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## **Abstract**

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## **Keywords**

teacher education, study abroad, culturally responsive teaching, experiential learning, short-term, faculty-led

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# Short-Term Study Abroad for Pre-service Teachers: Personal and Professional Growth in Brighton, England

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This study examines the personal and professional development of 34 pre-service teachers who participated in a study abroad program for education majors in Brighton, England. The participants completed a variety of assignments and learning activities before, during, and after the program, including 20 hours of observation in area schools. The results indicate that in terms of personal development, the pre-service teachers experienced increased levels of self-confidence, autonomy, tolerance for ambiguity, flexibility and adaptability, and interpersonal skills. Professionally, the participants identified the role of culture in education and pedagogy, described being better equipped to work with diverse learners in the United States, and developed instructional strategies to use in their future classrooms.

## INTRODUCTION

There is a growing initiative on U.S. campuses to develop and provide short-term, faculty-led study abroad programs. Initiatives such as Generation Study Abroad, part of the Institute for International Education (IIE), aims to double the number of students from the United States that participate in study abroad by the year 2020. The benefits of study abroad for students are many. These include increased self-awareness, cultural sensitivity and intercultural competence (Gaia, 2015; Cisneros-Donahue, Krentler, Reinig, & Sabol, 2012; Parsons, 2010), and the development of long-term 21<sup>st</sup> century skills such as curiosity, flexibility, interpersonal communication and problem-solving as well as a wider range of career possibilities (Farrugia & Sanger, 2017, p. 6). However, there are a number reasons that students may not be able to study abroad, as illustrated by Eckert, Luqmani, Newell, Quareshi, & Wagner (2013). Traditionally, study abroad has meant students are in country for a semester or an entire academic year, which requires a significant commitment from students, both academically and financially. Many students may be hesitant to study abroad in a country where they do not speak, or have not studied, the local language. Students in majors such as teacher education often have very rigid programs of study, which make it almost impossible for students to spend a year or a semester overseas without delaying graduation. However, research by Merryfield (2000) calls for teacher education to prepare pre-service teachers to work with a changing demographic of students in their classrooms through experiences such as study abroad. Trilokekar and Kukar (2011) describe study abroad as a “disorienting experience” for pre-service teachers that can lead to increased skills to work with diverse student populations and Apple (2017) calls for even further attention to this need for teachers to be able to prepare their students to be global citizens in world that only continues to become internationally connected. The U.S. Census Bureau (2017) projects that the foreign-born population in the United States will reach nearly 15% by the year 2028, a 1.36% percent change versus the .49% change of the native population in the same year. Therefore, providing U.S. pre-service teachers with international experiences during their preparation becomes even more crucial.

## Short-Term, Faculty-Led Study Abroad

For the reasons outlined above, short-term, faculty-led study abroad programs have become valuable options. These programs offer students the opportunity to participate in a program, between 2 to 4 weeks and typically in the summer, while working with a faculty member, which provides an additional layer of academic and social support (Keese & O'Brien, 2011). Since the university faculty member also teaches the courses for which students receive credit on the program, they can offer classes that are major requirements, so students can have an international experience that keeps them on track to graduate and is not as expensive as an entire semester or year abroad. These types of programs can be developed for specific majors, providing an intensive and focused experience that can be applied to future careers, such as nursing (Shannon, 2013), management (Carley, Stuart & Dailey, 2011), environmental science (Lewis & Niesenbaum, 2005) and, of course, foreign language (Martinsen, 2010). Furthermore, short-term, faculty-led programs often include a balance of academics and activities and opportunities to learn about their host country through excursions. These experiences can be further enriched by having the faculty member available to help students process and reflect on their experiences, as well as negotiate any difficulties that may arise. This is consistent with Farrugia and Sanger (2017), who found that students in study abroad programs that were structured and included group projects and activities showed a significant increase in collaborative, interpersonal, teamwork, and leadership skills (p. 6). In addition, Stebeleten, Soria, and Cherney (2013) found that study abroad programs through the university have a greater positive effect on intercultural competencies, as these typically include learning opportunities that have been designed specifically for the program goals, course objectives, and host country to support student learning.

However, there is the question of exactly what students take away from a short-term program. Bell and Anscombe (2012) found that even a two-week international experience can have a profound impact on the participants. Mapp (2012) also found that students participating in short-term study abroad programs, even those to English-speaking countries, increased their level of cultural adaptability. These programs may be based in one site, or the group may travel to several sites. Students may not need to

speak the language if the faculty lead, or on-site coordinator can, and therefore their interactions with locals may be hindered. This leads to questions about how a short-term experience can support students in their majors to develop the 21<sup>st</sup> century skills required of their future careers.

## Study Abroad for Teacher Education

Doppen, Jing, and Diki (2016) found that pre-service teachers chose to complete their student teaching in a study abroad program to learn more about different educational systems and practices, to become more globally-minded teachers and to travel and experience a different culture. Palmer and Menard-Warwick (2012) found that pre-service teachers on a short-term program to Mexico developed a greater sense of empathy when working with English language learners (ELLs) in U.S. schools. Phillion and Malewski (2011) found that having their students work in schools in Honduras allowed them to see how teachers used cultural knowledge in their classroom as well as how culture influences the classroom.

The aim to become more globally-minded as educators is a crucial piece of 21<sup>st</sup> century education. For K-12 schools to produce culturally competent graduates, their teachers must possess those same skills and curiosity about the world. Study abroad programs designed specifically for pre-service teachers provide an opportunity for students to develop cultural competence (Boynton Hauerwas, Skawinski, & Ryan, 2017; Phillion & Malewski, 2011), a growing requirement in teacher education (Johnson & Battalio, 2008). Study abroad is also a way to help develop culturally responsive teachers and can provide unique and different opportunities to develop culturally responsive practices than domestic field placements (Marx & Moss, 2011).

