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INTEGRATING EDUCATION ABROAD:  
FOSTERING CRITICAL REFLEXIVITY IN STUDENTS

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PIM78 IELR

A Capstone Paper submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for a Master of  
International Education at SIT Graduate Institute in Brattleboro, VT, USA.

May 4, 2020

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## INTEGRATING EDUCATION ABROAD

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### **Abstract**

This Capstone research aimed to address a need in higher education internationalization, which was to bring more intentionality and integrated learning around education abroad. The research explored the ways in which educators help students effectively process and make meaning of their lived experiences abroad. The following questions were addressed: how can educators help students to critically reflect on what they gained from their education abroad experience, and on who they are in a larger global society? How can educators foster this critical reflexivity in students for life-long learning?

The conceptual framework explored key theories in student development, adult learning, and reflective learning theory and pedagogy, and literature was reviewed on intercultural competence and current research on education abroad pedagogy and programming. This framework was utilized as the theoretical foundation for qualitative surveys, interviews, and a focus group targeted to international education (IE) professionals at U.S. colleges and universities.

The findings demonstrated the need for intentional, programmatic supports for education abroad across the entire experience, including pre-departure, while abroad, and upon re-entry. Opportunities for guided, critical reflection should be present throughout, and international programs should be aligned with a student's academic discipline and professional pursuits. Education abroad should be deeply integrated into the broader curriculum and within the structure of the institution, and it can be further supported through integration in individual disciplines. Collaboration and partnerships provide an opportunity for broader student support, and educators should continue to challenge and support students beyond the education abroad experience.

## Introduction

In recent decades, internationalization has become a norm in higher education. Colleges and universities are continually expanding efforts to internationalize their institutions in a multitude of ways. In response to an increasingly interconnected, globalized society, higher education institutions:

...are compelled to develop policy that leads to a more globally connected and globally literate university community. Comprehensive internationalization describes the policies and programs developed at higher education institutions to bring about the goal of a more globally aware campus community. (Bell, 2014, p. 116)

The American Council on Education's (ACE) Center for Internationalization and Global Engagement (CIGE) defines comprehensive internationalization as "a strategic, coordinated process that seeks to align and integrate policies, programs, and initiatives to position colleges and universities as more globally oriented and internationally connected institutions" (ACE, 2019). The CIGE's model for comprehensive internationalization is comprised of the following target areas: 1) articulated institutional commitment; 2) administrative leadership, structure, and staffing; 3) curriculum, co-curriculum, and learning outcomes; 4) faculty policies and practices; 5) student mobility; and 6) collaboration and partnerships (ACE, 2019).

Within this broader context of internationalization in higher education, student mobility remains the most prominent form of global education on U.S. campuses (ACE, 2017). ACE defines student mobility as both "the outward flow of domestic students to other countries to engage in an education abroad experience and the inward flow of international students to study at U.S. campuses" (ACE, 2019). This Capstone research focuses primarily on the former:

outward mobility of students from U.S. campuses to other parts of the world for study, internships, service, and/or research purposes.

During the undergraduate experience, students are choosing to study abroad, conduct international internships, and participate in international service learning in countries all over the world. As student mobility continues to expand, both in quantity of students and in diversity of mobility experiences, there exists an increasing responsibility for educators to help students integrate these education abroad experiences into their academic programs. Colleges and universities nationwide are increasingly giving more attention to the pre-departure and re-entry aspects of education abroad programming to address this need of intentional curricular integration, yet ample opportunity remains to improve and expand these efforts.

Education abroad is purported to be a high-impact learning experience that presents students with a myriad of challenges: discerning the nuances of communication in another culture, tolerating ambiguity, communicating in a non-native language, adapting to a new town or city, navigating a different education system, encountering new worldviews and grappling with one's own, questioning previously held assumptions, and so much more. However, mobility alone does not ensure that students will develop the intercultural competencies that educators expect. With this rich set of challenges and learning opportunities encountered abroad, there is a need to offer intentional supports to students so that they can effectively process, overcome, and learn from these challenges. These supports should ideally be present through all stages of the education abroad experience: pre-departure, while abroad, and upon re-entry. As Vande Berg, Paige, and Hemming Lou (2012) explain, "the data show that students learn and develop considerably more when educators prepare them to become more self-reflective, culturally self-aware, and aware of 'how they know what they know'" (p. 21). A leading model that supports

this type of learning is David Kolb's experiential learning cycle, which emphasizes reflection upon concrete experience, and integrates theory with practice. I have worked closely with undergraduate students in an integrative academic center at a small liberal arts college for the past three and a half years. These students complete both a semester abroad and an international internship, and I have found that the processing of these experiences upon re-entry is a critical step in their learning.

### **Statement of Research**

This Capstone research explored the ways in which educators help students effectively process and make meaning of their lived experiences abroad. The following questions were addressed: how can educators help students to critically reflect on what they gained from their education abroad experience, and on who they are in a larger global society? How can educators foster this critical reflexivity in students for life-long learning?

In order to successfully address these questions, a conceptual framework was provided, describing key theories in student development, adult learning, and reflective learning theory and pedagogy. Intercultural competence frameworks were explored, along with current research on education abroad pedagogy and programming. This framework was utilized as the theoretical foundation for surveys, interviews, and a focus group targeted to international education (IE) professionals - both faculty and staff - at U.S. colleges and universities.

The intent of this study was to address a need in higher education internationalization, which was to bring more intentionality and integrated learning around student mobility. By reviewing relevant literature, surveying professionals at various U.S. institutions, and assessing current educational practices, a clearer understanding was developed on how to best support

students in integrating their education abroad experiences more deeply into their education, fostering critical reflexivity for life-long learning.

### **Conceptual Framework**

In order to assess best practices in facilitating student learning, it is important to understand key theories of student development and adult learning. The following conceptual framework provides an overview of influential theories in the field including Sanford's (1966) theory of challenge and support, Baxter Magolda's (2001) theory of self-authorship, Mezirow's (1991) transformative learning theory, Dewey's understanding of reflective learning, and Kolb's (1984) experiential learning theory.

### **Student Development and Education Abroad**

A fundamental theory of student development is Sanford's (1966) theory of challenge and support (Jones & Abes, 2017). For students to grow and thrive, they must be pushed outside of their comfort zones and forced to confront challenges. However, without balancing challenge with support, a student could easily become overwhelmed and shut down. If too much support is provided, the student could become overly comfortable and complacent, with no incentive to learn and grow. The balance of challenge and support will be different for each individual, and there are observable trends within specific populations of what constitutes an appropriate balance. For example, first generation college students, underrepresented students, international students, etc. will have different needs in regard to the types of support and challenges that will best facilitate their learning.

