning. In this way learning was not bounded by their school-based experience or by the walls of the university classroom. Learning happened everywhere. Participants shared that they often continued conversations from class after class or revisited them while traveling and discussions of cultural difference occurred across these multiple contexts. Ruby described this cohesion, by saying:

> I felt like it needed to be all of those things. If one piece was missing, if I wasn't in London taking this course that would be missing. If she [Beth] wasn't the type of educator to keep pressing and pushing, then it wouldn't have come together for me. So it was like this magical everything came together at the right time in that program. In order for me to grow.

This quote exemplifies the idea of cohesion. She needed each of the program elements to be cohesive and work together for her to grow. As has been discussed, one of the key debates surrounding education abroad is the question of academic learning compared to experiential learning. This research highlights that these concepts need not be framed as dichotomous. Seeking to label one type of learning as "better" than another is fundamentally the wrong approach. In order for learning to be impactful, academic learning and experiential learning must complement each other as a cohesive pair.

A key element for impact was not only the cohesion of program elements while abroad, but also the cohesion of the international experience and the larger teacher education program. As a pre-service teacher education abroad program, the UConn Education Abroad in London Program combines a thoughtful progression across the calendar year, but the international experience builds on the foundation of coursework that participants were enrolled in over their first two years in the teacher education program. By the time they apply to the education abroad program, participants have spent two years building their teaching philosophy and pedagogy. Thus, the international experience does not focus on learning to teach, in the same way that their previous courses have. Instead, the international experience and coursework functions to expose participants to new pedagogies and beliefs about education, and positions them to consider schools holistically and the role of schooling in society. Importantly, the experience occurs post-student teaching. Participants identified that during student teaching they gained practical understanding of day to day life in the classroom, and as they had already completed student teaching they may have been better positioned to think about schools as systems and consider the ways in which culture impacts life in schools. If the program occurred during student teaching, it would be a fundamentally different experience than what the program offers during the graduate year. The cohesion of the education abroad program and the larger teacher education program allowed them to reflect not only on their experiences abroad, but also on their student teaching and previous school experience. Thus, shifting the question from "What does a teacher do?" to "Who am I as a teacher?"

The final aspect of cohesion that I think is important is cohesion of the program goals and individual participant goals. As future teachers, participants discussed how they came to the international program already thinking about their future classrooms. Some participants shared

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that they had a sense that interning and researching in British schools would be important for them to understand more about American schools. So, many participants began the program with the goal of learning more about culture and becoming a better teacher. Their individual goals are aligned with the program goals: to foster intercultural competence, to facilitate experiential learning and immersion in schools and local culture, guided cultural reflection. Aligning program goals and individual goals into a cohesive set begins during pre-departure. Participants reflected on how the program director set the tone and expectations during their summer pre-departure seminar. The program director is intentional about beginning to foster a sense of community and a purpose for their trip abroad. The inquiry research project provides a focus and a task for their international work. In more recent years the implementation of the IDI (Hammer, 2012) has also aided in foregrounding interculturality prior to departure and helping to set goals for participants.

Here we see that there is cohesion between program elements, cohesion between the international experience and the teacher preparation program, and cohesion between program goals and participant goals. Having each of these aspects connected is an important precursor to the program being impactful for participants. This connects to two of the recommendations from the 1960 study abroad conference described by Hoffa (2007). The conference recommended that the institution 1) carefully consider the timing of the program and the duration of the program, and 2) plan the program of foreign study as fully integrated into the student's college experience. The UConn Education Abroad in London Program functions best in the final year of study. Participants have already built a foundation of knowledge and pedagogy which can then be examined and considered from new perspectives. This would not be the case if the international experience occurred earlier in their teacher preparation program. Cohesion across all domains of the program allows for the program to have a greater participant impact.

*Allowing cohesion to drive program design*

Developing a set of cohesive elements hinges on program design. This raises the importance of beginning with a clearly defined program goal. Once a program goal is articulated, then program designers and directors can begin to design elements and experiences to support learning towards that goal. However, the findings of this research also prompt a different consideration of cohesion with significant implications for program designers. The findings of this research present evidence that participants do not compartmentalize the different elements of the experience, rather they considered the experience as a cohesive whole. Rather than discuss each piece individually, participants shared about the London experience as a whole. They considered the experience as one cohesive set of experiences. As program designers, we often compartmentalize the planning of experiences, placing certain learning in the context of coursework and other learning in the context of the internship. To use a metaphor, we design learning as though drinking from a hose, with a nozzle to control the flow and point the direction of water. But, for participants it is like drinking from a fire hose, everything all at once.

However, compartmentalization isn't the only view that program designers must change. Program designers think along a temporal dimension. We plan learning experiences one week at a time and define what participants will read and do each week. The nature of this temporal planning orients us towards sequential learning. For example, we might plan to explore differences in greetings in week 1, clothing and popular culture during week 2, differences in transportation during week 3 and so on. However, while program designers envision participants being able to dip one toe in the waters of learning at a time and slowly acclimate, participants describe the experience more akin to a dunk tank, everything all at once.

Additionally, the findings of this research suggest that we must critically examine the cohesion between pre-departure, re-entry and the time abroad. Pre-departure programming must become a place for participants to begin to develop their understanding of culture. Amselvoort (1999) noted that participants were unable to visualize life abroad prior to going. I believe that because they are unable to visualize life abroad they are utterly unprepared for the complete and total immersive experience that begins the moment you arrive. Perhaps a critical, yet often missing, component of pre-departure is to equip students with knowledge about the vastness of an international experience. Here, again the temporal aspect may be a factor. If program designers only think about pre-departure as things that participants need to know before going abroad, but don't consider their actual first few days abroad, then pre-departure has not prepared participants for those days. Further, program designers do not think about re-entry until after the participants have returned to the United States. However, separating re-entry from the other program elements may not be the best approach. The findings of this research suggest that the re-entry seminar was underutilized as an impactful learning experience. While I do not dispute the claims of Marx and Moss (2016) about the importance of a re-entry seminar, this research highlights that the current structure of the re-entry seminar is not impactful for students. Rather than conceptualizing and planning pre-departure, the time abroad, and re-entry as three separate components, program designers must think of them as a cohesive experience.

Here, I believe the timeline is a major factor. The UConn Education Abroad in London program occurs in the fall semester. Students typically return to America in mid-December when the university is on winter break. Thus, students return from this dynamic international program and return not to the university context, but to their home context. This challenges students in two ways. First, when they return home they immediately step back into their "old lives" but

they perceive themselves as a different person. They struggle to make sense of the things that used to provide comfort for them. Second, they have just completed a semester where they came to see themselves as adults and then they return home where their parents or guardians are likely to not view them as full adults. Combined, these two experiences are significant sources of discomfort. And rather than having their cohort and the program mentor there to help them make sense of their discomfort at home, they must navigate that alone. They don't reconvene as a group until the middle of January when the semester begins. Thus, the majority of the crucial window for sense-making during re-entry happens alone.

I propose that re-entry work should begin the final few weeks of the semester abroad and focus on helping participants make sense of what they will likely experience when they return home and developing strategies to cope with discomfort. This may seem counter-intuitive, as we may want to let participants finish their last few weeks abroad and soak up every last minute of the experience. But I believe that preparing students for what they will experience when they return home is a worthwhile endeavor. Here I will offer a few initial ideas.