According to He, Lundgren, and Pynes (2017), an effective study abroad program for teacher education must include cultural immersion experiences, teaching opportunities, language learning, reflection and collaboration. While this may seem like a difficult task to design in a short time, it is certainly possible. While teaching opportunities are a bit harder to arrange for visiting pre-service teachers, students may still observe in different schools in their host country. For the sake of short-term programs, it may be necessary to expand the definition of language learning. For example, although a study abroad program may take place in an English-speaking country, students can still be provided with the opportunity to interact with local people and identify ways in which there may still be a communication barrier as the result of different vocabulary or conversation styles. For students whose first international experience is to an English-speaking country, this can be an equally powerful exercise in recognizing that there are many manners of communication, even if all involved are speaking the same language. Regardless of destination, study abroad offers pre-service teachers opportunities to engage in learning and development through experience, as described by Kolb (1984). Such experiential learning can serve as a vehicle for pre-service teachers to develop personally and professionally in that they will be better prepared to have their own future students engage in similar learning opportunities. Therefore, it is important to investigate the learning outcomes of experiential learning in short-term study abroad programs for teachers. The guiding question for the present study is:

**What are the personal and professional learning outcomes of pre-services teachers participating in a short-term study abroad program in Brighton, England?**

## METHOD

### Case Study

The present study uses a case method approach. A case, as defined by Merriam (1998), is a “bounded system” and by Miles and Huberman (1994) as a “phenomenon of some sort occurring in a bounded context” (p. 25). Case study research is appropriate in this instance as a study abroad program fits this definition of a bounded case in the sense that it represents the intersection of a particular time and space. With each iteration, a program retains a similar structure and design, however the experiences of the participants are bound within the time and space in which it takes place each year. Although participants may return to the site of the study abroad experience at a later time in their lives, the resultant discovery and awareness that takes place is limited to the time in which the participants experienced it for the first time.

### Program Context and Design

The program in this study takes place every year for three weeks during the summer at a university in England. The host university in England and the home institution have maintained a partnership for over 30 years, and as a result, enjoy a robust working relationship. Because of this relationship, the home institution can communicate program needs and requirements to the host institution. A long-term working relationship between the two universities facilitates this work and flexibility in programming. The faculty lead for the program serves multiple roles throughout the experience, including online teaching prior to departure, helping students get settled on site during the first week, and monitoring and assessing student work and participation during and after the program. The faculty lead has led the program for 7 years, including several prior to data collection for the current study. This allowed for consistency in the design and delivery of the program.

**Participants.** The participants were all education majors from the home institution. Majors represented in the program included Early Childhood, Elementary, Middle Level, Secondary and Special Education. The majority of the participants, 22, were juniors, with 8 being sophomores, 3 seniors and 1 graduate student. Over the two years of data collection, there were a total of 34 participants, with 31 females and 3 males. Among these participants, only 12 had had previous experience traveling outside the United States. With the exception of 3 of these 12 participants, all prior international travel was limited to family vacations and not long-term academic programs.

## DATA COLLECTION

Previous research has demonstrated that effective short-term, faculty-led study abroad programs be highly structured, thoughtfully and purposefully designed and include learning opportunities prior to departure, while on site and upon return (Farrugia & Sanger, 2017; Eckert, Luqmami, Newell, Quareshi, & Wagner, 2013; Bell & Anscombe, 2012). In the present study, data were collected through assignments, online discussions and surveys

the participants completed before, during and after the experience. Data were collected over the course of three years of the program. This allowed for multiple sources of data that assessed various components of the study abroad program. The program consisted of two courses. One of the courses, social foundations of education, is a program requirement for all Education majors, while the second is an independent study, which can be substituted for a performing arts credit for some Education majors. The program runs for 3 weeks during the month of July. Prior to departure, participants engaged in online coursework. First, it allowed for participants to complete a majority of the coursework for one of the courses, allowing them to focus on the work of the second course, which is completed in England. Second, the online coursework prior to departure also included assignments with a cultural focus that prepared the participants for being in England. There were multiple learning opportunities for participants before, during and after the program which, according to Tarrant (2010) are essential in a study abroad program to help participants make the most of their experience and contribute to experiential learning (Kolb & Kolb, 2005).

Prior to leaving for the program, the participants completed several activities designed to ready them to be in an international setting as well as integrate perspectives and issues of the host country into the coursework, such as a pre-departure reflection paper, and engaged in several discussions regarding identity and U.K. perspectives of the United States. Participants also first completed a pre-departure survey. The survey (see Appendix 1) was developed by the faculty lead based on anecdotal observations made in previous iterations of the program to reflect growth and learning during a study abroad experience. The survey had been developed, revised and implemented for three years of the program prior to use for formal data collection. The survey was then evaluated by an expert reviewer for content and structure. This review yielded no suggestions for changes to survey question content or wording.

Another pre-departure assignment was designed to help participants identify and discuss U.S. culture. The participants were given several images of various aspects of U.S. culture, for example, the Superbowl, Thanksgiving, and several political figures and asked how they would describe these different things to people they meet in England. Participants also read *Body Ritual among the Nacirema* by Horace Miner (1956) and provided a reading response and then engaged in an online discussion. Participants completed other modules in which they examined topics through the lens of issues in education in the United States and the United Kingdom. These topics included general issues in education, race and ethnicity, gender and sexual orientation, and poverty and equity. Participants also completed a 3-week budget in which they researched prices of transportation, groceries, sights and other activities in England and converted them between U.S. dollars and British pounds, to help them understand the differences in cost of living and consider this in terms of the final module topic of equity and poverty. These assignments were developed as a means of beginning to engage in critical reflection, defined by Sharma, Phillion, and Malewski (2011), as reflecting on one's own culture, worldviews, and lived experiences that impact knowledge and professional practice (p. 11). The use of reflection has also been recommended in anticipation of departure (Gaia, 2015) as well as during and after students' return from study

abroad (Sjoberg & Shabalina, 2010; Stebleton, Soria, & Cherney, 2013).

