

Frontiers: The Interdisciplinary Journal of Study Abroad

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Promoting Intercultural Sensitivity in Future Reading Specialists and School Librarians: The Impact of a Short-Term Study Abroad

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Abstract

This mixed methods study reports on seven library science and reading education students' experiences before, during, and after a small newly developed short-term interdisciplinary study abroad, and its effects on their intercultural sensitivity. The evidence collected in this study affirms our belief in the potential for experiential learning, such as personal interaction with people from other cultures, to prepare preservice teachers and librarians to interact with children, families, and colleagues from other cultures professionally.

Abstract in Spanish

Este estudio de métodos mixtos informa sobre las experiencias de siete estudiantes de bibliotecología y educación lectora antes, durante y después de un estudio interdisciplinario a corto plazo en el extranjero, y el efecto en sus sensibilidades interculturales. La evidencia recopilada en este estudio afirma nuestra creencia en el potencial del aprendizaje experiencial, como la interacción

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personal con personas de otras culturas, para preparar a los maestros y bibliotecarios futuros para interactuar profesionalmente con niños, familias y colegas de otras culturas.

Keywords:

Education Abroad, Study Abroad, Intercultural Sensitivity, Library Science, Reading Education

Introduction

Despite the long history and proliferation of study abroad programs, the body of literature exploring their impact is comparatively small, belying the significance of these types of programs to the students and educators who participate in them and to the greater global community. Participation in study abroad has increased significantly in recent decades, and because study abroad programs involve significant contributions from personnel and other university resources, it is imperative that their effects be measured and reported. This mixed methods study reports on student experiences during and after a small newly developed short-term interdisciplinary study abroad, and its effects on their intercultural sensitivity.

Literature Review

Students have signed up to study abroad in steadily increasing numbers, with participation tripling in recent decades, particularly in short-term study abroad (Goetz & Holliday, 2017). Whether short- or long-term, participation in study abroad has been correlated with an increase in intercultural sensitivity and greater cultural awareness (Medina-Lopez-Portillo, 2004; Chieffo & Griffith, 2004). The literature shows that varying degrees of intercultural sensitivity may be achieved and tracked through an array of different analytical tools and pedagogical experiences. These often include scales for quantitative measurement of intercultural sensitivity, and carefully designed learning activities for qualitative measurement.

Theoretical Framework

There are two predominant theoretical frameworks from which this study pulls: experiential learning and intercultural sensitivity. Each of these is discussed in turn next.

Experiential Learning

“Experiential learning is the type of education that occurs when students actively participate and interact with their surroundings” (Prestholdt & Fletcher, 2018, p. 17). Experiential learning involves authentic experiences in which the student is given the opportunity to become an active participant in the learning process by engaging with real situations. Experiential learning is the antithesis of the traditional knowledge transfer model of education in which students passively absorb information as it is doled out by the instructor or gleaned from a static learning resource.

Experiential learning has long been known to be a powerful educational technique being described by John Dewey in the first half of the twentieth century in the seminal work *Experience and Education* (1938). Dewey (1938) proposed that all learning involves an interaction between the learner and what is being learned. That is, the learner must have an experience with the material, not passively receive the learning being transmitted. In relation to intercultural sensitivity for future educators, the value of experience in learning means that students cannot simply be told that intercultural sensitivity is important or that ethnorelativism leads to better learning outcomes, but must experience interactions with people from other cultures as an outsider entering into their space for this learning to deeply occur.

Since Dewey proposed the value of experiential learning, several scholars have demonstrated the effectiveness of experiential learning as an effective educational practice (Kuh, 2008) and others have developed specific practices to maximize experiential learning. Importantly, Kolb (1984) proposed a four-stage cycle for experiential learning where students first have the experience, then reflect on the experience, learn from the experience, and finally implement what they have learned. For study abroad, this cycle implies that we must expose students to intercultural experiences, invite them to reflect on those experiences, and lead them to learn from those experiences to improve future interactions that promote intercultural sensitivity.

Intercultural Sensitivity

Technology continues to bring people together from around the world in new and exciting ways. Whereas international communication was once relegated to handwritten letters or telegrams, we have moved far beyond those days, first to conference calls and now to live video conferencing. In short, “intercultural interactions have become a constant feature of modern life” (UNESCO, 2013, p. 5). Our students have never known a world without

globalization and that interconnectedness highlights the importance of their development of intercultural sensitivity. According to UNESCO (2013, p. 16), one displays intercultural sensitivity when one has:

Adequate relevant knowledge about particular cultures, as well as general knowledge about the sorts of issues arising when members of different cultures interact, holding receptive attitudes that encourage establishing and maintaining contact with diverse others, as well as having the skills required to draw upon both knowledge and attitudes when interacting with others from different cultures.