Often education abroad participants are unable to recognize that life continued at home while they were abroad. They have been engaged in this phenomenal experience and they don't consider that others at home have had their own experiences. Friends have started or ended relationships or jobs, people have moved or experienced life milestones, and all of this happened while the participants were abroad. So, I think re-entry must help students recognize that life continued while they were away.

Second, I think re-entry should position students to make a plan for the wide range of emotions they are likely to experience. It is common for participants in education abroad programs to come home ready to share all of their stories with friends and family who really just

want the brief highlight reel. Their friends and family may not be prepared or able to see the value in these stories. A further challenge here is that participants at times struggle to really explain their time abroad. This tension can lead to participants feeling sadness or frustration. A scaffolded re-entry can help them prepare to navigate that. What will they do? Who can they call? Can they look at photos or other artifacts they collected? Here we might consider the potential for creative outlets like poetry, scrapbooking or creating a curated display about their experience as a processing tool. These creative representations could then be used again later in re-entry and shared with the cohort. We might also consider the role of people who have had significant time abroad as people they can turn to. After all, many travelers love sharing their stories and listening to others. There is a unity between people who have been abroad which may be valuable for re-entry to consider.

Next, I believe that re-entry should consider the physical spaces of home and elsewhere. When I returned from living in Morocco, for weeks American grocery stores were overwhelming. One of my first times back in grocery store, I cried in the cereal aisle because I had just come from a grocery store with only six cereal options to one with an entire aisle of options. It was overwhelming. Journaling about places that are difficult for participants to navigate may be a powerful tool that can be used in re-entry. My breakdown wasn't really about cereal, it was about American excess and my inability to make sense of such display of wealth after living in a country where that wasn't the norm. Journaling about these types of places may help participants come to recognize new insight about American culture, the culture of their host nation, and themselves. And it may be critical that participants engage in journaling in the immediate days after returning to the United States. These journal entries can be shared and

discussed later in re-entry, but I believe that capturing their feelings in the days after re-entry is critical to help participants make sense of the re-entry process.

Finally, re-entry offers potential for participants to think about their future. Many interviewees for this research fondly reflected that they were constantly out and exploring while they were abroad. It was common for participants to muse that they missed that lifestyle or they didn't know why they didn't do that anymore. I believe this is common for education abroad participants. Part of this is about ease of access, when you live in a city with efficient public transportation it is easy to explore the city. Another part is about taking advantage of their time abroad. Participants are always aware that their time abroad is finite. So, they want to make the most of it. But when they come back to the United States, the urgency to explore disappears, and in many cases so does the ease of travel on public transportation. However, there are possibilities for local exploration in their home community, or even a weekend trip. Perhaps re-entry should be a time where participants think about what they want their future to look like and how active they want to be exploring their community, and create a plan to live in that way. Then perhaps rather than mourning the loss of exploring museums and the like, participants can put their energy toward discovering them in their local context. And this learning may also open new cultural understanding.

Rather than consider program design along compartmentalized or temporal dimensions, the findings of this research suggest that program design must view the experience holistically, as that is how participants experience it. For participants their international experience has cognitive, physical, and emotional challenges that happen all at once. Here, the literature of experiential education or immersive experiences may be helpful in guiding program designers to think about their program not temporally or as distinct separate experiences, but as a holistic

lived and embodied experience. Approaching program design in such a way may be essential to helping participants make sense of their time abroad.

**The role of program mentors and cultural guides is important**

As we think about the individual supports that participants may need in order to make sense of their experience and maximize the impact of an education abroad experience, the findings of this research make it clear that the role of a mentor is critical. Marx and Moss (2016) have written about the importance of a cultural guide and their role in helping participants make sense of cultural differences and understanding cultural practices in the host nation. They conceptualized the cultural guide as an insider in the host country who can help participants make sense of the unfamiliar. The findings of this research extend the role of the cultural guide to helping participants not only make sense of the unfamiliar, but also make sense of themselves and their own identity. The cultural guide helped them think about themselves and what they were going through as well as the cultural context. Yet, the findings of this research highlight that both in country mentorship and support from a mentor at home were equally valuable for participants. The participants viewed Beth, the in-country cultural guide, and David, the program director, as equally important in their growth.

The role of the cultural guide and program director is significantly understudied in the literature. I have previously discussed the need for greater transparency of the relationship between researcher and education abroad program (Simmons, Marx & Moss, 2020). However, this research makes it clear that a deeper investigation of this role is necessary. While this dissertation did not fully examine the role of mentor, the findings highlight some key elements of the mentorship role. Participants indicated that it was important to have both in-country and home country support. Participants discussed how the home nation program director served as an

anchor for them. As discussed in this research, the process of questioning and critically examining your identity is not always comfortable. For participants in the UConn Education Abroad in London Program, the cultural guide and host country instructor facilitated much of this investigation, and when it became too challenging they were able to reach out to the home country program director who provided support. Kram (1988) identified two components of mentoring: instrumental (i.e., coaching, creating assignments, guiding experiences) and psychosocial (i.e., empathizing, counseling, serving as a role model). Between Beth and David, they were able to provide both instrumental and psychosocial aspects of mentoring.

Additionally, David comes to visit participants about a month and a half into the experience abroad. This visit has academic goals, such as observing participants in their internships and providing guidance for the next step of the inquiry research project. However, this visit also helps refocus participants on the goals of the program and also their personal goals. Additionally, it may help reconnect participants to the home context, providing a familiar face from home. The program director's support becomes even more important as they navigated reentry, when some participants faced difficulties stepping into a life and a context that they felt they had outgrown. The home country program director was able to help them recontextualize their experiences and make sense of the home country context. As Ruby shared, "Beth opened the door. David made sure it stayed open."

Another important element of mentorship was the way that mentors positioned the participants. While abroad many participants came to see themselves as adults. This was reinforced by Beth and David, who empowered participants to take ownership of their own experience and learning. David empowered participants to craft their own internship experience and Beth encouraged participants to explore the city and to deeply engage in the content. Here

the situation that occurred with Julia, the in-country program coordinator, is useful to consider. When a program participant experienced a traumatic incident, Julia's response, rather than supporting and empowering the participant, fractured the relationship. This happened in two ways. First, Julia adopted a "you should have known better" attitude that was perceived by Georgie as victim-blaming. Julia's tone and response suggested that she viewed the participants as irresponsible children. This point of view was in tension with the participants developing self-perception of themselves as adults. The participants did not adopt Julia's view of them, rather they ceased to trust Julia. If someone views themselves as an adult and you tell them they are acting like a child and to stop, they are not likely to stop, but rather are likely to continue acting in a way that they see as appropriate but just in secret. The second way that Julia's response broke the relationship with participants was that she did not provide what participants considered to be adequate support. Even though participants had begun to view themselves as adults, in this moment the situation felt too big for them and they reached out to the program coordinator for help. This was beyond the scope of their developing adulthood and they wanted someone older and with more experience to guide them. While participants desired to be empowered to act as adults and take responsibility for their experience, it is also clear they wanted to have a safety net to fall back on if they needed additional support.

The third important aspect of mentorship is the mentor's personality. Participants often spoke about how Beth pushed them, but didn't push them too far. From my own experience abroad, I remember Beth telling us that our learning would go as far as we wanted it to and as much as we were willing to open up. Ruby described this when she said, "she just kept showing up" which eventually allowed Ruby to break down her wall and be vulnerable. Beth's masterful questioning of participants would not have been possible if she had not had the personality that

she does. This is representative of what Norman and Ganser (2004) conceptualize as "humanistic mentoring" where the mentor validates the mentee's lived experiences and simultaneously supports and challenges them. When we consider Emma's experience with Charles, the other instructor, we see the impact of not receiving support from a mentor. When she submitted a paper that didn't have the answer that Charles was looking for, rather than ask questions or have a discussion, Charles simply failed the student on that particular assignment. Both David and Beth held high expectations for students and participants often desired to impress them. But at the same time, participants knew that they could talk to David and Beth about anything.