Upon arrival in England, the participants worked in teams to complete a scavenger hunt of the town in which they would be living for the next three weeks. The scavenger hunt was designed by the faculty lead and challenged students to navigate the town with a paper map, negotiate cultural and linguistic differences, interact with locals, and get to know the city. At the conclusion of the scavenger hunt, the participants wrote a summary of their experience and reflected on their learning during the process (see Appendix 2). While on-site in England, the participants engaged in the second component of the program coursework, which focused on using drama techniques in the classroom. These courses were taught by two instructors from the host institution. During these class sessions, participants examined the issues they had studied and discussed prior to arriving in England through children's literature and using drama to explore them more in-depth.

The participants also observed 20 hours in area schools, in classrooms ranging from elementary to secondary levels. Combined with school visits were guest lectures by headmasters, teachers and other education professionals from area schools and organizations. This component of the program provided the participants with an opportunity to witness English education firsthand and discuss various issues with local practitioners and experts. Participants submitted a clinical experience report at the conclusion of their observations in England. In the clinical journal, participants discussed their experiences in English schools and lectures from local experts and compared what they learned in England with what they had experienced in the U.S.

At the end of the program, participants completed the post-experience survey, discussed coming home in an online forum and wrote a final reflection. The final reflection included reading about re-entry challenges, and invited participants to consider their responses from the pre-departure reflection. The final reflection also asked participants to provide any advice they may have for future participants and things they would have liked to have done differently. The goal of the final reflection was to provide one last opportunity for the participants to consider their learning through the experience after they had returned home and had had some time to process the overall experience. Overall, the design, delivery and timing of the various learning opportunities were developed with the goal of providing the necessary structure to the program as well as multiple forms of assessment that are needed for an effective program (Keese & O'Brien, 2011; Tucker, Gullekson, & McCambridge, 2011; Sjoberg & Shabalina, 2010).

## DATA ANALYSIS

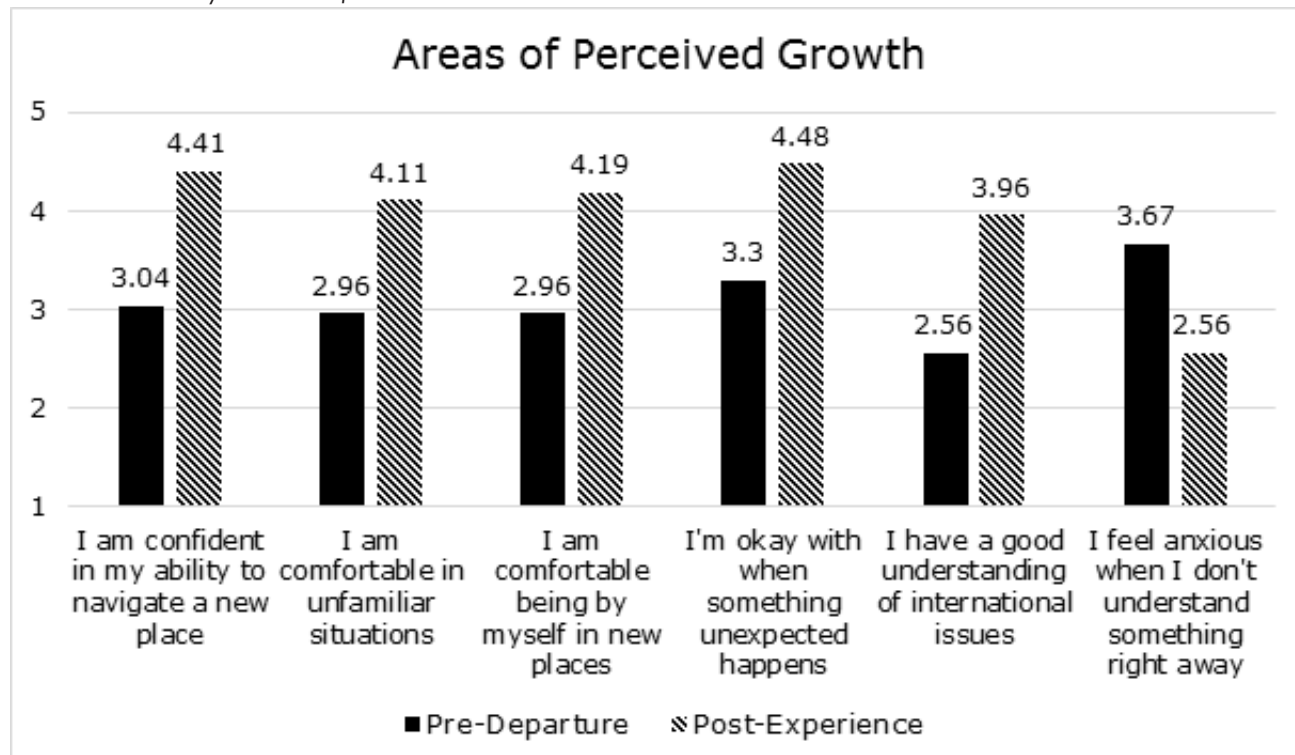
The course assignments and online discussion data were analyzed descriptively, identifying common themes throughout the data and across participant groups. To interpret the participants' experiences, the data coding procedures of constant comparative analysis were used (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), which allow for a potentially deeper understanding of the experiences of the participants and impact of the study abroad program on them (Patton, 2002). Throughout the analysis, the three-level coding process was used: open coding, axial coding, and selective coding (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Open coding was completed by first reading through all sets of the assignment submissions and on-

line discussions. After the initial readings, axial coding was used by identifying trends and themes that emerged from the data. Finally, selective coding was used to determine core themes that emerged from the data and engaged in a final reading to further refine and support them with quotes. Given the relatively low number of participants, the pre- and post-experience survey was analyzed descriptively, using the means of the survey items for comparison between responses before the study abroad program and after.