Intercultural sensitivity can be measured in many ways, but a general move from ethnocentrism toward ethnorelativism is a good indicator of progress toward increased cultural sensitivity. Ethnocentrism can present in varying degrees, from the mild to the discriminatory. Associated dispositions “include seeing one’s own group (the in-group) as virtuous and superior, one’s own standards of value as universal, and out-groups as contemptible and inferior” and associated behaviors lean toward cooperation within one’s own group to the exclusion of other groups (Hammond & Axelrod, 2006, p. 926). In contrast, a move toward ethnorelativism is characterized by a more inclusive, broader view of the world and its myriad cultures. There are many pedagogical paths for encouraging the development of intercultural sensitivity and the move toward ethnorelativism; one such path is short-term study abroad.

Intercultural Sensitivity and Short-Term Study Abroad

Short-term study abroad is generally defined as any study abroad with a duration of less than one full semester. For the research of Lee and Negrelli (2018), students embarked on a 24-day stay in Japan and Korea. Students completed the Orthogonal Cultural Identification Scale (OCIS) developed by Oetting and Beauvais (1990-1991) before departure and upon their return. The OCIS was designed to measure identification with five different American ethnic groups. The researchers expected an increase in identification with the cultures students encountered on their study abroad, but in fact the opposite was true. Though initially surprising, this result is consistent with the work of Oetting (1993) and with Bloom & Miranda (2015) and is actually a sign of growth toward ethnorelativism. Student participants did not develop negative attitudes toward these cultures, they simply identified less, perhaps recognizing and even appreciating their cultural differences.

Nguyen (2017) conducted research involving 55 students in eight different study abroad programs. Her method involved administering the Intercultural Effectiveness Scale (IES; Bird, Stevens, Mendenhall, Oddou, & Osland, 2008) before, after, and three months following students' study abroad experience. The IES measures six intercultural competencies: self-awareness, exploration, global mindset, relationship interest, positive regard, and emotional resilience. Nguyen (2017) found that students made significant gains in three of the six competencies (self-awareness, global mindset, and relationship interest) and showed a general increase overall. She was also able to tie those skills back to specific activities in the course syllabi, indicating that intentional design is key to the development of intercultural sensitivity.

Gondra & Czerwionka (2018) also found an overall increase in intercultural knowledge (sensitivity) among their 26 students who participated in a five-week study abroad program in Spain. Using part of Fantini and Tirmizi's (2006) Assessment of Intercultural Competence questionnaire, the researchers measured students' intercultural knowledge prior to and following the study abroad. In addition to the overall increase in intercultural knowledge, their results indicate that "short-term study abroad is more beneficial in terms of intercultural knowledge growth for students who have lower levels of intercultural knowledge initially" (Gondra & Czerwionka, 2018, p. 134). Like Nguyen (2017), the authors stress the importance of intentionally designed learning activities, both before and during the study abroad experience.

Study Abroad Learning Activities

Given the importance of intentionally designed learning activities in study abroad experiences designed to foster intercultural sensitivity, it is critical we examine the types of learning activities possible. Two of the most common study abroad learning activities are experiential learning and written reflection. While each of these categories has a variety of ways that it can be implemented during study abroad, these activities' effects on intercultural sensitivity have been well-researched. Some of the variations of these learning activities and their effects will be detailed in turn in the sections that follow.

Experiential Learning

One such pedagogical tool is experiential learning, the value of which was one of the undergirding theoretical frameworks for both the educational experience and research design. Experiential learning has been demonstrated

as an effective educational technique not only in general as previously described but also in study abroad specifically.

Prestholt and Fletcher (2018) found that the effects of experiential learning were especially significant for students participating in a study abroad focused on a subject area outside their major. For non-Biology major students who participated in a study abroad to Tanzania and experienced its biology firsthand, the differences in pre- and post-test results demonstrated significant learning gains in the form of increased details about the area and the use of scientific names on the post-test where none had been present in the pretest answers. The researchers also observed a great deal of peer-to-peer learning that would not necessarily have occurred in a regular classroom, particularly as the situational factors of the study abroad experience that prompted those conversations would not have been present.