This research findings emphasizing the role of mentorship supports one of the recommendations from the 1960 conference on study abroad and challenges another. The conference highlighted the importance of selecting a director of an overseas program. They recommended that the person:

> Be a leader and an example for the group, fluent in the foreign language, familiar with the civilization and customs of the host country and well acquainted with the educational organization of the United States and of the host country. He should possess a dynamic, warm and understanding personality. (Hoffa, 2007, pp. 247-248)

This research emphasizes the importance of this role and the need for a dynamic warm and understanding personality. The conference further suggested that it was not wise to send American faculty to teach overseas, that participants needed to work with host nation instructors. This research highlights the need for both American and host nation instructors working together as a team to support education abroad participants.

*Creating cohesive mentorship experiences*

Just as the findings of this research prompt us to consider the ways in which we design program experiences, they also prompt us to consider the way that we conceptualize mentorship. As described by participants, the mentors played a significant role. However, that role wasn't solely academic or logistical or personal. Mentors fulfilled many different roles for the participants. As described in this research, participants wanted mentors to challenge them academically, serve as a cultural guide, recognize and support their growing independence, help them think about pedagogy, and much more. However, as of yet, research that explores how mentors conceptualize this role is nonexistent. But it stands to reason that mentors likely consider their role as mentor in connection to their role programmatically. For example, if I teach a course about intercultural growth I am likely only think about participants in an academic sense and I probably plan an academic timeline, but I probably don't consider their emotional or personal stress or growth as I plan. So, I don't lighten the cognitive load in their first weeks when they have immediately been thrown into a new and possibly overwhelming environment. Similarly, I don't seek to lighten the academic load in their final weeks when they are likely feeling a lot of emotion at the end of the experience. In fact, quite the opposite, they are also working on final projects and exams.

The findings of this research also ask us to consider the lens of mentorship. In the case of Emma and Charles and mentorship dysfunction, Charles was only thinking about Emma through an academic lens. He was her course instructor and so discussing her academic performance fell within the scope of his view. Then, when Emma was upset, Charles didn't broaden his mentorship lens to recognize that when and how grades are shared is also cultural. In the British context, grades are often more public, while in an American context, grades are private and often

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teachers think about timing when sharing negative grades with students. Emma was upset that Charles told her she failed the assignment right before she had to present in class, which from an American view would be considered insensitive. Charles, only thinking about his academic responsibilities did not use this as an opportunity to help Emma recognize the different cultural views on grading and academic performance.

I imagine that this is more common than we might realize. If mentors solely conceptualize their duties as mentors within a frame of program elements, then the program director shares elements of mentorship with different people, some who focus on academics, some who focus on the school based internship, some who focus on the logic elements of housing and safety. However, through abdicating some of this mentorship responsibility, the likelihood that things fall through the crack and are missed is increased. I am not suggesting that one person be the singular mentor for the experience. And the findings of this research emphasize the power of mentorship partners. So, this brings to light the need for communities of practice and professional learning about mentorship. Participants are having an intense lived experience and they may go to any of the program staff to help them make sense of what they are experiencing, so the full program staff should be able to facilitate cultural learning discussion.

Further, the findings of this research suggest the need for additional consideration of the role of program staff. As I was working on this dissertation I had the opportunity to travel to London one semester to support participants and complete intern evaluations. During the week I was there, we met as a group several times, I attended courses with the participants, and I visited each of them in their internship. Additionally, as it was a small cohort of only five people I planned an individual activity for each participant in order for us to talk about culture and explore their experience abroad. For one participant that included visiting a museum, for another

it included visiting my favorite central London coffee shop, and for another it included a walk through Regent's Park. Each excursion introduced students to something they had not yet done in the city. During each excursion I simultaneously filled multiple roles: travel agent, tour guide, and at times, therapist. I don't have formal training for really any of those roles. Yet, for the program participants I filled each of those.

In informal conversations with David, we have talked about participants who really struggled while abroad and felt paralyzed with fear and never left their flat except for internship or classes. We have talked about participants who experience significant family events while abroad and cannot fly home to be with their families, but need help processing the event. We have talked about students who have gone abroad and navigated their sexuality and come out while abroad. These situations are delicate and complicated and participants may turn to the program mentors to make sense of them. The findings of this research highlight the importance of identity work within the context of education abroad and demonstrate the power of the program mentor role, yet many mentors have no formal training for the myriad situations they may face. If quality mentorship is the key to impactful experiences, then there is a significant and urgent need for greater understanding of the perceptions of mentors and what high quality mentorship looks like. It is clear that mentorship involves much more than just the traditional "academic work" of course instructors, and that to be an effective mentor, one must have a wide range of skills and the disposition to facilitate both academic and personal learning.

Participants made deliberate moves to curate "authentic" experiences

One of the longest running debates regarding education abroad explores the difference between education abroad as a serious academic endeavor and education abroad as tourism under the guise of education. This debate is rooted in the response to the stories that participants share,

which are more likely to recall funny adventures than academic content. But this debate also questions what is valued more highly, experiential and personal learning or more traditional academic learning. While participants in this research did share both types of stories, the most significant way that this research challenges this historic debate is through the intentional moves that participants made to curate "authentic" experiences. Participants perceived some experiences abroad as being "authentic" and some as not authentic. While this research did not seek a full description of "authentic" experiences, there are some observations shared by participants. Not authentic experiences were very "touristy" and did not offer the opportunity for meaningful engagement with people or places from the host country. Authentic experiences led to new realizations and deep reflection. Authentic experiences were unique and they often exposed participants to new places or ideas.

The first way that participants sought to create what they perceived to be authentic experiences was through an intentional separation of the cohort from two groups of people: tourists and other education abroad students. Program participants believed that tourists were not seeking authentic experiences and they wanted to differentiate themselves from these tourists. This led program participants to avoid certain experiences or places in the city which they felt would mark them as tourists, such as the London Eye or the "hop on, hop off" tour busses.

Participants also wished to distinguish themselves from other education abroad students, particularly undergraduate students. They believed that the undergraduate students were not taking the experience seriously; they were just abroad to drink and sightsee. Additionally, when meeting people from the host nation, who immediately recognized that they were foreign, it was not uncommon for program participants to explain that they were working in schools in London.

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This was an intentional move to signify themselves as more serious than other education abroad participants.

Reflection was another important way that participants sought to create authentic experiences. As noted in the findings, participants went out of their way to create cinematic moments of reflection, seeking hilltops, scenic vistas, and the right song to reflect on their life and their experience. Reflection also occurred through conversation with other members of the cohort and through the journaling process in their course. These various forms of reflection added a sense of gravitas to their experience. This connects to the work of Krillova, Lehto & Cai (2017) who suggest that when abroad experiences that may not hold meaning in your home context (such as standing on a hilltop) take on new meaning in the context of the foreign country. Further, Krillova, Lehto and Cai suggest that while abroad people seek experiences that allow them to connect with nature, find unity with others, engage in an aesthetic awe-inducing experience, and act spontaneously. They suggest that these experiences can prompt the process of self-reflection that leads to transformation. These types of experiences are the types of experiences that participants in this research would consider to be authentic. This research reinforces this claim, as participants intentionally sought these experiences.