## RESULTS

The participants completed a pre-departure survey and a post-experience survey, which consisted of 30 questions designed to gauge tolerance for ambiguity, knowledge and understanding of culture and international issues, willingness to take risks, and confidence in new situations. The items were presented with a Likert-scale response of Strongly Disagree (1), Disagree (2), Neutral (3), Agree (4) and Strongly Agree (5). The means for the pre-departure and post-experience responses for the most significant items are presented in Table 1. The results indicate that the participants did experience a perceived change in their confidence, tolerance for ambiguity and understanding of international and cultural knowledge. For instance, the mean scores for items that asked about confidence and tolerance for ambiguity, the pre-departure mean indicated that the participants felt neutral, or not necessarily confident or unconfident. However, the means for these same items increased at the conclusion of their experience, where the mean score indicates that they “agree” with these statements. In addition, presenting the same item in a reverse way, “I feel anxious when I don’t understand something right away”, revealed an initial response in the “neutral to strongly agree” category, yet a decrease in the post-experience mean, indicative of a “disagree” response. In this way, it is clear that the participants perceived that their confidence and tolerance for

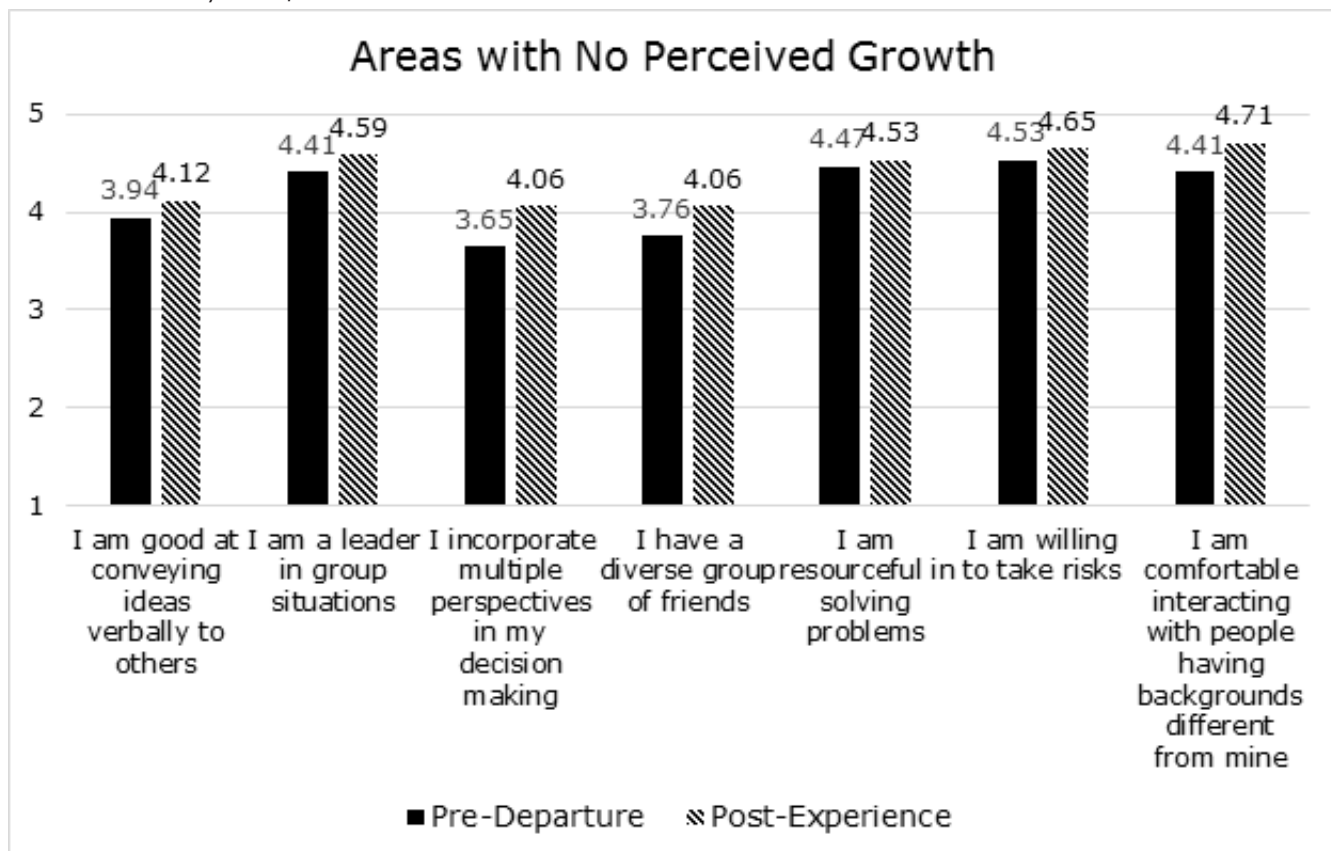
**Table 1** Selected Survey Items: Areas of Perceived Growth



ambiguity had increased as a result of their three weeks in England. The survey results also showed that participants perceived a greater ability to change their plans and demonstrate flexibility. Finally, the participants indicated that they were more aware of issues related to education and other topics from around the world than when they left the United States for England.