Another type of experiential learning activity is the drop-off technique. The drop-off technique derives its name quite literally; students are dropped off in an unknown area with instructions to explore that area and absorb the culture. Maloney and Asbury (2018) employed this technique over the course of two semesters of a study abroad to Ireland using a scaffolded approach: they first implemented a half day drop-off, followed by a full day drop-off, and finally an overnight drop-off. Results of the Intercultural Development Inventory®, which they administered before and after the study abroad experience each semester, indicated an increase in students' intercultural sensitivity, with the greatest increase in the second semester in which students were provided with targeted advice on how to increase their sensitivity.

Written Reflection

A second pedagogical tool that is often used to foster intercultural learning and sensitivity is the written reflection. The written reflection can take many forms including, but not limited to, communicative blogging and reflective journaling. Elola and Oskoz (2008) found that their students' use of blogs in a communicative exchange positively influenced intercultural sensitivity. The researchers assigned students abroad a partner at home and had them communicate via blog. Students not only completed assigned blog entries, but also chose to write optional entries. Using Byram's (1997, 2000) Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) model and assessment guidelines as a framework, the researchers thematically analyzed students' blog

entries and discovered that both sets of students benefited from the exchange, with the students abroad indicating that the exchange and writing provided them with the impetus to reflect more deeply on their experience and the culture (Elola & Oskoz, 2008).

Lee (2012) observed similar results in her study requiring blog entries as personal reflection. Students indicated how much they valued the chance to record and reflect on their feelings and perceptions. However, Wong (2018) strongly cautions us about the academic ritual of self-reflection, saying that “honest consideration of one’s experiences is essential for intercultural learning” (p. 49). Students, he says, often feel constrained to a particular type of academic behavior and persona and lose sight of the three “virtues” necessary to disengage from those expectations and open themselves fully to intercultural learning: honesty, ignorance, and courage. He further postulates that embracing those three virtues will allow students to truly experience the curiosity that they must in order to achieve personal growth.

Study Abroad and K-12 School Personnel

While the volume of research on study abroad is fairly limited in comparison to the proliferation of study abroad experiences each year, the amount of research involving the effects of study abroad on K-12 school personnel is rare, though there is some representation. In a 2011 study, Fine and McNamara found that a study abroad experience for school leaders “helped the participants to develop honest personal reflection, comfort with questioning their prior beliefs and assumptions, and critical thinking as the basis for a larger and more adequate view of their roles and responsibilities” (pp. 266-267). Using the Global Perspectives Inventory (GPI), the authors measured participants’ development by administering the GPI as a pre- and post-test to the three groups of K-12 administrators that participated in the study abroad over the course of three years. The results of the study are significant in that they illuminate the ability of study abroad to open participants’ eyes and minds to social justice issues, a skill which translates directly to the K-12 environment, where school personnel must serve the needs of marginalized populations (Fine & McNamara, 2011).

Similarly, Hermond, Vairez Jr., and Tanner (2018) found that study abroad gave leaders the opportunity to reflect on their personal cultural views and leadership philosophy, and to consider “how their leadership behavior

should change to meet the needs of others” (p. 25). In their answers to three open-ended questions, participants used language that indicated their recognition “that leaders must be aware that their students are culturally different from each other” (Hermond, Vairez Jr., and Tanner, 2018, p. 23). The results of both of these studies indicate that study abroad can be a valuable experience for school personnel that leads to better understanding of, and service to, the multiple cultures and identities they will encounter during their careers.

While the effects of study abroad on the intercultural sensitivity of school leaders is important work, there are a variety of other school professionals who interact closely with students and families from diverse cultures every day. This gap in the literature prompted both the study abroad experience described in this paper as well as the research into its effectiveness. Specifically, we asked: How does a short-term study abroad affect the intercultural sensitivity of school librarians and reading specialists?

Method

This study investigated the cultural sensitivity of reading education and library science master's students enrolled in a short-term faculty-led study abroad. A phenomenological approach was taken to determine the commonality of students' lived experiences through analysis of daily journal entries. Phenomenological studies such as this one aim to understand the lived experiences of people (Creswell, Hanson, Clark Plano, & Morales, 2007). Specifically, we sought to understand how a study abroad experience impacted students' intercultural sensitivity via daily journals and the *Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity Scale* (Bennett, 1993).