For traditional-aged college students (18 to 22), the undergraduate experience is a time of deep personal growth and development. While students are further developing critical thinking skills, they are also beginning to question external authority and to make meaning of the world

based on their internal authority instead. Baxter Magolda (2001) defined self-authorship as “the developmental capacity to internally define one’s own beliefs, identities, and relationships...self-authorship enables individuals to think critically, act authentically, and interact mutually” (Baxter Magolda & Taylor, 2017, p. 154). Education abroad experiences have potential to amplify this journey towards self-authorship, as previously held assumptions and beliefs are brought into question. During education abroad experiences, students are confronted with a greater amount of independence and are required to navigate new and challenging situations, forge new relationships, and grapple with different ways of seeing the world. Especially in international internships, students have vastly less structure and support than on their home campus, and they are forced to rely on themselves in a way they likely have never had to before.

Bringing together these two concepts of challenge and support and self-authorship, Baxter Magolda and Taylor (2017) introduce a learning partnerships model:

Baxter Magolda’s (2009) learning partnerships model (LPM) provides a set of three challenges and three accompanying supports to foster growth toward self-authorship. The challenges include dealing with complex decisions, developing personal authority, and collaborating to solve issues. In turn, the supports include respecting students’ thoughts and feelings, helping students sort through their experiences, and collaborating with students to solve problems. (Baxter Magolda & Taylor, 2017, p. 166)

A learning partnership between educator and student takes into account the diverse needs of students, as a balance of challenge and support will look different for each individual. The LPM illustrates that the journey towards self-authorship begins with concrete experience, as the student is navigating and making sense of their environment. Learning is founded on relationships with others - in this case, learner and teacher – to make meaning of experience. The

following section will describe in more detail the importance of reflection on experience to learning and development.

### **Reflective Learning: Freire, Mezirow, Dewey, and Kolb**

**Freire.** Elements of Freirean pedagogy provide a helpful roadmap for educators to understand some of the tenets of student learning abroad. A foundational concept in Freirean pedagogy is that experience itself is a key source of knowledge. As explained by Freire (1968), “the starting point for organizing the program content of education or political action must be the present, existential, concrete situation, reflecting the aspirations of the people” (p. 85). Another key Freirean concept is that learning is relational and occurs through critical dialogue. The balance of reflection and action are what comprise true dialogue; without both elements, education suffers. Reflection without action is detached from concrete experience and can thus become meaningless, whereas action without reflection can turn to mindless activism, which also stifles true dialogue (Freire, 1968).

To use Freire’s language, students on education abroad programs are continuously partaking in critical dialogue and balancing action and reflection; they are confronting new challenges in the day-to-day, reflecting upon those challenges, acting in new ways, reflecting upon their shifting behaviors, and so on. This shift in behavior and attitudes that results from students’ reflection upon their experiences is a defining component of transformative learning. An education abroad experience aids in helping students to become interculturally competent, consider others’ viewpoints and perspectives, and adopt a critical understanding of global issues. As Freire (1968) states:

It is not our role to speak to the people about our own view of the world, nor to attempt to impose that view on them, but rather to dialogue with the people about their view and

ours. We must realize that their view of the world, manifested variously in their action, reflects their *situation* in the world. (p. 96)

Again, it is the responsibility of educators to help bring students along in this dialogue.

**Mezirow.** Like Freire, Mezirow described self-directed learners as those who engage in critical dialogue, challenging others' views and likewise assessing their own. Mezirow emphasized the importance of open discourse to allow for a questioning of intrinsic beliefs, values, and assumptions. Cranton (2016), a scholar of Mezirow's work, explains:

We develop or construct personal meaning from our experience and validate it through interaction and communication with others. What we make of the world is a result of our perceptions of our experiences...Transformative learning is a process of examining, questioning, validating, and revising our perspectives. (p. 18)

Education abroad experiences can provide fertile ground for this type of critical dialogue, as students are confronted with diverse worldviews and forced to navigate cultural difference.

Similar to Freirean pedagogy, Mezirow's transformative learning theory emphasizes reflection on experience as a critical element of learning - both "critical reflection and critical self-reflection" (Cranton, 2016, p. 29). As Cranton (2016) states:

When something unexpected happens, when a person encounters something that does not fit with his or her expectations of how things should be based on past experience, the choices are to reject the unexpected or to question the expectation. When people critically examine their habitual expectations, revise them, and act on the revised point of view, transformative learning occurs. (p. 15)

Mezirow described three types of reflection – content, process, and premise. Content reflection, which focuses on the "what" questions (e.g., what do I believe?), and process reflection, focused

on the “how” questions (e.g., how have I come to believe this?), are steps towards transformative learning. Premise reflection – the “why” questions (e.g., why should I believe this?) - is what *truly* transforms the learner, pushing him or her to change perspectives as they question deeply held beliefs and assumptions (Cranton, 2016).

**Dewey.** A discussion of reflection as a key to learning is incomplete without acknowledging the influential teachings of John Dewey. Rogers (2002), a scholar of John Dewey, explains that Dewey’s concept of reflection contained four overarching criteria: reflection as a meaning-making process, reflection as a rigorous way of thinking, reflection in community, and reflection as a set of attitudes. Just as the theorists who came after him, Dewey emphasized that interaction with one’s environment is the starting point for learning. The learner makes sense of new experiences based on his or her understanding of prior experiences and drawing connections with those experiences; Dewey referred to this as continuity. As Rogers (2002) states, “the creation of meaning out of experience is at the very heart of what it means to be human. It is what enables us to make sense of and attribute value to the events of our lives” (p. 848).

Dewey’s definition of reflection as a rigorous way of thinking can provide a helpful roadmap for educators in facilitating student learning. Rogers (2002) outlined Dewey’s six stages of reflection as follows:

1. An experience; 2. Spontaneous interpretation of the experience; 3. Naming the problem(s) or the question(s) that arises out of the experience [aka intellectualization]; 4. Generating possible explanations for the problem(s) or question(s) posed; 5. Ramifying the explanations into full-blown hypotheses; 6. Experimenting or testing the selected hypotheses. (p. 851)

This reflective process put forth by Dewey served as a foundation for David Kolb's (1984) Experiential Learning Theory. From this description, it is important to note that Dewey's understanding of reflection involves reconstructing, reorganizing, and making sense of lived experience. Additionally, reflection must include action, or active experimentation.