However, the survey also showed areas where the participants did not indicate a major change after the experience, as shown in Table 2. Although there was some indication of growth in some areas, this change was quite minimal. For instance, in the pre-departure survey, the participants indicated high levels of confidence in terms of interpersonal skills such as conveying their ideas to others, using different perspectives to make decisions, and interacting with people who are different from them or so not share similar ideas or beliefs. It is possible that the participants had an inflated sense of possessing these skills as pre-service teachers who are encouraged to develop these traits throughout their preparation. It could also be attributed to the participants only having an idea of what this may look like without ever actually having experienced prolonged contact or interaction with the other that would propel them to consider the degree to which they have these skills. The survey also showed that the participants identified themselves as willing to take risks and being a leader. Given that the participants self-selected to go on the study abroad program, it is not surprising that they would perceive themselves to be leaders and risk-takers. Finally, the participants did indicate a change in their belief of having a diverse group of friends, however, this may be attributed to feelings of friendships that had developed over the course of the program with people they did not previously know.

These areas of the survey demonstrate that participants may need further opportunities to more critically identify their skills in these areas. Furthermore, additional opportunities while in-country may need to be provided to support the participants

**Table 2** Selected Survey Items of Areas with Minimal Perceived Growth

in their development and understanding of these skills within the context of the study abroad experience.

In addition to the pre- and post-experience survey, data from the participants' written work throughout the three-week experience also provided many themes in terms of learning outcomes. The themes that emerged from the data fell into the categories of either personal or professional development. Nonetheless, the results showed that these were intertwined throughout the participants' reflections on their learning. These results will be presented as two categories for the sake of clarity.

## Personal Development

In terms of personal development, the data revealed four areas in which the participants experienced a change. The themes that emerged regarding personal development include an increase in self-confidence and tolerance for ambiguity, self-awareness, flexibility and adaptability, and finally, interpersonal skills. All the skills that came through the data in the student work are consistent with the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills outlined by Farrugia and Sanger (2017), including personal and interpersonal skills development.

**Self-confidence and tolerance for ambiguity.** First and foremost, the participants all described an increase in self-confidence. This development came through a variety of activities, including simply getting on a plane with other participants that they didn't know, to getting lost in town to figuring out the bus schedule to get back to campus. Although the participants had a faculty member on site to support and guide them, the participants discussed the importance of not relying on this person to direct every activity every day and to allow for students to spend some time on their own. Although this made some participants

nervous, they described how it was a necessary part of their learning. As one participant wrote, "I didn't have guidance in every situation I faced. I had to figure it out on my own. It was nice to have the freedom to make my own choices, whether they were right or wrong." The participants also described many instances in which this was the first experience where they felt truly independent because they had to solve problems on their own. This led to a feeling of accomplishment for many of the participants. Said one participant, "I'm proud that I'm not afraid to take risks and I could survive and thrive in any situation on my own." For many of the participants, facing an instance in which they were not familiar with the norms and practices of the local community was an exciting opportunity to take on a new challenge, which increased their self-confidence.

In addition to self-confidence, the participants also reported that they were more comfortable with "changing plans on the fly", having to figure out how to get to a place on their own, and what to do when things did not go as planned, such as getting on the wrong bus. The participants noted that the scavenger hunt activity was where they first began to be comfortable with not knowing every detail. As one participant reflected, "When you told us we had two brains and a map, I was terrified. Even though I speak English, I have bad sense of direction. But not only did we get everything, we came in second!" The participants also described how having activities that were led by the faculty member of on-site partner helped them to observe problem-solving in action, which they later used in their own explorations. One participant wrote that, "We decided to just walk around London and find things that looked interesting. Even though we didn't have a plan, we had the tools to find our way back and that was all we needed." Situations such as these helped the participants to stop and reflect on their situation and

make decisions in the moment. Although the participants were typically in small groups on these occasions, they were still able to work with unknown factors in their immediate environment.

**Flexibility and adaptability.** In addition to an increase in self-confidence and tolerance for ambiguity, the participants also discussed how having to negotiate with others in the group, as well as coming to terms with the uncertainty of travel, led them to become more patient and be more flexible in different situations. While at times these interactions were stressful, such as deciding how long to wait for a late bus or even determining where to eat in the evening, the participants all stated that they realized in these situations that there was very little they could control, and that they needed to compromise and consider the needs and wants of others. As one participant reflected, *"I learned a lot of patience. Many times we had to wait for buses, group members or in lines. And there was nothing I could do about it! I think I will use this when I am a teacher."* What's more, is that the participants became more comfortable when situations changed, or when there was no pre-determined schedule of events or activities and that it was up to the students to fill their free time, as noted by one participant who wrote, *"I'm used to having everything planned out for me. This experience helped me realize that things always work out in the end. Some of the best moments are the ones that aren't planned."* Although the schedule of lessons, activities, and observations was quite full, the participants had a fair amount of free time in the afternoons and evenings. The faculty lead would provide information on area attractions, event and things to do, however, this was typically in response to questions about them from the participants. In one instance, three participants asked the faculty lead to verify they had chosen the correct train and times to go to London in the evening for a show and be back to Brighton in time for class the day.

**Self-awareness.** Since part of the pre-departure coursework was related to identity and defining culture, this was a theme for the participants throughout the program, even when it was not specifically identified as such in an assignment. Throughout the experience, and especially in the final reflection, the participants were cognizant of the changes that were taking place in their view of the world. The participants discussed how being in England helped them to understand there is much more to the world than the United States. For instance, one participant described how she now understands that *"there are people and issues in the world. Everything isn't about the America."* Others participants described observing other tourists from the United States and feeling uncomfortable with the behavior they exhibited: *"They were so loud! It was embarrassing and we made sure to never act like that when we were out."* The participants had begun to observe the world through a lens other than that of the United States, and were finding multiple ways to connect this to their developing knowledge.

The participants also described how their own identity had changed. This ranged from something as simple as now being able to identify as a "world traveler" to reflecting on engaging in new activities helped them realize something new about themselves. For instance, one participant exclaimed that, *"Breaking out of my comfort zone is exhilarating!"* The participants also collectively discussed how the experience had been influential in reshaping some of their own ideas that they recognized had previously been formed by their families and peers. As one participant reflected, *"I now think for myself, not according to how my parents,*

*peers or my community think. A lot of people I know are close-minded about certain views. This experience has shut down those assumptions for me."* For many of the participants, being away from their regular social network and influence of friends and family allowed them to observe the world and grow in different ways. Coupled with an increased level of self-confidence, this shift in identity was empowering.