After obtaining institutional IRB approval, the students were recruited to participate in this study from a cross-listed study abroad course at a comprehensive regional university in the southeast. The course was designed to “explore cultural issues and their relevance to the role of the public librarian, school media specialist, and reading specialist in providing services to the local, regional, national, and international community” (course description, 2019). The study abroad section of this course was offered as an alternative to a required course for the library science students and as an elective for reading education students. Both authors were co-teachers of this course. This course was offered during the second summer session and ran for six weeks with two

weeks being offered in central Europe, including extended time in Germany and shorter day trips to France and Switzerland. Prior to travel abroad, students completed readings focusing on hidden bias, reflected on their own personal cultural narrative, and investigated a cultural group of interest and developed a best practice presentation on professional services to this community. While traveling abroad, students kept a daily journal reflecting on their experiences as they explored sites of cultural, social, and historical importance and engaged with locals. For the final two days abroad, students investigated a topic of their choice and compared its portrayal in English language and German language picture books. A daily travel itinerary can be seen in Appendix A. Throughout the study abroad, a modified drop-off approach prevailed; most days students were guided through planned activities and then left to their own devices to explore for the rest of the day, with instructions to observe local culture in all its possibilities during those independent excursions. According to Anderson (2016) “students having a basic understanding of intercultural frameworks, along with frequent and spontaneous facilitation by the instructor was the best method to mentor students to make greater intercultural sensitivity gains,” (p. iii). Upon returning to the United States, the students completed a final reflection and completed the *Intercultural Sensitivity Scale-15* (Wang & Zhou, 2016).

Participants

All students in the study abroad course ($N = 7$) consented to participate in the study. Four students were library science master’s students and three students were reading education master’s students. All participants were female, Caucasian, and between the ages of twenty-two and forty-three years old. Two were school librarians, one was a public librarian, one was a full-time teacher, and three were full-time graduate students.

Data Collection and Analysis

Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity Scale

The *Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity Scale* (Bennett, 1993) is one of a handful of analytical tools for the quantitative measurement of intercultural sensitivity. It is based on the theoretical framework of the *Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS)*, which posits that individuals move through six orientations around cultural difference. The first three (denial, defense reversal, and minimization) can be considered

ethnocentric whereas the final three (acceptance, adaptation, integration) can be considered ethno-relativistic. The DMIS theoretical framework serves as a way to conceptualize intercultural sensitivity for the purposes of research using the Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI; Hammer, Bennett, & Wiseman, 2003).

The abbreviated instrument used in this study consists of fifteen statements that are self-assessed using a five-point Likert-scale ranging from “Strongly Disagree” to “Strongly Agree.” The validity and reliability of this abbreviated instrument, the Intercultural Sensitivity Scale-15 (ISS-15) was established by Wang and Zhou (2016). The items on the questionnaire can be seen at that publication. When quantitative analysis of the self-assessed results of the *Intercultural Sensitivity Scale* derived from the DMIS is combined with the qualitative analysis of participants’ journal entries, investigators can form a robust picture of participants’ perceived intercultural sensitivity.

The ISS-15 was administered after the short-term study abroad, was used in its entirety, and completed in Qualtrics by all participants within one week of returning home. Six of these items were reverse scored due to item wording. Descriptive statistics were used to analyze this questionnaire and a count of strongly disagree (1), disagree (2), and uncertain (3) was taken for each item, excepting those reverse scored, to ascertain how interculturally sensitive our participants self-reported following the study abroad.

Daily Journal Entries

Students’ daily journal entries and post-study abroad ISS-15 (Wang & Zhou, 2016) were the units of analysis for this study. Students completed journal entries describing and reflecting on their experiences for each of the fourteen days abroad, excluding air travel days. Students were provided open-ended opportunity to reflect on their experiences via daily journaling with the only requirements being that they engage daily with their experiences from both “gut response” (heart/head) and “critical distance” (personal/professional) lenses. The instructions for daily journaling were deliberately vague/open-ended so as to capture the authentic voices/experiences of the students. Participants were encouraged to write every day and most often journaled in the evenings. These journal entries were analyzed using thematic analysis. This analysis involved the first author reading and open coding one participant’s journal and creating a preliminary codebook from which both authors coded a

second participant's journal to establish interrater reliability. Interrater reliability was established at 90%, well above Miles and Huberman's (1994) recommendation of at least 80%. Therefore, both authors felt confident continuing with coding using the codebook developed. Once these codes were applied to each of the participants' journals, data was arranged according to "the most significant or frequent initial codes" so as to facilitate pattern matching and subsequent thematic analysis (Charmaz, 2006, p. 46). Themes were then analyzed to better understand each participants' intercultural experiences. Each of these themes is discussed in the results section.