Here it is important to note that participants could not always see themselves with unbiased eyes. For example, when traveling on weekends to different cities, they became tourists, and at times they considered extracurricular travel as just for fun, but at times they still sought deeper connections and authentic experiences on trips outside of their adopted city of London. Additionally, participants did not often discuss recognition of their privilege. Education abroad participants are often from a similar racial and economic demographic group, as there are significant barriers to access (Murray Brux & Fry, 2010; Stroud, 2010; Willis, 2015). While

traveling, participants may have elected to take the overnight bus or stay in a hostel because they were the cheapest options, but their comments lacked recognition of the broader impacts of poverty. Thus, participants may need help to understand their own relationship to those in other parts of the world and how economic conditions in one country are related to the global economy.

When participants encountered an experience that they did not perceive as authentic, they tended to write those experiences off as "just for fun" and did not consider them as meaningful. While I think it is perfectly okay for participants to have some experiences that are just for fun, for some participants this extended to program elements and they did not find meaning in their internship or the inquiry project. As discussed earlier, personal growth was significantly meaningful and some participants framed their experience as a personal journey rather than a professional journey. For those participants who were deeply engaged in an exploration of self, some were not able to find meaning in the internship or the inquiry project. So, they withdrew from full participation in those areas of the program. When they perceived that those areas would not yield authentic experiences for them, they refocused their energy into program areas that they viewed as more authentic.

Further, the notion of "specialness" of the cohort should be approached with caution. Participants described the ways in which they intentionally separated themselves from tourists or other education abroad students who they perceived as not seeking authentic experiences. While I don't believe that separation between the cohort and others is inherently a bad thing, if that separation becomes equated with a view that the cohort is "better than others" that could signal a problematic way of thinking. The sense of "specialness" can be viewed as an urgency to the

learning where it becomes motivating. Or the sense of "specialness" can be viewed as rampant privilege which likely blinds participants to cultural difference.

The program director may be an essential factor in shaping this "specialness." The program director puts together this specific set of people in the cohort. And the program director sets the size of the cohort, which likely matters. During pre-departure the program director sets the tone for the experience. The cohort will develop their own personality, but I suspect that the words of the program director during pre-departure are important to guiding that process. Will the cohort be studious? Adventurous? Always looking for a party? The personality of the cohort is important, yet understudied. At the core, island programs in education abroad are immersive living and learning situations. The cohort provides the academic circle, professional circle, and social circle for each participant. Might there be an important role for experiences such as ropes courses or teambuilding challenges in pre-departure orientation, as these types of experiences set the context for supporting each other through challenges.

Participants need support and guided reflection to make sense of their experiences abroad, especially experiences that are less structured and may not immediately be perceived as meaningful for participants. Education abroad has been criticized and not viewed as a serious academic endeavor. Perhaps it is because participants of this program were graduate students, perhaps it is because the program had a strong focus and cohesion among elements, perhaps it is the way the program director frames and introduces the experience, but it is clear that participants developed a belief that their cohort was special and they intentionally sought to curate authentic experiences that allowed them to engage and learn in meaningful ways. Much of the discussion surrounding this debate in education abroad has focused on program structure, but

this research makes is clear that participants are actively creating their own experience and that their voices and perspective must be added to this debate.

**Implications and looking toward the future**

This research offers an important contribution to the field as it is one of the few systematic investigations into perceptions of long term impacts of education abroad. Much of the research surrounding pre-service teacher education abroad explores the experiences of participants while abroad. Additionally, much of the research focuses on undergraduate pre-service teacher abroad programs. This research, which explored the experiences of pre-service teachers in their graduate year of study within an integrated bachelor's/master's degree program offers a unique context that is underrepresented in the literature. This study asked participants to reflect on their experiences years after participation. The findings of this study portray the various ways that participants described impact. Participants identified both personal and professional impacts, and situated impact individually, shaped by each participant's unique identity and experiences.

The findings of this research call into question the role of structure in education abroad program design. For some participants the program offered the right amount of structure to support their developing independence and allowed them to view themselves as adults. For other participants, the program did not offer sufficient structure for them to engage and take away meaningful learning. Within the specific context of this program structure was most contested in the internship and inquiry research project. Some participants suggested that having clear guidelines for the expected learning outcomes of the internship would have helped them know what they were required to do. Other participants suggested that the inquiry project had too many people working on it and not enough guidance. They suggested small group concurrent and

connected inquiry projects. The findings of this research do not suggest an optimum level of structure and support; however, they make it clear that more consideration of structure is necessary. Future practice should consider ways to support individuals and recognize which aspects of the program participants are engaging in and which aspects they need additional support to engage with.

Considering structure and considering the individual bring up several questions that must be confronted. This research presents findings that suggest that individual participants self-curate their own experience regardless of program design. Participants explored and engaged to the level at which they felt comfortable, relying on the safety net of the cohort and mentors when their exploration pushed them further than they were ready. Participants engaged with the inquiry research project and the internship to varying degrees. If we agree that cultural learning does not happen automatically and we recognize participants' efforts to curate their own experience, we must then ask what responsibility does the program have? Is it enough for programs to be designed to present opportunities for engagement and participants may or may not engage? Do programs have a responsibility to facilitate and assess individual growth? These questions are complex. There may be no simple answers. Further complicating the idea of individual support is the logistical barrier of distance. If a program manager is in America and the participants are thousands of miles away, then the program manager is removed from their day to day life and can only respond to what they know. So, if a participant chooses not to share a challenge they are facing, the program director cannot help provide guidance or structure to support them better. Future research should explore participants' decision making processes around what they reveal and what they hide.

Another aspect that the findings of this research highlight is program cohesion. The UConn Education Abroad in London Program is designed so that each program element supports other program elements, but it also builds on their previous experiences in teacher preparation and connects to participant's individual goals. The concept of program cohesion and the questions posed in the previous paragraph challenge us to think about program design in new ways. We, as program designers, cannot think temporally or think of each element in isolation. Participants do not think about their time abroad temporally or as separated pieces. Rather, they view them as a cohesive whole, and perhaps that is how program design must be conceptualized moving forward.

The findings of this research highlight the role of program mentors and emphasize that the work of leading a program is crucial for the impact of the program. Participants can remember specific incidents and conversations between themselves and the program mentor and still think about these conversations 20 years later. However, there is a lack of research exploring the role and perspectives of program mentors. Research is needed to understand how program mentors conceptualize their role, what strategies they use, and how they support students, as their words have potentially long lasting impacts on participants. The findings of this research also illuminate the impact it can have on a program when mentorship falls short. The mentor has incredible power to shape the experience of participants, for better or for worse. Currently there are no training programs or guidelines for mentorship. There is a need for research to explore mentorship and to develop supports and guidelines that lead to positive mentorship and impactful experiences.

Additional directions for future research include research that compares two programs or compares international experiences and home country learning. There is a need for future

research that explores extracurricular travel experiences and examines participant learning in these contexts. In particular, there is a need for research that explores poverty tourism, dark tourism and ways that they can be used to challenge neo-colonial perspectives. There is a need for additional impact studies that consider different contexts (i.e., short term abroad programming, program participants of different ages, general education abroad programs). In these impact studies I recommend that the research design multiple opportunities to engage with participants or visual aids. During this research it was common for participants to share that the process of reflection revealed more memories. Additionally, many participants kept mementos from their time abroad, one participant even gave me her journal to read during her interview. Future impact research should examine these mementos as evidence. There is a need for additional research about the perspectives of underrepresented groups in education abroad and consideration of how to expand access to education abroad. Studies that examine the perspectives and experiences of LGBTQ+ participants and heritage seeking education abroad students are necessary. Further, Research that has an explicit focus on program design will help build understanding of best practices, in particular surrounding mentorship and support systems. Within this realm there is a need for additional research into pre-departure orientation programs, perhaps with consideration to the messages participants receive about education abroad prior to their international experience. Lastly, there is a need for new research that explores new research methods, in particular visual methods of research.