Finally, as part of the final reflection assignment, the participants read about the challenges of re-entry after a study abroad experience. The participants completed this assignment in two parts: the first before they left England and the second after they had been home for a week. In the first part of the assignment, many participants felt that they would not necessarily experience any of the challenges presented, except perhaps for life being back to normal and not exciting on a daily basis. However, after being home, they experienced something very different, for example, as one participant wrote, *"I'm so excited to share my stories but I can tell my friends don't want to hear about it anymore. I don't know who to talk to."* These thoughts and experiences were echoed by other participants as well, and included the challenge of feeling as though they had changed so much, but home had stayed the same. One participant's frustration with this was evident: *"Ugh. My friends just want to go out drinking all the time. It just isn't that much fun to me anymore."* The participants also described ways in which they now understood aspects of U.S. culture that might seem strange to someone from England. For example, one participant wrote that he never realized how rude it was that waiters bring your check to your table before you've finished eating and that he had learned to enjoy a meal differently in England.

**Interpersonal skills.** Being in a group during the program led to understanding the value of developing friendships with others. Many of the participants discussed how they did not know anyone that was going on the program before the pre-departure meetings on campus, yet found themselves planning excursions together, negotiating new situations, and even mediating tensions. Many of the participants discussed that being with different peers, and not wanting to miss out on anything while in England helped them to be more social. One participant reflected, *"Before this I thought of myself as an introvert. I preferred to be alone and had a small group of friends. Being with this group helped me be more outgoing and make new friendships."* The participants all acknowledged that they formed friendships with others in the group with whom they would most likely not have interacted with back on campus due to different schedules, majors, and out of class activities, such as a job or student organization. What's more, many of the participants viewed these friendships as long-lasting ones that they hoped to maintain after the program ended. For many, these friendships were also an important part of re-entry and represented a support system for sharing fun memories of the experience, but also helping with readjusting to life at home, which did not offer the same level of daily excitement and discovery. *"I didn't think that three weeks with a whole new group of people would create so many friendships, but it did. Remaining friends and communicating with the others has helped me cope with the transition back to the States."* These findings demonstrate that the participants found themselves becoming closer to others with whom they may not interact on campus due to differences in living situations, areas of interest and involvement, or social circles. In addition to learning to work with English



colleagues and instructors on-site in Brighton, the participants recognized that they could also negotiate differences with peers from their own country and institution.

## Professional Development

The participants also identified ways in which they believed the study abroad experience had impacted them as future teachers. They reflected on several aspects of the experience that they believed would have a more direct impact on their teaching careers moving forward. In terms of professional development, three themes emerged from the data: diversity and empathy, instructional practices, and learning through comparisons.

**Diversity and empathy.** A significant part of the coursework connected with the study abroad program focused on diversity and equity in schools and education. The participants had previously observed in schools in the United States as part of their teacher education program. While in England they observed at three different school sites, including an early years school, a primary school and a lower secondary school. These school sites were also determined to be “diverse” by the criteria of the home institution, and therefore represented student populations that had certain percentages of students with disabilities, students of color, students coming from low income families, and were English language learners. By providing the participants with school observation opportunities at different levels, they were able to make connections to their own major and also consider various aspects of their coursework impact learners at different stages in their education. The participants described how these experiences, paired with being in a new environment themselves, helped them to understand how it feels for a young student to find themselves in a different place where they don’t automatically understand the rules and expectations and how they might support their own future students. One participant wrote that, “*I am more prepared to assist immigrant students as they transition to American schools.*” The participants were also able to make connections between their coursework and what they observed in the different schools. Since the participants visited different school settings with different ages of students, they began to see a common thread amongst the learners they observed, which led to realizations about culture and learning. “*Before this trip I had a basic understanding of culture but now I understand how it is the foundation of an individual and impacts the learning process.*” Through observations in the Brighton area schools, the participants were not only able to identify cultural practices in a classroom, but were also able to re-construct their ideas of what culture is and how it influences the pedagogical environment.

**Instructional practices.** In addition to a shifting socio-cultural understanding of students and schools, the participants also described the various techniques they had learned and were excited to use in their future classes. Some of these techniques were observed during school observation visits, while others were a result of the on-site coursework they engaged in. Since the on-site coursework focused on the use of drama techniques in the classroom, many of the participants were hesitant at the beginning to engage in the activities, however, they came to value them and look forward to the interactive nature of their class. While they acknowledge that getting learners comfortable with such strategies was part of the process, they also recognized how they might use specific ones with their future students. As one participant reported, “*I will definitely incorporate the differ-*

*ent styles of teaching that we learned like teacher-in-role, hot-seating, and the others.*” What’s more, the participants were able to make connections between the strategies they were learning in their class with what they were observing in practice in the schools. For instance, one participant said that, “*During the school visits, I was able to see how drama techniques are a great way for students to communicate and express themselves in different ways.*” Through their class observations in a different educational environment, the participants were able to observe practices with a different lens than if they were in the United States.