Quality Assurance

The use of multiple sources of data (daily journals and intercultural sensitivity scale) reflect triangulation of the data, which strengthened the construct validity of the study. Reliability was assured by keeping the data intact in its original form in password protected applications. Reliability was also increased through the careful coding and re-coding of the data, as well as the use of multiple coders and a high interrater reliability score (Creswell, 2014; Kolb, 2012). During the coding process, pattern matching was used in order to ensure internal validity, and external validity was attained by the careful elimination of "subjective judgments during the periods of research design and data collection" (Riege, 2003, p. 80). Rich descriptions of the data are included in this report to further support validity (Creswell, 2014; Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

Results

Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity Scale

The *Intercultural Sensitivity Scale-15* (Wang & Zhou, 106) was analyzed using descriptive statistics. Only two out of seven students (29%) rated themselves as strongly or somewhat disagreeing or uncertain on items 7, 8, 9, and 10, and only one out of seven students (14%) rated themselves as strongly or somewhat disagreeing or uncertain on items 11, 12, and 14. Each of these items questioned participants' self-efficacy and confidence in interactions. All students rated themselves as being in agreement with all other items. The results from this survey can be seen in Table 1 including which statement corresponds to which item. Together, these items indicate that students think positively about people from other cultures and look forward to intercultural

interactions but are not yet confident in their actions in those interactions. These results are consistent with the qualitative findings, which follow.

TABLE 1. QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS OF ISS-15.

Item	Count of Students Self-Identifying as a Level 1, 2, or 3
1. I enjoy interacting with people from different cultures.	
2. I often give positive responses to my culturally different counterpart during our interacting.	
3. I avoid those situations where I will have to deal with culturally-distinct persons.	
4. I don't like to be with people from different cultures.	
5. I would not accept the opinions of people from different cultures.	
6. I think people from other cultures are narrow-minded.	
7. I am pretty sure of myself in interacting with people from different cultures.	2
8. I feel confident in interacting with people from different cultures.	2
9. I can be as sociable as I want to be when interacting with people from different cultures.	2
10. I often feel useless when interacting with people from different cultures.	2
11. I get upset easily when interacting with people from different cultures.	1
12. I often get discouraged when I am with people from different cultures.	1
13. I am very observant when interacting with people from different cultures.	

-
14. I am sensitive to my culturally-distinct counterpart's subtle meanings during our interaction. 1
15. I try to obtain as much information as I can when interacting with people from different cultures.
-

Daily Journals

Students' daily journals were coded using provisional coding, which involves establishing a predetermined set of codes before data collection begins (Saldaña, 2009). For details on how the researchers established their codebook, see the Method section of this paper. The codebook consisted of 11 codes. Table 2 shows the list and frequency of the codes that emerged from the analysis.

TABLE 2. FREQUENCY OF CODES FROM DAILY JOURNALS (N=7)

Code	Frequency
Cultural Comparisons/Social Norms	150
Consumerism	123
Emotional Self	57
Aesthetics	57
Logistics	56
Personal Growth	55
Weather	46
Group Dynamics	44
Language Barrier	33
Historical Significance	22
Educational Impact	20

Cultural Comparisons/Social Norms was the most represented category ($n = 150$). Items coded in this category involved observations about German

culture, usually in comparison to American culture. The following quotes from student journals are illustrative of the types of responses that were coded as Cultural Comparisons/Social Norms:

Student A: On the way to the Chinese tower we saw a man sitting in the park naked. In the US we view nudity as bad and here it is completely acceptable and there does not appear to be the same pressures to be model perfect here as there is in the US.

Student G: I think the German culture really started to sink in today. From the vacuum cleaner hair drier to the different foods on the breakfast buffet to the concentration camp to the guy at the river. However, there were still many surprises. I couldn't believe that so many places in Dachau were closed so early in the day. But with each surprise, I had to remind myself that I was submerged in a different culture.

Students were obviously surprised by some of the differences they observed. In Germany, English is very commonly spoken in larger cities, which can make tourists feel "at home," increasing their culture shock when an out of their ordinary experience occurs. We saw evidence of this repeatedly throughout our study abroad experience.

The second most frequent code was Consumerism ($n = 123$). Items coded in this category included any instance where money exchanged hands, primarily shopping or dining. The following quotes from student journals are representative of items coded as Consumerism:

Student F: We planned to explore the market, but stopped on the way for some breakfast. We got yummy quiches from this little bakery and at them on the way to the market. At the market, <student E> and I split a little container of blackberries and we munched on them as we browsed the stands of flowers, produce, and handmade goods.