Dewey's third criterion for reflection was that it should occur in community. The act of articulating and sharing one's experience with others contributes to learning. It affirms the value of one's experience, contributes to deeper reflection and understanding, and provides "support to engage in the process of inquiry" (Rogers, 2002, p. 857). This assertion supports the value of reentry programming for students to process their experiences from abroad together with their peers. Finally, Dewey viewed reflection as a set of attitudes, including: whole-heartedness, or passion and curiosity; directness and lack of ego; open-mindedness; and responsibility, or considering the real-world application as opposed to getting caught up in self-absorption.

**Kolb.** David Kolb (1984), drawing on the intellectual theories of Dewey and others, introduced his experiential learning theory (ELT), a cyclical process "driven by the resolution of the dual dialectics of action-reflection and experience-conceptualization" (Passarelli & Kolb, 2012, p. 138). Kolb's experiential learning cycle emphasizes the continuous, holistic, and process-oriented nature of learning, which is grounded in a learner's concrete experience. Kolb (1984) defined learning as "the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience" (p. 38). The experiential learning cycle begins with the learner's concrete experience, followed by reflective observation of that experience. The learner then moves to abstract conceptualization, assimilating their reflections into abstract concepts and drawing on theory to deepen the learning. The fourth step is active experimentation, by which the learner tests out newly acquired theory. These four stages of the experiential learning cycle –

concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation – also serve as characterizations of an individual’s learning style. While ELT asserts that all learners move through the experiential learning cycle, the way in which an individual moves through the cycle depends on their preferred mode of learning (Passarelli & Kolb, 2012).

As is evident from the theories of Freire, Mezirow, Dewey, and Kolb, learning is an experiential, reflective process, which is grounded in an individual’s lived experience. For deep, transformative learning to occur, an individual must interact meaningfully with their environment, draw connections with prior experience, engage in critical dialogue, question previously held assumptions, and be open to experimenting with new ways of thinking and being in the world.

### **Literature Review**

Moving from the theoretical foundation of student development and adult learning theories, the following review of literature on cultural learning grounds these theories in current practice. Intercultural competence frameworks are explored, along with a survey of current practices and pedagogies within integrative education abroad programming.

#### **Intercultural Competence**

The term “intercultural competence” is referenced quite regularly both within and outside the field of international education and is often one of the primary desired outcomes for students participating in mobility programs. “Global/intercultural fluency” is cited by the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE) as one of the key competencies in career readiness (NACE, 2019). The Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) developed an Intercultural Knowledge and Competence VALUE (Valid Assessment of Learning

in Undergraduate Education) Rubric to define and assess essential learning outcomes. AAC&U utilizes Bennett's (2008) definition of intercultural knowledge and competence, which is "a set of cognitive, affective, and behavioral skills and characteristics that support effective and appropriate interaction in a variety of cultural contexts" (AAC&U, 2009).

Students must develop a set of knowledge, skills, and attitudes in order to demonstrate intercultural competence. Circling back to student development theories, students obtain intercultural competencies at different rates and different levels depending on multiple factors, including their background, their "ability to reflect, ability to synthesize and integrate, and understanding of the other culture(s)" (Friedman, 2019). Intercultural competence requires one to understand cultural differences and demonstrate this understanding by engaging mindfully and effectively with another culture. Students must develop knowledge of cultural worldview frameworks, with an enhanced ability to consider and understand global issues from multiple perspectives (AAC&U, 2009). Intercultural competence requires a high level of reflection, including reflection upon one's place in the world and one's relationship to global society, and reflection upon how interactions with people from other cultures may influence one's identity or understanding of self. Students must engage active listening to genuinely try to understand the perspectives and viewpoints of people from a different culture. Additionally, students must be able to translate these skills across various settings, displaying cross-cultural sensitivity in multiple contexts (Friedman, 2019).

Bennett's (1986) developmental model of intercultural sensitivity (DMIS) describes a learning continuum, in which an individual's understanding of cultural difference increasingly becomes more sophisticated and complex. An individual on one side of the continuum demonstrates ethnocentrism, in which the individual understands their own culture as the central

construct of reality. The individual progresses through a series of stages towards ethnorelativism, in which they understand that their cultural values and standards are simply one worldview among a myriad of perspectives (Bennett, 2014). The six stages of this developmental model are as follows: 1) denial, in which one is not aware of cultural difference; 2) defense, in which cultural difference is highly stereotyped; 3) minimization, which diminishes the depth of cultural difference and emphasizes cross-cultural similarity; 4) acceptance, characterized by increased curiosity and respect for cultural difference; 5) adaptation, in which an individual develops empathy and acts appropriately in a different cultural context; and 6) integration, in which an individual can move easily across multiple worldviews (Bennett, 2014). The main assumption of this model is that as an individual moves towards ethnorelativism, they also develop the capacity to interact more effectively across cultures (i.e., they become culturally competent).

### **Education Abroad Pedagogy and Programming**

**Learning paradigms.** Within the field of education abroad, it was assumed for years that students would achieve intercultural competence simply by studying in another country. By setting up the proper structures for cultural immersion, such as placing the students in a home stay, connecting them with language partners, directly enrolling them in the host university, etc., it was assumed that students would engage meaningfully with the host culture, and that deep learning would take place. However, research has shown that in order for students to develop intercultural competencies, cultural immersion alone is not sufficient; there must also be structures in place before, during, and after the education abroad experience to facilitate guided reflection and engagement with the host culture (Vande Berg, Paige, & Hemming Lou, 2012).

Whereas previous models of education abroad relied on paradigms of positivism (students learn from experience/exposure to new and different experiences) and relativism

(students are transformed through immersion experiences), current pedagogy centers around the experiential/constructivism paradigm (Vande Berg et. al., 2012). The experiential/constructivism paradigm asserts that while learning occurs through interaction with the environment, a person's background experiences and knowledge inform the ways in which he or she interacts with and understands their environment. As Vande Berg et. al. (2012) explain:

Each of us learns through transactions between ourselves and the environment; what we bring to the environment - that is, our genetic makeup, our cultural makeup, and the ways that these have equipped and conditioned us to learn and to know - is ultimately more important than the environment in determining how we will experience it, and what we will learn from it. (p. 20)

The experiential/constructivism paradigm emphasizes intercultural learning as a critical component of education abroad, as it grounds concepts, theories, and practices in local cultural worldviews. The learning focus is less on content knowledge, and more on cultural competence and acquiring an ability to adapt to new and different cultural contexts (Vande Berg et. al., 2012).