**Learning through comparisons.** Finally, the participants made several comparisons between the U.S. and the English school systems. The participants also attended several lecture sessions led by professional educators, one of whom worked with schools in both England and Ghana, therefore adding another dimension of schools and education in the world. This additional component led the participants to take more of an interest in educational matters beyond their immediate environment. For instance, as one participant pondered in a journal entry, “*All children have an equal right to learn regardless of where they come from. This is a major issue in the current world.*” There were many things that stood out to the participants in this regard, such as religion being taught in schools, that teachers tended to dress more formally in England than they had observed in the U.S., and that all students wore uniforms. Since the use of uniforms in the United States is primarily limited to private schools, seeing this in practice in England led the participants to consider how this may be beneficial in terms of equity. For instance, as one participant observed, “*I thought the uniforms helped limit discrimination based on home income level.*” Other participants noted that the students in the English schools appeared to have higher levels of knowledge across subject areas than their peers in the United States that they had observed previously. This led the participants to consider why this might be, such as one who wrote, “*I was shocked by the skills that these students possessed compared to students the same age in the States. It made me think about the things we do that actually hinder students’ learning.*” However, the participants were also able to identify ways in which many things were similar between schools in the U.S. and England. While they noted that the response to classroom management issues varied between the two countries, the participants recognized that disruptions are universal. In the words of one participant, “*Around the world teens are teens and even though there are cultural differences, they have the same developmental and affective needs.*” Throughout their observations, the participants began to understand that schools, curriculum, and classrooms are bound by culture.

## DISCUSSION

The participants in this program demonstrated both personal and professional growth. Although the participant sample represents years of the program, the results were consistent within and across each group. Returning to the guiding question for the study, the participants experienced several personal learning outcomes through their study abroad experience. First, the participants grew in terms of increased self-confidence, autonomy and tolerance for ambiguity. These results are consistent with Mapp (2012) and Boynton Hauerwas, Skawinski, and Ryan (2017), who found that students who has participated in a study abroad program demonstrated increased emotional resiliency, being open to new ideas, increased flexibility, higher levels of self-efficacy

and autonomy. The Brighton program was structured in aspects such as activities that helped the participants acclimate to their new environment, but also allowed for free time for students to research area activities and events and make their own plans. Gonsalvez (2013) found that participants in a study abroad program reported now feeling more comfortable in uncomfortable situations after their program. This was also true of the Brighton participants and may be attributed to the activities designed to move students out of their comfort zone, such as the city scavenger hunt.

Another way that the participants developed personally was that they began to see themselves as global citizens, with a new interest in and curiosity about the world, as did Boynton Hauerwas, Skawinski, and Ryan (2017), Gaia (2015) and Bell and Anscombe (2012), whose study abroad students reported an increased level of self-awareness and viewing themselves as global citizens. This shift in identity led them to develop interpersonal skills such as cultural sensitivity, flexibility and communication. All the Brighton participants reported a similar sense of awareness of the world as a larger community than they had previously experienced or understood, and many reported that they wanted to stay on top of international news and events, whereas before they had little to no interest in them, which is consistent with Larsen, DeGraaf, Ditta, and Slagter (2015).

The participants also experienced professional growth during their time in Brighton. Although their study abroad site was in an English-speaking country, there were still many times where they struggled with varietal differences in the language or understanding expectations and social norms and customs, similar to Marx and Moss (2011) whose participants were able, to some degree, to experience being "the other", which at times led to miscommunication and misunderstandings that needed to be negotiated. Through this experience, the participants reported that they were able to identify more with students who may be newly arrived or English language learners. This is consistent with He, Lundgren, and Pynes (2017), who found that in-service teachers completing a study abroad experience in China felt a renewed commitment to English language learners in their own classes upon their return. The Brighton participants all reflected on the ways in which they were better equipped to work with diverse learners in their future classrooms.

The participants also developed new instructional strategies to incorporate into their practice as a result of the program. While in Brighton, the participants learned drama techniques for the classroom and they reported that they felt that they had additional strategies to work with all learners in their future classroom. The participants were also able to identify how practices such as these were used in the different classrooms they observed in Brighton, similar to Johnson and Battalio (2008), whose participants became aware of how special education practices differ between the U.S. and what they observed in Scotland and how this could impact their own teaching practice. He, Lundgren, and Pynes (2017) also found that a short-term program study abroad program for inservice teachers in China yielded a significant impact on their commitment to culturally responsive teaching. Stebleton, Soria, and Cherney (2013) recommend incorporating work opportunities into study abroad programs. In the case of the Brighton program, pre-service teachers were able to learn drama techniques for use in their future classrooms, observe similar techniques in local school observations and learn

about educational practices in the U.K. through guest lectures. This provided a cohesive and purposeful program where participants were learning through both theory and practice.

In addition to impacting their practice, the participants reflected on the ways in which culture influences the curriculum and the classroom. This was an impactful revelation for the pre-service teachers because they had not been confronted with these differences in their clinical experiences prior to coming to England. Although the participants had already completed some school observations in the United States, it was not until they were removed from the classroom culture that they had always known that they were able to identify culture and how it manifests in the classroom. Marx and Moss (2011) found that by comparing and contrasting educational systems and practices in the U.S. and the U.K., their students gained a greater understanding of the influence of culture in the classroom. The participants in the program that Boynton Hauerwas, Skawinski, and Ryan (2017) studied in Italy also grew in their teaching practices and understanding of how culture influences the classroom.

While the present study is supported by previous research, it also demonstrates that education abroad can serve as a means of integrating both personal and professional development. While the participants showed growth in both of these areas, the structure of the program through the assignments and opportunities for new experiences and purposeful reflection allowed for them to bridge both personal and professional development and to understand how the two are related, rather than as separate sets of skills. This approach to designing education abroad programs that are content-specific provide a unique opportunity for this growth opportunity. Finally, these experiences and learning opportunities resulted in the participants being even more excited to return to the U.S. and continue in their teacher preparation. By participating in a study abroad program specifically for pre-service teachers, the participants were able to develop personally, while also making strides towards their development as education professionals as well. This is consistent with Larsen, DeGraaf, Ditta, and Slagter (2015), found that education majors specifically demonstrated an increase in knowledge related to their major and that the experienced had reaffirmed their choice of teaching as a career.