Student B: After lunch we continued to walk around Zurich to explore what it was like. We walked into shops and bakeries to shop. Overall, the city of Zurich was very overwhelming. I think that it's steep prices and lack of euros surprised me. I didn't buy what wasn't necessary. The only things that I bought were meals and coffee.

The frequency of the remaining nine codes dropped below 100. Emotional Self and Aesthetics were next with a frequency of 57 each. Items

coded as Emotional Self were those that dealt with students' range of feelings throughout the trip. Following are a few examples:

Student C: It was irritating not to go out and explore more, but I was trying to roll with the punches. It made me miss my husband terribly because we would have gone on an adventure, drank wine/beer, and relaxed in the shade.

Student A: I enjoyed the bus rides because it was a good time to take for myself and just enjoy the sights and a book along the way. I didn't have to interact too much and could recharge my introversion a bit.

Items coded as Aesthetics included all of the students' observations and perceptions regarding architecture and scenery, or other remarks on appearance. Following are a few examples of items coded as Aesthetics:

Student D: Now we are driving through a town on the lake and the flower boxes in the window are so freaking cute. I want to do that on my balcony.

Student B: When we finally got up to the castle, the view was spectacular. The castle was nestled on top of the mountain.

Logistics ($n = 56$) and Personal Growth ($n = 55$) had similar frequencies. Excerpts coded as Logistics dealt with banal observations such as asking for directions, getting lost, and finding one's way.

Excerpts coded as Personal Growth dealt specifically with a student coming to a realization that either changed their way of thinking or their behavior. Here are some examples:

Student B: Once again, I felt very inferior because the whole menu was in German. This time however, I was prepared. I had the Google translate app that had the camera feature to translate.

Student C: After we told the guys what we'd like to order, he told us to leave the area and go sit down. I guess we were in the way, and he wanted us gone to make room for more people who needed to order. I wasn't offended at this point in the trip.

These types of responses were typical throughout the trip and illustrative of students' move away from ethnocentrism and toward ethnorelativism.

The remaining five codes had frequencies less than 50. Weather ($n = 46$) was the next most frequent code, and items coded as such pertained mainly to

the heat and acknowledgements of cultural differences regarding expectations for air conditioning and iced water, but also to times of relief from the heat.

Group Dynamics are always a key part of study abroad, and this code came in next with a frequency of 44. Because this was a small group, students spent most of their time together as one group. They also had to work in two smaller groups on the final project. Entries in this category dealt with how they navigated those groups.

As none of the participants in this study abroad spoke German, they sometimes encountered difficulty in communicating with the native population, and Language Barrier ($n = 33$) was the next most frequent code. Items coded as Language Barrier ranged from one-on-one interactions with native speakers to trying to read menus and transportation signs, and gaining confidence in nonverbal communication. Here are a few examples:

Student E: At first, I was nervous to walk around because I was still worried about the language barrier and didn't know what to do about people talking to me in German when I walked up to their shop, but slowly I learned to just say "English" when people confronted me in German. But I honestly feel bad about not knowing the language here. Now I know how frustrating it is to not be able to communicate with, or understand, the people around me.

Student C: I am most insecure when I don't know the language they are speaking, but I learned to gain some confidence by knowing how to speak the basics, pointing to things, and using Google Translate.

Students' increase in confidence in navigating the language barrier was evident throughout the study abroad experience, and these excerpts are indicative of that progression.

Historical Significance ($n = 22$) and Educational Impact ($n = 20$) round out the list of codes and are similar in nature. The difference is that a student might mention something's Historical Significance as a mere observation, whereas items coded as Educational Impact involved internalizing new knowledge (often historical significance) and indicating how it might be used in or applied to their own life and/or practice. Here are two examples of items coded as Historical Significance (HS) and Educational Impact (EI), respectively, presented together for the purpose of comparison:

Student D: The history of Munich and Germany itself is very interesting. I knew that Germany had not always been called Germany, but it's interesting to hear how recently it unified from separate states. (HS)

Student F: . . . we walked to the university to listen to a lecture on (the) German education system. My main takeaway from this were two main things: I thought it was interesting that students are sent to different types of schools based on ability. I can see the benefits of this, but I also think it would have some negative effects as well. I like seeing a mixture of ability levels in a classroom and I think that it benefits all students. My other main takeaway was that teaching is a very high paying profession in Germany . . . German teachers have to complete more years of higher education than US teachers, but for higher pay, it seems well worth it to me. (EI)

These excerpts, particularly the Educational Impact excerpt, demonstrate students' recognition that different does not necessarily equal wrong or bad. We observed these types of reactions increasingly throughout the study abroad, again as participants moved away from ethnocentrism and toward ethnorelativism. Following is a discussion of these results, as well as our conclusions and implications for practice and further research.