Bennett (2012) emphasizes that in the constructivist paradigm, culture is not a static concept, but "is a result of the lived experience (praxis) of participating in social action" (p. 101). Thus, one does not *have* a worldview, but is constantly "constructing a view of the world" (Bennett, 2012, p. 101). The ideal of intercultural adaptation, then, requires one to engage in self-reflexivity, in order to imagine and practice other ways of thinking and being in the world. Bennett (2012) explains that while the field of intercultural learning is grounded in constructivist thought, the practice of education abroad still very much follows a positivist or relativist

paradigm; this discrepancy brings challenges and confusion when incorporating intercultural learning outcomes into education abroad.

**Learner support: Pre-departure.** In order to address these paradigmatic challenges in education abroad, Bennett (2012) brings constructivist theory to practice in his six-stage developmental model of intercultural sensitivity (DMIS), described previously. In facilitating intercultural learning, Bennett (2012) advises educators to understand, recognize, and address each stage of intercultural learning. To address the first stage, *denial* of cultural difference, educators must present the existence of cultural difference in a simple and straightforward way to students during pre-departure. In the next stage, *defense* of one's culture, one may feel threatened by cultural difference, and reinforce cultural stereotypes. To address this in pre-departure and on-site orientations, educators may emphasize "common humanity, tolerance, and application of the Golden Rule (Bennett, 1979)" (Bennett, 2012, p. 106). People in the *minimization* stage may overgeneralize aspects of their own cultural worldview, thus diminishing deep cultural complexities. People in this stage may also lack cultural self-awareness, and an understanding that culture is highly contextual. Bennett (2012) advises educators to spend ample time in pre-departure orientations helping students to gain cultural self-awareness, before getting into the specifics of other cultures.

In the *acceptance* stage, one moves away from the ethnocentric characterizations of denial, defense, and minimization, towards a "more ethnorelative experience of one's own culture as just one of a number of equally complex worldviews" (Bennett, 2012, p. 108). To assist students towards this stage of intercultural sensitivity, Bennett emphasizes the importance of presenting students with ethical frameworks, or schemata, in pre-departure, by which they may organize their experiences abroad. In the fifth stage, *adaptation*, a person hones their ability

to shift their frame of reference, moving skillfully among different worldviews. This stage is difficult to achieve, and rarely happens without some sort of educator intervention. The challenge that arises in the adaptation stage is grappling with one's identity and how to remain authentic. By resolving this conflict, one reaches the final stage, that of *integration*; they are able to accept that frame shifting is an assimilated part of their intercultural identity, which is continuously adapting and changing (Bennett, 2012).

**Learner support: While abroad.** To help students take ownership of their learning abroad, and assist them in the development of intercultural competence, it can be effective to educate them on the experiential learning cycle, so they begin to develop an understanding of how they learn best (Passarelli & Kolb, 2012). Helping students to understand their learning styles empowers them to embrace challenges rather than withdraw from them. Passarelli and Kolb (2012) explain that by helping students develop a learner identity, students will be more likely to “feel more capable and be more effective at maximizing learning opportunities abroad” (p. 156). They also emphasize the importance of learning relationships as key opportunities for interventions in education abroad programs. For example, a trusted professor, mentor, or staff member can engage the student in reflective dialogue on their experiences with cultural adjustment, interactions with others in the host community, or other aspects of the education abroad experience. Passarelli and Kolb (2012) note that, “meaningful relationships abroad not only ease the adaptive challenge of living abroad but also facilitate transformative learning and the development of cultural competence” (p. 158).

**Learner support: Re-entry.** A core component of the experiential learning cycle is reflection on experience, and re-entry from abroad presents a critical moment to facilitate this type of learning. Kindred (2014) references the Forum on Education Abroad's (2013) three main

objectives for effective re-entry programming: reflection, articulation, and integration. Programming should include structured reflection to “encourage deeper engagement and understanding of the study abroad experience, the cultural complexities introduced, and the personal impact on the student” (Kindred, 2014, p. 92). Because students are often overwhelmed with the vast amount of learning that occurs while abroad, challenges faced and overcome, and pivotal experiences endured, it is crucial to provide students with tools to be able to articulate these experiences, so they do not become reduced to tired descriptors such as “amazing,” “incredible,” “best time of my life,” etc. (Kindred, 2014). Finally, students should be educated on concrete ways in which they can continue to apply and integrate their learnings from abroad in their academic, professional, and personal lives, both during and beyond the college experience.

Some of the challenges students may experience upon re-entry from an education abroad experience include “reverse culture shock,” difficulties reconnecting with friends and family back home, feeling a sense of loss that the experience has ended, re-acclimating to life on the home campus, and maintaining the personal growth experienced while abroad, among others (Gray & Savicki, 2015). The educator’s responsibility is to guide students through the re-entry process, “to help students harness the transformational potential of the experience and formulate linkages that inform students’ sense of responsibility, identity, purpose, and vocation” (Forum on Education Abroad, 2019). Re-entry programming can take several forms, including orientations and meetings, returnee conferences, returnee courses, peer mentor/global ambassador programs, and storytelling and public expression (Forum on Education Abroad, 2019).

Re-entry programming may be most impactful when educator intervention spans the entire experience, beginning in the early stages of pre-departure advising and orientations, continuing throughout the education abroad experience, and building on these learnings upon

return. One example that supports this belief is Bathurst and La Brack's (2012) description of the cross-cultural training program at the University of the Pacific. All students who study abroad through Pacific are required to take the course Cross-Cultural Training I (CCT I) the semester prior to departure, which "introduces students to key intercultural concepts and skills" (Bathurst & La Brack, 2012, p. 262). Students apply these concepts and skills throughout their semester abroad, and upon their return, they unpack their experiences as a group in Cross-Cultural Training II. In the re-entry course, students reflect on how they engaged the intercultural concepts and skills learned in CCT I while abroad. The course provides students with a structured opportunity to dive more deeply into their experiences from abroad, engage in guided reflective activities and assignments, and learn from their peers (Bathurst & La Brack, 2012).

### **Research Methodology**

This study explored learning and pedagogy around education abroad in a wide context. Within education abroad, there are a myriad of mobility programs: semester or year-long study away, faculty-led programs, short-term programs, international internships, service learning, research, and more. While each genre of education abroad program likely has different needs in regard to educator intervention and facilitation of student learning, multiple programs were considered, in order to develop a broad understanding of best practices in facilitating student learning within education abroad.