This research has described how participants conceptualize impact and offered new understandings about pre-service teacher education abroad programs. The findings of this research clearly illuminate both personal and professional impacts. Participants felt that one of the most important impacts was an increased understanding of themselves. The abroad program

helped them reflect on their experiences and helped shape their understanding of themselves. A deeper understanding of self was related to both their personal identity and also their professional identity. Participants developed confidence and independence and perceived themselves as adults in a way that they had not previously viewed themselves. Participants reported that their experience abroad helped them gain insight into what is important to them and the type of person they want to be. The experience abroad also helped them reflect on their professional role. Participants considered the type of school in which they wished to work, the location of the school and the ways that they hoped to interact with their future students. In particular, participants refined their conception of differentiation, and emphasized student centered instruction, asking questions, and adjusting instruction to better align with the preferences of their students. Their experience abroad also helped participants refine their ideas of culture. Impact of participation in a pre-service teacher education abroad program is wide and varied.

Participants remarked that the way that they thought about their time abroad has changed over time. And although they recognized the impact, at times it was difficult for them to feel as though they really fully understood or perceived their learning from their time abroad. This is the challenge of researching impact. Impact is nuanced and individual. Through exploring participants' reflections on their time abroad and its impact, this research expands the understanding of education abroad programming, emphasizing the need for mentorship, the important role of the cohort, and ways in which participants curated an individual experience within and beyond the program structure. This research emphasizes that education abroad is greater than the sum of its parts. The parts must function together to create an experience that fosters learning, intercultural competence, and a sense of confidence and independence that participants carry with them long after the program has ended. Through illuminating the

individual nature of impact, I offer these conclusions not as a definitive guide but as suggestions

that others can take and apply in their own unique context. And just as participants'

understanding of their experience changed over time, I too expect understandings of the impact

of education abroad programs to grow and change with time. In that spirit I humbly offer this

work, encouraging others to ask questions and expand on the ideas presented here.

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# Appendix A: Pilot Study Interview Protocol

**10 Years of Global Citizenship Interview Protocol**

What do you remember most about your London Experience?

What is most important to you about your London Experience?

How do you define global citizenship?

Thank you for speaking with me to today and agreeing to tell your story. This interview will focus on your story. I am interested in hearing you tell the story of your past, your present, and what you see as your future. As you tell your story, I want you to be selective and focus on a few key events, relationships, themes and ideas that you believe are fundamentally important and you believe says something significant about you and how you have come to be who you are.

**Life Chapters**

Think about your life as a story, with characters, plot, scenes. There are high points, low points, moments that are frustrating or embarrassing, and moments we celebrate. Our story will begin with your experience in the UConn Education in London Program during 2011. Think of this as the first chapter in the story you will tell me. I want you to give me a quick outline of the chapters of your life story that would come after the UConn Education in London Chapter. We will add more details later, but I would like you to give each chapter a name and describe briefly the overall contents of each chapter.

> *Tell me what's been going on in your life after the London experience.*
> *How did and does your London experience impact career choices and your daily interaction?*
> *What parts of the London experience are most relevant in your personal life? Professional life?*

1. Critical Events

Now that we have an outline of the chapters of your life story, let's focus in on some key events that stand out in the story. A key event can be thought of as something that stands out for some reason – "particular moments set in a particular time and place, complete with particular characters, actions, thoughts and feelings." For this interview we will focus on critical events that happened within the chapter of your life that happened in London. I will ask about 4 critical events. These events will give greater detail to this chapter in your life story. Share what happened, where you were, who was involved, what you did, and what you were thinking and feeling during the event.

For each event I also want you to share what impact this key event had in your life story and what this event says about who you are or were as a person. Please be specific here.

Event #1: High Point

A peak experience would be a high point in this chapter, maybe the best moment of the experience, where you were feeling strong positive emotions (maybe joy, excitement, happiness, or even deep inner peace). This should stand out as one of the best scenes in the chapter.

Event #2: Low Point

A low point in the chapter is the opposite of your peak experience.  Characterized by negative emotion (despair, disillusionment, terror, guilt) this experience represents one of the "low points" in the chapter of your experience in London. Even though these moments are not enjoyable, please be honest and share what you were feeling and the details

Event #3: Turning Point

Looking at this chapter of your life, it may be possible to identify a "turning point" where you experienced a significant change. I am especially interested in a turning point in your understanding of yourself, though turning points can be reflected in your relationships with other people or in work and school.

> *Do you think the London experience changed you, if so, how?*

Event #4: One Other Important Scene

Describe one more event from your experience in London that stands out in your memory as especially important or significant.

> *What stories do you tell most often about your time in London?*
> *Where (in what types of spaces) was it easiest to interact with people who were different than you? Tell me about an interaction that happened in one of those spaces. How did you think about the interaction after it happened?*
> *Do you think you were "out and about" more frequently than you are in the US? Why?*

2. Life Challenge

Please describe the single greatest challenge you faced while in London. How did you handle this challenge and were there other people who helped you through it? How did this challenge have an impact on your life story?

> *How, in any ways, did the London experience challenge the way you saw the world? and do you still see the world along those lines?*

3. Influences on the Life Story: Positive and Negative

Looking back over your time in London, please identify the single person who has the greatest positive influence on your story. Describe them and the way they had a positive impact on your story.

Negative?

How do you think this cohort developed a group identity? And why was that important?

How do you think this group identity impacted your experience in London?

What has been most important about maintain contact with the group for you? (personal reasons, professional support, connections)

4. Alternative Futures for the Life Story

I want you to imagine a positive future for your life and describe what you would like to happen in the future for your life story, including goals and dreams you have for your future

Now think about a negative future and describe a highly undesirable future for yourself. One that you fear could happen but that you hope does not happen.

Is there anything else that you would like to share about your experience?

# Appendix B: Questionnaire

**Demographic and Background Information**
1. What year did you participate in the UConn Education in London program?
2. Did you have additional education abroad experience?
    a. Please briefly explain your additional education abroad experiences.
3. What is your current job?
    a. Please describe your current job
4. What state do you currently reside in?
5. What state did you grow up in?
6. Do you speak any languages other than English?
    a. What languages?
7. List what jobs you have had since graduating from UConn and where those jobs were located. Please share both the town and the state.
8. What is your gender?
9. What is your race?


**Perceptions of Impact**
1. Picture yourself before you traveled to London and please share up to four keywords that you would use to describe yourself pre-London
2. Think about your experience abroad and please share up to four keywords or terms that you consider relevant to this experience.

Please read each statement and indicate how much you agree or disagree with that statement
3. Participating in the program had a big impact on me.
4. I have grown as a teacher as a result of participating in the UConn Education in London program.
5. I have grown as a person as a result of participating in the UConn Education in London program.
6. Having participated in the UConn Education in London program gives me more insight into who I am and what is important to me.
7. I often think about my time in London.