Discussion

Six of the seven participants in this study either have now, or plan to have, positions in a K-12 school. All seven participants will be required to interact with people of other cultures, including individuals from marginalized populations. The outcome of those interactions depends largely on how well they have been prepared by their degree programs, but also on their intercultural sensitivity. The results of this research show that study abroad does afford the opportunity for students to reflect on those aspects of their social and emotional intelligence, and to learn and grow in confidence in how they interact with those who are different from them.

The quantitative data indicates that students possessed an overall desire to know about other cultures but had some misgivings about their ability to be successful in that endeavor. This conclusion is corroborated by the qualitative analysis, with evidence appearing throughout the content, regardless of the code(s) assigned. Consider, for example, these pre- and post-trip thoughts from

Student G, which were echoed almost unanimously in various iterations by the other six students:

Even though I feel comfortable interacting with people of different cultures, I am not always sure of myself . . . I hope that being submerged in a different culture will help me have a better understanding of what it's like to be submerged in America as someone from another country. (pre-trip)

I love to interact with people of different cultures, but I don't always feel confident when speaking to them, especially if there is a language barrier . . . I do think going to Germany and being submerged in the culture gave me an even greater desire to interact with people of different cultures. (post-trip)

Although this student felt some level of inadequacy in her ability to interact, she also expressed a willingness and even desire to do so, and she appears to have felt validated by the experience and more confident in her ability to interact going forward.

The frequency with which students reflected in their journals on Cultural Comparisons/Social Norms indicates a latent desire to move away from ethnocentrism. They were specifically coached and directed to observe the German culture; they did so, internalizing what they observed in an attempt to make sense of those observations within the context of their own personal lived experience, thus allowing them to become more ethno-relativistic in their thinking. Evidence of this phenomenon can be found in the following excerpts:

Student A: It was interesting to see how our cultures came together and where they were different but also to see how I would like to implement some of the culture into my day to day life. I really liked seeing the amount of quality time and their interest in sitting with new people. I think that is something that all cultures should strive for. I also liked their confidence and self-assurance that they all seemed to have whereas we are constantly questioning ourselves or at least comparing ourselves to others. I like to think that we are never done learning and I think that translates well to cultural sensitivity. We should always be learning more about different cultures and backgrounds.

Student B: Upon arrival to Edeka [a local supermarket], we realized that it wasn't open because it was Sunday. A lot of places in Germany are closed on Sunday. We discovered this harsh reality when we were searching for

at least one place to be open for us to get food . . . Upon initial thought, I was very angry that everything was closed. But looking with critical distance, I realized that Sunday is the day of rest. Germans really take this to heart (unlike in America).

Both of these examples illustrate a thoughtful and deliberate move away from ethnocentrism toward ethnorelativism. The qualitative analysis of participants' journals revealed a great deal of this type of movement along the ethnocentrism to ethnorelativism scale, illustrating the importance and value of the intercultural interaction students encounter during study abroad. It is important to note, however, that this movement and proximity to other cultures does not equate to integration, as Woolf (2001) pointed out.

Our students also recognized the similarities and differences in culture in the children's picture books that they examined for their final projects. From Student E's journal:

I was surprised to find out that the book We Are All Wonders was translated to German. This shows that the German culture does value the idea that all people are created miraculously and that physical appearance does not take away from being a miracle. Also, this book went along with our observation that a lot of German books about individuality deal with the main character finding self-acceptance and not have to gain acceptance from an outside source. This was something we saw way more of in German books than we did in American books.

All of our students will be responsible to some degree for choosing resources for their own students and the general public as future reading specialists or school librarians, and the ability to recognize and appreciate different representations of culture is paramount in that decision-making process.