This Capstone employed qualitative research. Through a combination of written surveys, interviews, and a focus group, detailed information was gathered on how educators at various U.S. institutions support students in critically reflecting on and integrating their education abroad experiences into the broader curriculum and life beyond college. The conceptual framework of student development and adult learning theories served as the theoretical foundation for a written

survey, interviews, and a focus group targeted to international education (IE) professionals (both faculty and staff) at U.S. colleges and universities.

### **Sample Selection and Data Collection Methods**

Data collection for this study involved a three-pronged approach: survey distribution, individual interviews, and a focus group. The survey was intended to obtain a broad understanding of best practices in facilitating and integrating student learning around education abroad, while the individual interviews and focus group allowed for more in-depth analysis of teaching and learning methods in education abroad pedagogy and programming.

Participants for this study were international educators, both faculty and staff, from a variety of U.S. colleges and universities. The selection of participants was decided through mixed purposive sampling. Convenience sampling was used in the distribution of surveys; the survey was distributed to international educator networks, including the NAFSA Region XI listserv, the World Council on Intercultural and Global Competence, the NAFSA Teaching, Learning, and Scholarship Knowledge Community, the SECUSS-L listserv, SIT alumni Facebook groups, and intercultural educator groups on LinkedIn and Facebook. Snowball sampling was also employed, as selected participants offered to forward the survey invitation to colleagues.

Survey responses were received from fifteen international education professionals at a wide range of institutions. Participants who indicated on the survey that they would be willing to participate in an interview were invited to discuss their responses in more detail through a semi-structured interview. Participants who described innovative programming, identified as something that stood out as unique to that institution, and/or programming that has received recognition, such as the NAFSA Simon Award for Campus Internationalization or the Institute

for International Education's Heiskell Award, were further prioritized. Eight participants were invited for an interview; five confirmed and were interviewed.

Working at a liberal arts institution, I have access to a number of faculty and staff dedicated to international education. To take advantage of their expertise and obtain an in-depth understanding of education abroad integration at a liberal arts college, both a focus group and individual interviews were conducted with a select group of faculty and staff involved with international education at the college. An invitation to participate in a focus group was sent to twelve faculty and staff who had previously participated in a seminar dedicated to educating faculty on education abroad at the college. Six colleagues confirmed participation and were interviewed via a focus group. The purpose of gathering these colleagues into a focus group was to leverage group dialogue to yield new and creative insights. Rather than interviewing each of these colleagues individually, the focus group created synergy and a generation of multiple ideas and perspectives (Korzh, 2018). Individual interviews were conducted with two faculty who were involved with campus internationalization, but who had not participated in the seminar.

### **Researcher Positionality**

To ensure this study's credibility and trustworthiness, I employed multiple strategies, including self-reflexivity, triangulation, and using my community of practice (Rossman & Rallis, 2017). As a qualitative researcher, it was imperative that I remained aware of my own positionality in regard to the research question, and how my own views and experiences may have influenced both the manner in which I interacted with and affected participants, and the ways in which I analyzed the data.

I have held my current position for three and a half years, through which I work closely with undergraduate students who undertake education abroad experiences. I work with these

students before, during, and after they embark on study abroad semesters and international internships, and I have witnessed the challenges they face, the obstacles they overcome, the learning they encounter, and the changes they undergo personally, professionally, and academically. As such, I have formed my own opinions and understandings of how to facilitate student growth in the area of education abroad integration. Therefore, it was important that I continuously checked in with myself throughout the data collection and analysis phase to ensure that my own opinions and biases were not influencing how I interacted with participants and with the information I gathered.

### **Findings**

The findings are presented as grouped data according to the research instrument. First, survey responses are presented, followed by an analysis of the interviews completed with select survey respondents. The section concludes with the presentation and analysis of focus group and interview data from College A.

#### **Survey Findings**

Survey data was collected from 15 international educators, representing diverse institution types and positions, including: four education abroad advisors/coordinators; one director, center for global studies; one assistant director for education abroad; one director, international internship program; one pre-departure specialist; one academic head; one professor and director of international studies; one lecturer; one graduate teaching assistant, global engineering; one program coordinator, community college initiative program; one institutional relations coordinator; and one global programs specialist. (See Appendix A: Survey for a complete list of questions asked of survey participants.)

Of the 15 survey respondents, 14 have worked in international education for over two years, and 13 have worked in international education for five years or more. A variety of higher education institutions across the United States were represented, including seven research universities; three liberal arts colleges; one community college; one college of art, media, and design; and three other non-categorized institutions of higher education. All respondents reported that their institutions offer faculty-led study abroad, 14 offer short-term (two- to four-week) study abroad, 13 offer international internships, and 12 offer semester study-abroad, international service-learning, and international research.

Survey participants were asked a series of questions about educational support and/or programming provided by the institution to students partaking in education abroad experiences. Types of support and/or programming offered by the participants' institutions included: individual or small group advising before departure (14), pre-departure workshops (13), re-entry programs (10), for-credit seminars or courses (eight), facilitated reflection throughout the education abroad experience (seven), and e-Portfolios (one).

**Reflective learning.** When asked what types of supports and/or programming they believed to be most impactful in facilitating *reflective learning* in education abroad, participants shared a wide range of ideas. Seven participants emphasized the benefits of structured programming for facilitated reflection throughout the whole arc of the education abroad experience: pre-departure, while abroad, and upon re-entry. Six participants described supports in the form of academic courses, and eleven participants discussed co-curricular spaces and opportunities for processing experiences. Table 1 provides an overview of participants' suggestions for how to support reflective learning before, during, and after the education abroad experience.