Please order the following elements in order from greatest to least impact on yourself
8. Living in London
9. School-based internship
10. Inquiry Project
11. Coursework
12. Extra-curricular Travel
13. Re-entry Semester/Seminar

14. If there was an element that you considered to be impactful but was not included in the previous question, please describe it here.
15. Picture yourself at the conclusion of your time in London and please share up to four keywords that you would use to describe yourself after London.

**Intercultural Competence – Values**

Please read each statement and respond to each statement about intercultural competence and values. Intercultural competence can be defined as an appreciation and understanding of cultural differences and the ability to conduct oneself effectively in intercultural interactions.

1. My time in London influenced my belief that human rights should be protected by society.
2. My time in London helped me understand and recognize different identities and cultural affiliations.
3. My time in London influenced my understanding of how schools teach about democracy.

**Intercultural Competence – Attitudes**

Please read each statement and respond to each statement about intercultural competence and attitudes. Intercultural competence can be defined as an appreciation and understanding of cultural differences and the ability to conduct oneself effectively in intercultural interactions.

1. Because I went to London, I am curious about other's beliefs and world view.
2. Because I went to London, I treat all people with respect regardless of their cultural background.
3. I take action to stay informed about civic issues.
4. I accept responsibility for my own actions, even if they hurt other people.
5. Because I went to London, I am able to overcome obstacles and challenges.
6. Because I went to London, I can temporarily suspend judgments about other people until I learn more information.
7. Because I went to London, I deal with unpredictable circumstances in a positive and constructive manner.
8. Because I went to London, I enjoy conversations and experiences that challenge my own ideas and values.

**Intercultural Competence – Skills**

Please read each statement and respond to each statement about intercultural competence and skills. Intercultural competence can be defined as an appreciation and understanding of cultural differences and the ability to conduct oneself effectively in intercultural interactions.

1. My time in London helped me identify resources for learning about people who are different from myself.
2. My time in London has a lasting impact on my ability to use evidence to support my opinions.
3. My time in London has a lasting impact on my ability to recognize how people with other cultural backgrounds react in different ways to the same situation.
4. My time in London has a lasting impact on my ability to see things from different perspectives to understand the situation.

5. Because I went to London, I can modify my own behavior to make it appropriate to other cultures.
6. London helped me avoid cultural misunderstandings.
7. Since going to London, when working in a group I support other people, despite differences in point of view.
8. I initiate communication to help solve interpersonal problems.

## Intercultural Competence – Knowledge and Critical Understanding

Please read each statement and respond to each statement about intercultural competence, knowledge and critical understanding. Intercultural competence can be defined as an appreciation and understanding of cultural differences and the ability to conduct oneself effectively in intercultural interactions.

1. London helped me critically reflect on my own values and beliefs.
2. London helped me critically reflect on my own prejudices and stereotypes and what lies beneath them.
3. London helped me reflect critically on the different communicative conventions that are employed by another social group or culture.
4. Because I went to London, I can describe basic cultural practices (i.e., eating habits, greeting practices, ways of addressing people, politeness) in another culture.
5. Because I went to London, I can explain the dangers of generalizing from individual behaviors to an entire culture.
6. Because I went to London, I can think critically about how histories are often presented and taught from an enthnocentric point of view.

## Please read and respond to each statement about personal impact

1. I am more confident because I went to London.
1. I am more patient because I went to London.
2. I am more flexible because I went to London.
3. My time in London taught me a lot about myself.
4. My time in London helped me learn to communicate better.
5. I am more confident in my ability to solve unexpected problems because I went to London.
6. I am a better collaborator and teammate because I went to London.
7. I am able to change plans quickly and figure out a new course of action.
8. I am more independent because I went to London.
9. My time in London changed how I think about and approach traveling.

Below is a list of categories that are part of your professional role as a teacher and may have been impacted by your time in London. Please select up to five categories that you feel your time in London had the biggest impact on.

- The type of school at which you wanted to work, including: physical location, population of students, etc.

- Curriculum
- Ability to solve problems in the classroom
- Desire/ability to talk about culture in the classroom
- Interactions with families and the community
- Interactions with co-workers and other staff members
- Interactions with students, including: BIPOC students, LGBTQIA2S+ students, students of different socioeconomic statuses, etc.
- Views about the types of books you bring into the classroom
- Views or beliefs about assessment
- Views or beliefs about behavior management
- Your confidence as a teacher
- Your understanding of yourself as a teacher
- Your desire to hold a leadership position in schools
- Your views on the role of schooling in society
- Your views on work-life balance

**Self-defining memories**

Think about your experience in London. Throughout this questionnaire you have reflected on different aspects of the program and your time abroad. For this final section, please share a few moments or stories that you consider to be really impactful for you. This should be a story that you feel is important and is clear and familiar to you. The story you share may help you understand who you are as an individual or help define your time abroad. The moment may be associated with strong feelings (positive, negative, or both) but should be a story that is familiar to you, one that you have thought about many times. In the questions that follow I will ask you to share two key stories or memories and answer a few questions about each story. Please share story #1.

How much has this event impacted you? (none at all, a little, a moderate amount, a lot, a great deal)

Please rate the following emotions as you felt them at the time of this event.
- Fear
- Guilt
- Happiness
- Love
- Pride
- Sadness
- Shame
- Anger
- Disgust
- Embarrassment

Think about your experience in London. Throughout this questionnaire you have reflected on different aspects of the program and your time abroad. For this final section, please share a few

moments or stories that you consider to be really impactful for you. This should be a story that you feel is important and is clear and familiar to you. The story you share may help you understand who you are as an individual or help define your time abroad. The moment may be associated with strong feelings (positive, negative, or both) but should be a story that is familiar to you, one that you have thought about many times. In the questions that follow I will ask you to share two key stories or memories and answer a few questions about each story. Please share story #2.

How much has this event impacted you? (none at all, a little, a moderate amount, a lot, a great deal)

Please rate the following emotions as you felt them at the time of this event.
- Fear
- Guilt
- Happiness
- Love
- Pride
- Sadness
- Shame
- Anger
- Disgust
- Embarrassment

This study consists of the survey you just completed and a possible follow up interview. You do not have to participate in the follow up interview. If you are interested in being considered for a follow up interview, please add your name and email address below. By providing your name and email address you are providing consent to participate in the follow up interview.

# Appendix C: Semi-Structured Interview and Identity Cartography Protocol

Thank you so much for taking the time to meet with me and share about your experience in London! I'm curious about the ways that you feel the program has impacted you.

1. When you think about your time in London, what comes to mind first?
   *Where did you live? Where did you intern? What was your inquiry project? What experiences in the city of London or travel experiences stand out to you?*

2. I want to talk about your self-defining memories. In your first self-defining memory you talked about … why did you select that memory?

3. In your second self-defining memory you talked about… why did you select that memory?

4. You've shared a little bit about your experience in the school where you interned. I'm curious how that changed what culture means to you.
   *What does it mean to be a culturally competent teacher? Can you think of an example where you were confronted with cultural difference and learned (either about yourself or about others)?*

5. Do you see any connections between London and your current work?

6. Do you see any connections between your time in London and your relationships (either at work or in your personal life)

7. Before we transition to the second thing I want to do today is there anything else you'd like to share? Anything that you have been thinking about that I haven't asked about?

Other potential questions:
1. What does education or school mean to you?
2. Who would you say was a big influence on you? Can you give me an example of how they impacted you?
3. When you started the program did you have a sense that it was going to be impactful and meaningful for you? When did that realization happen?