## Limitations

There are several limitations to the study. The first being a relatively small sample size over the course of three years although there were consistent findings in all three groups, a larger sample would provide further insight. A second limitation is that these results reflect the experience of students in a Western / European and English-speaking context, and may or may not translate to similar experiences in a culture that is significantly different from that of the participants. While this is a challenge in study abroad noted by Marx and Moss (2011), Mapp (2012) found that even experiences in English-speaking countries were impactful for the participants. Although the participants identified ways in which they had developed professionally, their assignments and online discussions reflected a richer and deeper processing of the personal changes in them that had taken place. While these changes are valuable, more guided and structured work to help participants identify and process their professional development specifically with the same degree of depth would be beneficial. The survey measured perceived abilities and levels of confidence and

knowledge, both before and after the experience. It is therefore possible that the participants perceived their starting point, as well as the impact of the experience, to be greater than it actually was. In future iterations of this study this limitation could be mitigated by asking participants to include an example in response to the survey items or a pre-departure interview would allow the research to ask more probing questions to determine the level of actual versus perceived ability and skills. Finally, the participants across all three iterations of the program reported primarily positive experiences and learning outcomes. While there were some comments in the final reflection regarding program logistics that the participants would like to have done differently, they were not enough to warrant a theme across all groups. In essence, all of the responses and reflections were largely positive. This could be explained by the participants only being in country for three weeks, in which case they may never leave the Honey-moon phase of culture shock (Pederson, 1995), where everything is new and exciting and the work of negotiating cultural differences in a more profound way is never approached. This could be mitigated in future iterations of the program through developing cultural and school experiences that challenge the participants to go beyond superficial levels of cultural difference.

### Implications for Future Research

There are multiple opportunities for future research. First, given the limitations above, a study that compares the experiences of participants who completed a study abroad program in different countries would provide additional insight and support for the findings here. Also, as this program was designed for pre-service teachers, a second study could compare the experiences of students in other majors. To address the issue of participants engaging with the professional aspect of the experience, developing a research project as part of the program would be one step to alleviate this. As Barkin (2016) states, research projects that are part of a study abroad program allow for students to make greater connections between theory and practice and also to engage on a deeper level with local issues and resources in the host country. For pre-service teachers, this could mean investigating similarities and difference in national curriculum in the U.K. versus the Common Core curriculum in the United States or even different approaches to classroom management between the two countries. Regardless of the topic, by challenging participants to engage in a research-oriented project, they may be able to make greater connections in their professional development because of the program.

### CONCLUSION

This study has shown the personal and professional learning outcomes for pre-service teachers participating in a short-term study abroad program in Brighton, England. The present study, as well as others, demonstrates that a major-focused study abroad program provides opportunities for both personal and professional development. However, for this development to take place, participants need guided support, purposefully designed lessons and activities, and opportunities for reflection to process both as their experience abroad progresses. Furthermore, faculty-led study abroad programs provide a unique opportunity for the design of learning activities that challenge students to go beyond their comfort zone and to engage with the local envi-

ronment in a way that supports both personal and professional development. For instance, a higher tolerance for ambiguity as a result of having to learn different social norms and practices, may transfer to professional situations, such as an international client, or learning to negotiate travel with others may help develop interpersonal skills when it comes to working in groups or on teams with others in a workplace environment. Such skills as the result of education abroad would be applicable in a wide range of professions. In the case of the pre-service teachers in Brighton, the program supported their personal development by allowing them to grow in terms of confidence and autonomy. The program further supported them as emerging education professionals by providing multiple learning opportunities for them to engage in coursework and with area schools, allowing them to observe theory into practice. The participants returned home from their program not only changed as people, but as 21<sup>st</sup> century teachers as well.

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## **APPENDIX 1**

### **Pre- and Post-Survey Items**

1. I am good at conveying ideas verbally to others
2. I am a leader in group situations
3. I have a good understanding of my own culture
4. I am not afraid to try new things
5. I am confident in my ability to navigate a new place
6. I have a good understanding of international issues
7. I incorporate multiple perspectives in my decision making
8. If I don't know something, I will ask someone else
9. I have a diverse group of friends
10. I am comfortable in unfamiliar situations
11. I interact well with people who hold different interests, values or perspectives
12. I am good at gaining knowledge from my experiences
13. I feel comfortable asking a stranger for directions
14. I feel anxious when I don't understand something right away
15. I can identify different ways in which people communicate
16. I'm okay when something unexpected happens
17. I like to have everything planned ahead of time
18. I enjoy new experiences
19. I can identify appropriate behaviors based on observing the people around me
20. I am most comfortable in new places with a friend
21. I can identify different points of view in a conversation
22. I can advocate for myself to communicate my needs to others
23. I am resourceful in solving problems
24. I am comfortable being by myself in new places
25. I can apply information from one context to new, broader contexts
26. I am willing to take risks
27. I am flexible in adapting to situations of change
28. I am comfortable interacting with people having backgrounds different from mine
29. I like to explore new places
30. I am curious about the world around me

## APPENDIX 2

### City Scavenger Hunt Reflection Prompts

1. What did you learn most about the city of Brighton during your scavenger hunt? Don't reiterate what you saw or found out - I can already see those!
2. What did you learn about the people of Brighton during your interactions with them? How did you choose who to ask? What were your feelings about this part of the scavenger hunt?
3. What did you learn about yourself that you didn't know before during this process? What was challenging, frustrating, fun, exciting, etc.? What gave you confidence when you weren't sure what to do or where to go?
4. Identify a problem that arose during the scavenger hunt. How did you work to resolve this?
5. What did you learn about your partner? In what ways did you work well together and in what ways did you need to negotiate approaches and ideas, communicate your ideas, etc.?
6. What was your favorite part of the scavenger hunt? Why?
7. What other fun or interesting things did you find along the way between your destinations?
8. How will you use what you have learned from this activity as you continue in your Brighton learning adventures? How will you use what you have learned about yourself through this activity in your teaching practice?