Table 1		
<i>Supporting Reflective Learning</i>		
Pre-Departure	While Abroad	Re-Entry
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide intercultural competence courses</li> <li>• Teach students “what reflection is, why it is important, and how to do it” (graduate teaching assistant, personal communication, February 2, 2020); get students comfortable with reflection before they go.</li> <li>• Guide students to set learning goals ahead of time</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Offer facilitated reflection courses</li> <li>• Build in structured and independent reflection options: journaling, partner talks, group discussions, artwork/creative projects, experiential activities</li> <li>• Facilitate weekly guided reflection and Skype check-ins</li> <li>• Utilize E-Portfolios</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hold required re-entry programming</li> <li>• Partner with career services to help students integrate education abroad with career goals</li> <li>• Provide advising for fellowship opportunities (Fulbright, Peace Corps, etc.)</li> <li>• Leverage senior honors projects</li> <li>• Require post-travel project and presentations: paper, slide presentation, lecture, video, etc.</li> </ul>
Throughout the Experience: Pre-Departure, While Abroad, and Re-Entry		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encourage journaling</li> <li>• Connect students with a cultural mentor from the host culture to guide students in their learning and help them work through challenges; the cultural mentor serves as an unbiased guide</li> <li>• Provide discussion spaces for students before, during, and after the experience; prompt discussion with questions that force students to think deeply about their experiences</li> <li>• Offer for-credit courses, as deadlines and grades incentivize doing the work and thus allow for more reflective learning</li> </ul>		

Table 1

**Intercultural competence.** Survey participants were also asked what types of supports and/or programming they believed to be most impactful in facilitating *intercultural competence* in education abroad, and the responses demonstrated many similarities and connections to the responses on reflective learning. Six participants re-iterated that developing intercultural competence is an ongoing process and requires intentional guidance before,

during, and beyond the education abroad experience. Suggestions for supports and/or programming included: pre-departure orientations; intercultural competence courses; language partners; interaction with the host community coupled with reflection; helping students to understand their own culture and cultural framework through readings, discussion, and reflective writing; educating students on the experiential learning cycle; educating students on the process of reflection and assigning regular reflection activities before, during, and after the experience; embedding cultural learning into the broader curriculum; and considering assessments such as the Beliefs, Events, and Values Inventory (BEVI) and the Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI). Two participants also discussed training and education for trip leaders, faculty, staff, and homestay families.

**Opportunities for improvement.** 14 of the 15 participants noted that there are areas in which student learning in education abroad could be better supported at their institution. Re-entry programming was mentioned by five participants as an area that could be expanded and improved upon, such as providing spaces to help students articulate what they gained from their education abroad experience, connecting with the career center, and supporting ongoing reflection. One of the barriers to implementing successful re-entry programming included limited staff and financial resources. For those that do offer re-entry programs, it can be challenging to get students to show up and continue to engage when there is not a course requirement in place. Three participants mentioned the challenge of getting faculty buy-in, and three participants suggested there could be better training for faculty.

### **Interview Findings**

The five participants interviewed represented a diverse cross-section of international educators, as described in Table 2. All names used in this research are pseudonyms.

Table 2			
<i>Interview Participants</i>			
Name	Title	Institution Type	Estimated Undergraduate Enrollment
Ben	Professor and director of international studies	College of art, media, and design	650
Linda	Director of the center for global studies	Liberal arts college	1,200
Karen	Study abroad advisor	Research university	22,000
Stephanie	Graduate teaching assistant, global engineering	Research university	30,000
Maggie	Director, international internship program	Research university	30,000

Table 2

While the participants’ responses varied depending on their role and type of institution, there were several common themes that emerged from the discussions, including student learning in education abroad, educational supports provided throughout the education abroad experience, reflective learning, and institutional structures and priorities. (See Appendix B: Interview Guide for the complete list of questions posed to interview participants.)

**Student learning in education abroad.** Participants described student learning abroad as falling into three main categories: personal, academic, and professional. In the personal realm, educators described their students gaining greater self-awareness, confidence, independence, maturity, flexibility, adaptability, and a greater sense of identity. They also referenced an increase in intercultural sensitivity, knowledge, and understanding, and especially a greater awareness of one’s own culture. Four of the participants articulated that students’ personal transformation from education abroad experiences seems to be the most salient gain, more so than the academic and professional development that occurs. As Ben noted:

I think there's an increased sophistication, and that comes from, I think, this self-awareness and a certain kind of confidence that is built when you think, "gee I can do this, I can go to this other culture, and I seem to be doing ok." (personal communication, February 6, 2020)

In terms of academic gains, participants emphasized the value in aligning the education abroad program with the student's academic program, whether that be the major or other academic pursuits. For example, Linda indicated that students in STEM fields may choose particular programs with research opportunities abroad, business majors may choose specific programs that align with their career goals, and so on. For arts students, education abroad experiences allow students to gain an understanding of "how different cultures look at creative practice, the arts, the integration of the culture into that social system, and how different it might be than the United States" (Ben, personal communication, February 6, 2020). With this alignment, students are then able to more easily make connections to their coursework back on the home campus, and they might go on to integrate their experiences into honors programs or senior projects.

Education abroad can also have a great impact on students' career and professional development, particularly pertaining to research abroad and international internships. Linda noted that the education abroad experience can help inform students' thinking about life after graduation, including opportunities such as the Peace Corps and Fulbright. Students doing international internships have opportunities to learn directly how to navigate workplace culture in another country, and these experiences may also be instrumental in setting students on a particular career path. Maggie (personal communication, January 29, 2020) shared an anecdote illustrating the long-term impact of a student's international internship:

I had this student who really struggled with her internship, did not love the class, didn't want me to use her photo on anything, she didn't wanna be affiliated, and she didn't think we should offer the internship again - which I agree with, and we did not. But then three years later, she came back to campus, and ran over and hugged me, and said that the internship experience was what set her on the path she ended up on, and made her reevaluate her first job choice, and go in a different direction. And now it's been eight years since that, and now she's working with a company that might take interns from us. And so seeing that kind of progression - like she came back and didn't get a lot out of it - and then as she got out further and kept looking back on that experience, she saw the value and has reconnected with us at different touch points as she's grown in her career.

Participants clearly identified various forms of learning occurring in education abroad experiences, and they discussed in depth the types of supports that help to facilitate and deepen this learning, described in the following sections.

**Pre-departure support.** Interview participants offered detailed accounts of the various ways in which they support their students before the education abroad experience. Table 3 provides an overview of the types of pre-departure support that participants described, organized by overarching themes.