I have provided you with a piece of paper and a variety of supplies (colored paper, markers, colored dot stickers, post it notes, glue, scissors). I want you to take some time to think about London. I want you to create a map of "your" London for me. Consider the places that are important and memorable to you and represent them on the map. While your map can include words, I want you to lean more into visuals, icons, and pictures to represent the places on your map.

Note: The questions here are offered as suggestions and examples of the types of things that may be asked to understand the mapmaking process.

Now that you have drawn your map of London, please take a moment and tell me about it.

1. What have you included?
2. Why did you place things where you did?
3. Tell me about the first thing that you drew on your map.
4. Why did you select the colors that you selected?
5. Does the size of the elements indicate anything?
6. Were you surprised at anything that came up during this process?

Now I want to talk about the process of doing this

1. Tell me about this process. What was easy and what was challenging?
2. How did this process challenge how you think about yourself and your experiences?
3. Are you surprised by what your map looks like and the changes you identified?
4. What does this process mean for your teaching?
5. What other moments in your life does this connect to?

# Appendix D: Identity Cartography Maps
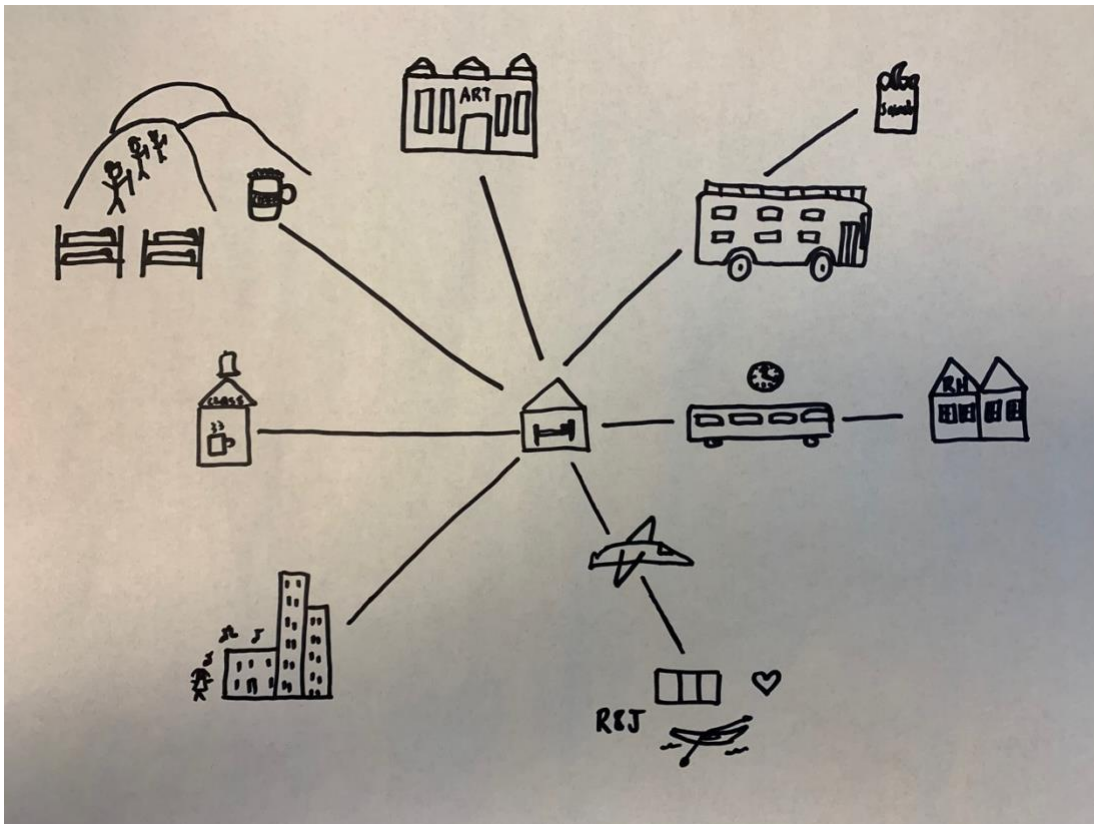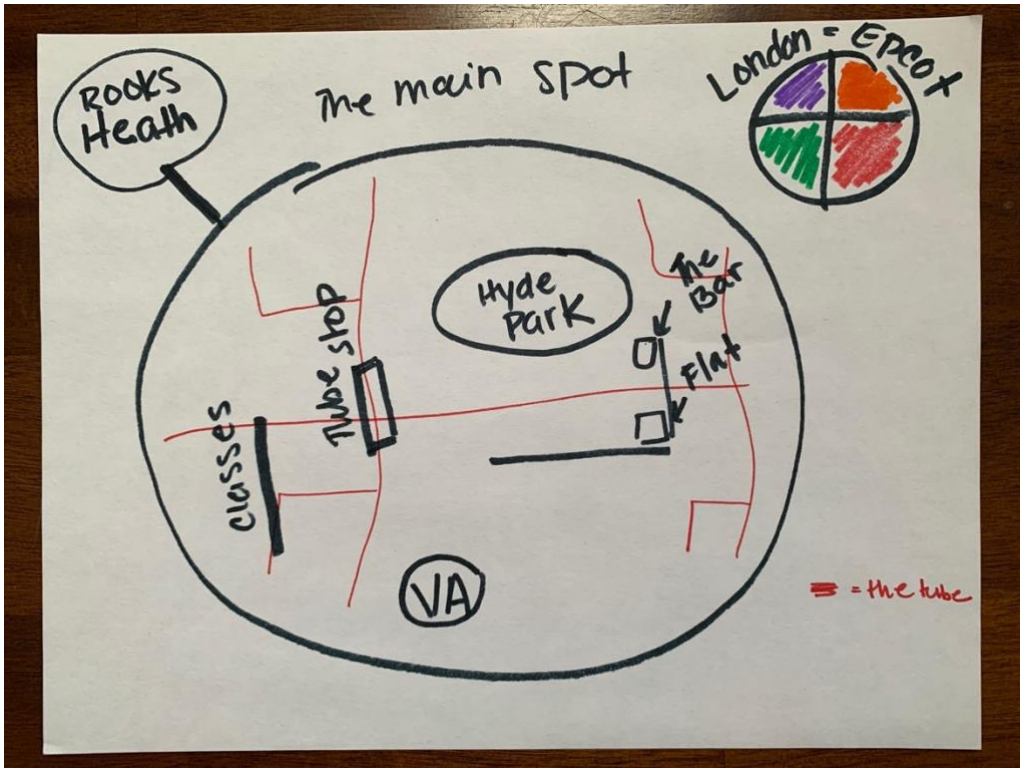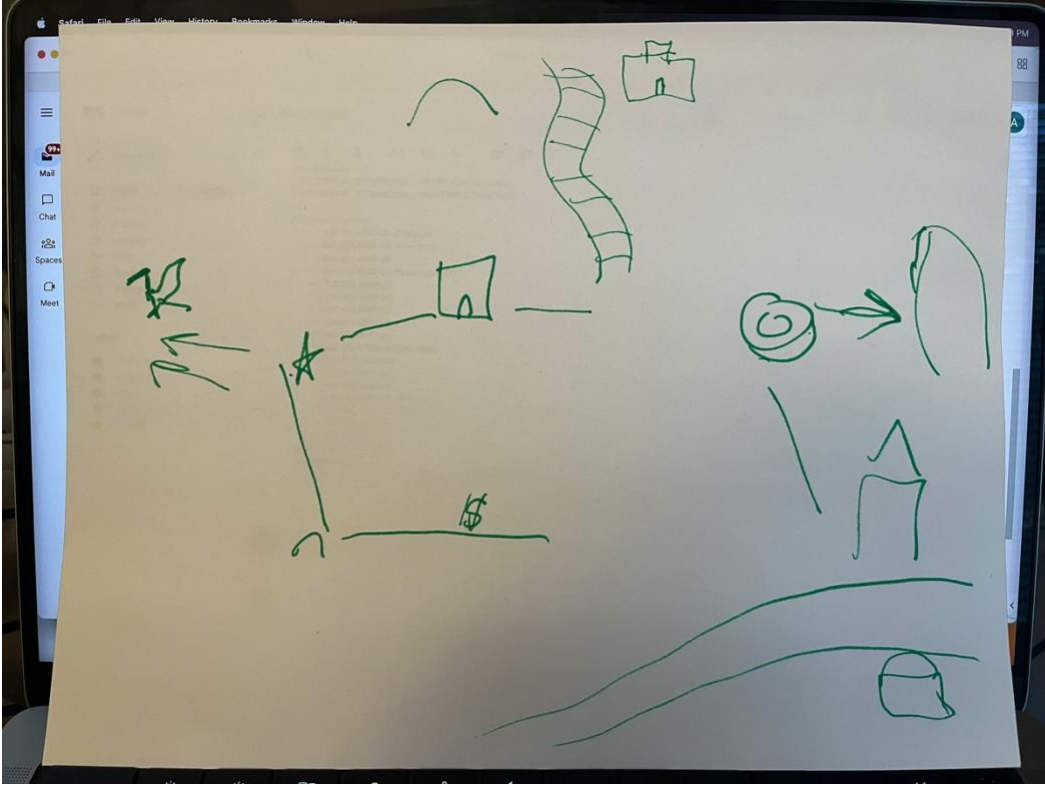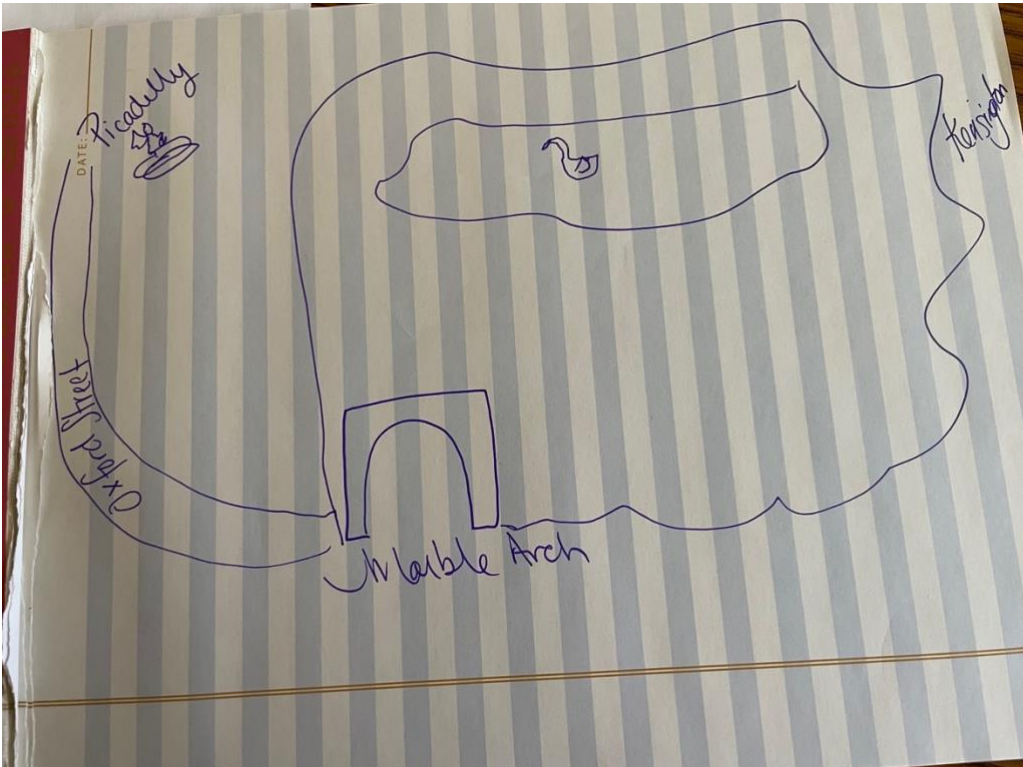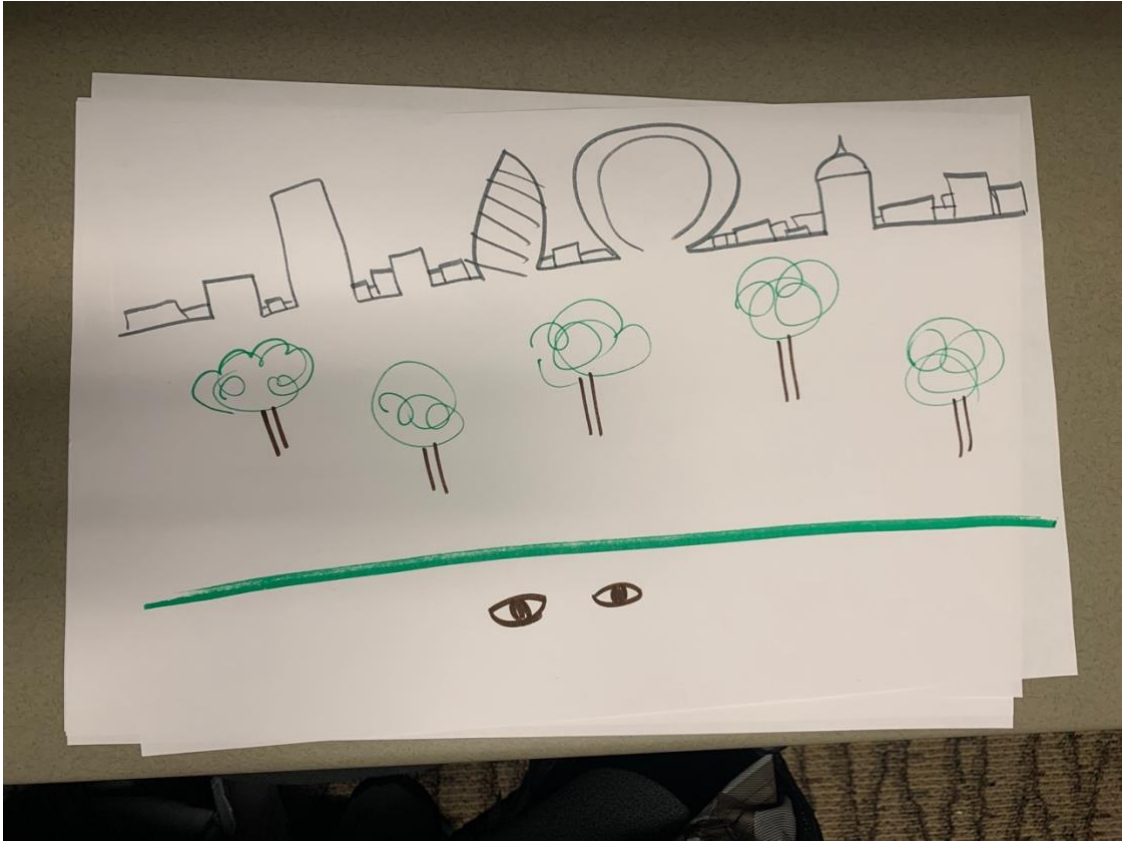
what does London look like for me?