We, like Nguyen (2017) and Gondra & Czerwionka (2018), believe that these results are directly tied to the intentional decisions that we as library science and education professors made. We believe our intentional visits to culturally important sites that went beyond those strictly related to the students' intended professions directly led to our finding of increased intercultural sensitivity among our participants. That is, though we engaged students with a comparison of English-language and German-language treatment of particular topics in picture books and had them attend a lecture on the structure of the

German educational system, we also purposefully engaged students in more general cultural experiences. For instance, they toured Dachau, the first Nazi concentration camp, to engage with the historical effects of Naziism and to consider the continued effects of that history on the present culture. We were impressed with students' insightful questions that considered how this history was discussed both in German schools and at German dinner tables. Similarly, we purposefully introduced students to two local markets in Freiburg to consider the cultural differences in something as simple (but pervasive and necessary across cultures) as food acquisition. We also intentionally included several times for acclimation and free periods for students to engage authentically with locals in ways that were personally meaningful to them. Because our students were all graduate level, we afforded them more freedom of choice than we might have with an undergraduate group. Many students chose to use this time to visit other historical and cultural sites that we did not visit together or even just to take a packed lunch to a local park and observe and interact with others there. We concur with Prestholdt and Fletcher (2018) that these non-discipline specific activities were a crucial element of the short-term study abroad experience that directly influenced participants' increased intercultural sensitivity.

Moreover, we believe our across-the-board findings are likely due to the homogeneity of our group, including their common lack of previous travel experience and homogeneity of their home regions. To illustrate, one of our students had not only never left the state before but had never even walked through the downtown of the metropolis approximately a one-hour drive from her rural home. The homogeneity of the teacher workforce is an oft-cited issue given the diversity of the student population, and, as a result, there are often calls for increased diversity in the teacher recruitment pool (Department of Education, 2016; Gershenson, Hart, Lindsay, & Papageorge, 2017). While we certainly support those efforts, we also believe that increased opportunities for intentional intercultural experiences for practicing and pre-service teachers are vital. Experiences such as those described in this study can enhance the intercultural sensitivity of all teachers, even when students must be taught by a teacher from a different cultural group given the state of the teacher labor pool. Moreover, these experiences may be even more impactful on those with few previous interactions with culturally diverse individuals (Gondra & Czerwionka, 2018).

It is important to note, however, that our students were still not completely culturally sensitive, as can be seen in many of the journal excerpts shared throughout this paper. While this experience was certainly able to grow their appreciation of cultural differences and move them away from ethnorelativism, they largely still seemed to think in “us” and “them” terms. Moreover, the ability to consider subcultures, or even simply differences among members of a culture, was not yet apparent. One of our goals for selecting Central Europe as the destination for this short-term study abroad was the close proximity and interactions among a variety of cultural and linguistic groups, given both the easy border crossings within the European Union and the recent increase in immigration to the area from other parts of the world. In future iterations of this study abroad, we will engage students to consider both the similarities and differences within members of a culture more specifically through directed readings, facilitated discussions, and journal prompts. In the next section, we further discuss other limitations and future directions of this research.

Limitations and Implications for Future Research

While the research described here is valuable in the context of a small case study with a very particular population of participants (future reading specialists or school librarians), the participant group for this study abroad was small and homogeneous and results cannot be generalized to the larger population, or even to the larger population of preservice or practicing educators. However, the results indicate value to the professions of library science and education that merits further investigation. Future iterations of this work might involve a control group of students who do not participate in study abroad, as well as follow-up with both groups once they have had a chance to apply their graduate level coursework in their careers. The authors are also aware that a long-term research study, including follow-up with participants once they are ensconced in their professional setting, would contribute much to the existing literature on study abroad and its implications for K-12 educators.

Another limitation of the study is the self-reported nature of both the DMIS and the reflection journals. There is evidence to indicate that students applied Wong’s three virtues of honesty, ignorance, and courage as they completed the scale and journal entries (2017). However, the inherent bias and subjectivity associated with these activities should still be considered. Future

iterations of this class will require students to keep brief field notes that they can refer back to as they journal each day in order to eliminate recall bias.

Conclusions

The evidence collected in this study affirms our belief that, as teachers and librarians interact with people from other cultures, they will be better prepared to interact with children, families, and colleagues from other cultures. It is our job as study abroad leaders “to give students the scaffolding they need to be critical global citizens who work and vote and live within the context of the larger sociopolitical realities” so that they can “look past their bubble and understand these issues from multiple perspectives, to put themselves in the shoes of people around the world who may be very different from themselves, but who share the common trait of being human” (Dietrich, 2020, p. 6). For our population of future teachers and librarians, this means the ability to engage fully with the people and content that give their work meaning, and the value of that ability is immeasurable.

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