Table 3		
<i>Pre-Departure Support</i>		
Advising	Orientations and Meetings	For-Credit Courses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work with students to set learning goals and help them develop realistic expectations</li> <li>• Provide advising throughout the application process; structure the application process to prompt reflection</li> <li>• Assist students in choosing programs that align with their academic discipline and professional goals</li> <li>• Advise students to research the host country: read newspapers and learn about current events; discover contemporary culture, music, literature, theater</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hold a pre-departure orientation to cover logistics, health and safety, preparing to go abroad, cultural engagement, etc.</li> <li>• Make pre-departure orientation mandatory</li> <li>• Hold region-specific meetings</li> <li>• Provide additional online modules outside of the in-person orientation</li> <li>• Provide on-site orientations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conduct culture-specific lessons</li> <li>• Invite visitors from the host country for guest lectures</li> <li>• Build in reflection assignments</li> <li>• Run cultural simulations</li> </ul>

Table 3

While there were general themes that emerged in participants’ responses around pre-departure supports, differences arose among program types and institution sizes. Maggie illustrated this difference through her description of pre-departure support provided in the international internship program:

So, we are a small office, so we're very high touch advising in general. So, I'm not speaking for study abroad, because their model and their volume is so, so different. They don't have the contact and relationship with their students that we do, because we're a small program. We do a lot of advising through the application stage even, of asking *because* these are such independent experiences, we're trying to get students in early, getting realistic expectations of what this is going to be like, where you're going...; so they're often getting that in just the application stage. They might be coming in for cover

letter review, or to compare options, and checking out if this is for me or not for me - so it's starting early in the application stage. Many students meet with us before they apply, but all students have to meet with us before they accept. They have at least one in-person touch point one-on-one before accepting, to lay out some of those expectations of the experience. (personal communication, January 29, 2020)

Maggie also noted that for study abroad, pre-departure support varies greatly within the programs themselves. Some programs might hold large- or small-group meetings. For faculty-led programs, the faculty might do some sort of pre-departure programming. Some third-party providers offer on-site orientations and support, and others “rely on the online modules to get people started” (Maggie, personal communication, January 29, 2020).

**While abroad.** Participants described the various types of support offered to students to enhance their learning while abroad. For Karen, this comes in the form of an online writing course that students take while abroad, which is run through the home institution. Through the course, students post regular reflections and are also required to respond to their peers’ postings. When asked what type of programming or supports she believed to be the most impactful on integrative learning in education abroad, she emphatically stated, “this course” (personal communication, January 30, 2020). Karen shared the following experience as the course facilitator:

...they start really getting into content of the reflections, and they start to see parallels and are able to offer encouragement and support. I respond to each post, I try to ask questions to push them to think a little bit deeper, but I think it means so much more for them to have that peer support and reinforcement, particularly when they encounter things that are frustrating - it’s this whole support network here. Also, I think it’s great

that they are seeing the same kinds of problems are popping up - whether the student's in Italy, the Philippines, Brazil - it really helps them to start to see that culture and intercultural communication...there are many things that are specific to individual places, there are also much broader themes that relate to what it means to be human. (personal communication, January 30, 2020)

Karen noted that this type of reflective learning while abroad can be incorporated into short-term programs as well. On a faculty-led program which she supported, students were assigned regular journaling assignments, and she observed students engaging with one another over the written assignments during dinner conversations.

Maggie, who directs an international internship program, indicated that all students in the internship program complete a required three-credit online course to supplement the international internship. The course involves weekly written reflections on the internship experience, weekly reading or video assignments that explore different aspects of culture, an informational interview with a professional in the field, periodic Skype check-ins with their home-institution advisors, and a supervisor meeting to reflect on goals. Maggie further explained:

At the end they do a - they pick a novel or nonfiction book about crossing cultures, and then do an analysis of that, to try to apply some of the themes they've learned and look at how those play out. And then they do a big reflection paper at the end, looking at the professional and cultural, apply some of the readings and things they've learned, and they also just look at themselves and what they've learned and how they've improved through the experience. (personal communication, January 29, 2020)

**Re-entry.** Participants described various forms of support and programming offered to students upon returning from the education abroad experience. Linda described printed materials

that her institution provides to students to help them process their experiences upon re-entry, “which covers everything from reverse culture shock, and even depression, and counseling services, and then how to incorporate this into your academic experience, and how to think about the future” (personal communication, January 22, 2020). Linda also noted that they hold a welcome back dinner for students, where they discuss in detail the information provided in the printed materials.

Maggie discussed re-entry within the scope of the internship programs she directs, which includes a re-entry event, as well as one-on-one or small-group debriefing sessions. As part of the requirement of the internship course, student complete a reflective assignment upon return. The students then have the opportunity to debrief with advisors a couple of months after they have returned, to process the experience in more depth. Maggie noted that this structure is possible in part because they deal with a smaller number of students and have built those relationships with them over time. Maggie described the nuances of the re-entry experience, in the sense that discussions about the experience abroad may vary greatly over time. She stated:

Even one month out when we do those debrief meetings, we get a very different impression than that Skype meeting when they're onsite, they're in it and trying to process and get through the challenge versus they're back on campus for two months and they're seeing how they are now different from their peers. (personal communication, January 29, 2020)

Ben discussed an academic element of re-entry, in the form of capstone projects stemming from a thesis program. Through the students' capstone presentations, faculty and staff can see the effects of the education abroad experience on student learning. Stephanie described how engineering students returning from international research trips are required to write a final

report at the conclusion of the experience, reporting on both their research and on their experience with cultural integration.

Another aspect of re-entry that the participants discussed was career integration.

Regarding the global engineering program, Stephanie stated:

So, I think one piece that we've started to notice in our program, and I think might be generally applicable, is that we have to help students see how their experiences connect to their career. Specifically to engineering and STEM fields, going abroad or global activities in general can feel like this is a side/extracurricular thing, but it may not fit with my actual career. I think building in reflection opportunities that help them think about how it *is* related, and how it can relate to their other classes. (personal communication, February 17, 2020)

Linda also referenced career integration and collaborating with colleagues in the career center for re-entry support. At their welcome back dinner, advisors discuss future opportunities to apply or expand upon the abroad experience, including Fulbright and Peace Corps, as well as opportunities for international students.

**Reflective learning.** Participants were asked how they help to facilitate guided reflection and meaningful engagement with the host culture. Linda emphasized that reflection is built into every aspect of the education abroad experience, beginning with the application process. To apply for study abroad, students have to respond to short-answer questions, write an essay, create a study plan, and meet one-on-one with an advisor, all of which force them to deeply consider their rationale and motivation for study abroad. Students are encouraged to connect with specific faculty members, who can further assist students in connecting the study abroad experience with

the major. Upon return, students reflect on the education abroad experience through career discussions and welcome back events.

Karen discussed how the writing course that students take while abroad facilitates deep reflection on the experience. She noted that the course allows students to think critically about the education abroad experience, beyond the “highlight reel.” She states:

I have found that this course helps students to be more comfortable in discussing with one another what some of the challenges, and so it helps them have a more realistic perspective on the good, bad and the ugly and how that's all part of the process. (personal communication, January 30, 2020)

Maggie, whose students take a course while completing an international internship, also emphasized the benefit of the course structure in fostering reflection, as students are continuously asked to reflect on their professional and cultural experiences throughout the internship. Skype check-ins also help facilitate this, as educators can intentionally intervene in student learning and help students work through challenges and consider aspects of their experience more deeply. For Stephanie’s first-year engineering students, who take a course that has an embedded two-week international trip, the instructors “have them do reflections during semester, they keep a journal while they’re abroad, and then they do a sort of reflective assignment when they get back, using photos and writing about key moments they experience while they were abroad” (personal communication, February 17, 2020).

**Institutional structures and priorities.** Participants offered additional insights into how institutional structures and resources may impact education abroad integration. Ben stated:

I find that the structure and placement in the academic hierarchy is critical in reaching goals in internationalizing the campus. Most often international programs are viewed as

“value added” or peripheral to the academic discipline. This attitude excludes underserved students and perpetuates a colonial bias... That’s what I think is probably the most critical part of building a program that really works to integrate the educational experience rather than a value-added or something that you can do. (personal communication, February 6, 2020)

Linda also addressed education abroad within the broader institutional climate, noting:

And then the other thing - collaborating a lot with faculty colleagues - would be / is kind of make internationalization or global perspectives just a part of campus culture. If it’s this immersive campus culture, if it’s saturated - nobody’s used that term yet - if it’s a saturated experience to the degree that you can, that’s what makes the difference. (personal communication, January 22, 2020)

Karen discussed collaboration as a key to high-impact learning, stating, “I think as our student loads increase and our budgets decrease, the more we can share, the better” (Karen, personal communication, January 30, 2020). Stephanie commented on the challenge of access regarding the first-year engineering program, noting, “if you want it to be integrated into the curriculum, and you want it to be a core piece, how do you also make sure that everyone can participate?” (personal communication, February 17, 2020). Ben also discussed the challenges of funding and access associated with integrating education abroad more meaningfully into the broader curriculum, and he suggested developing partnerships with other organizations as a potential strategy.

**Other.** In addition to the topics discussed above, other themes arose which would lend themselves to further processing and potential future research, including assessment of education abroad experiences, the international student experience, health and specifically mental health

abroad, specific programming for international internships, student motivation and pushback, and coloniality.

**Case Study: A Small Liberal Arts College (College A)**

**Focus group findings.** The focus group consisted of five faculty and one administrative staff at College A, shown in Table 4.

Table 4	
<i>Focus Group Participants</i>	
Name	Department
Renee	Chinese studies; global studies center (faculty)
Cathy	Psychology (faculty)
Laura	Psychology (faculty)
Maria	Religious studies; global Islamic studies (faculty)
James	History (faculty)
Sophia	Interdisciplinary, international center (staff)

Table 4

All focus group participants had previously participated in a seminar designed to educate and bring more awareness to faculty around education abroad at the college. The seminar met two times per month over the course of one academic year, and it has been running for four years. Each year’s seminar involved a different group of faculty participants and focused on a slightly different theme within education abroad at the college.

**Biggest takeaways from the seminar.** The focus group participants shared several insights they gained from taking part in the study away seminar (see Appendix C: Focus Group Guide a complete list of discussion topics). Renee, who has participated in the seminar each year from its onset, stated:

One of the biggest takeaways at the beginning was how *not* integrated study away was with the academic program. And that’s a really important part of the work, is actually

taking stock and doing an inventory and figuring out what we don't know. I didn't realize just how little we knew about what we were doing. (personal communication, February 17, 2020)

Laura echoed these sentiments, noting that in her department, they set up a working group to review all study away programs in which students had participated. She stated, "It just struck me how little each of us knew about that" (personal communication, February 17, 2020).

Laura's colleague, Cathy, noted that through the working group, the department discovered that:

Our students have gone to many, many places, but *most* of our students have gone to very *few* places. We've had one or two going here or there, and that list is very long, so it's hard for us to know what are the benefits and positive attributes of those programs, because there's so many and we can't really keep track of it. (Cathy, personal communication, February 17, 2020)

Participants discovered the need for intentional and focused advising around education abroad. Cathy stated, "I would say the biggest takeaway is the need to be intentional with our advisees about what they're going to achieve and how best to do that in their study abroad" (personal communication, February 17, 2020). Maria described her shift in advising practices after participating in the seminar:

Since then, writing letters for students, I ask them carefully, 'why is it that you want to go abroad? Why do you think that this is the best program? What do you want to get out of it? What can you do there that you're not getting here?' So, I spend a lot of time with them talking about that. That really, I think makes a difference. And I hadn't really spent time on that before, because I thought there was someone else who was dealing with that, somewhere else at the college. (personal communication, February 17, 2020)

*Changes or work done in department since the seminar.* Participants were asked what they have done in their department since participating in the seminar, and they discussed both the challenges and successes of implementing change. James noted that while he could have done more to institute changes in the history department, such as doing a more thorough vetting of study away programs, there were certain assumptions within the department that made it challenging to get colleagues on board. James stated, “I think there’s a sense in my department that of course study away is great, and we do that, and there’s always history involved in all study away programs, so what do we really need to do?” (personal communication, February 17, 2020). Renee responded by saying, “I do think that if the only outcome that comes from this work is we have 30 faculty - good faculty - who have become better advisors, that’s a win, and that’s a step forward” (personal communication, February 17, 2020).

Cathy noted that in the psychology department, “we did a pretty good job of expanding the description of study away on our website, so that students have more resources for understanding what options are available” (personal communication, February 17, 2020). The department discussed requiring students to take a cultural psychology class, but they “don’t have the capacity to handle the demand for that at our current staffing level” (Cathy, personal communication, February 17, 2020).

Renee discussed the changes that were made to the study away application process as a whole, stating:

One thing we’ve tried to do was to try to improve the study away application process and make it more rigorous and meaningful. Faculty now have to write much more substantial letters; that’s an invitation for faculty to maybe say that this isn’t the best option for a

student, or at least to ensure that the student has connected with a faculty advisor.

(personal communication, February 17, 2020)

Both Maria and James discussed the widespread cultural mindset of study away on the campus, as something that you just have to do in the junior year, almost like a rite of passage; in other words, faculty are working against a strong current of assumptions that make it challenging to implement change. James stated, “I think we are *improving* this conversation, and a lot of our colleagues are doing a *better* job, but we still have a kind of student culture, maybe even a faculty culture that says, this is what you do junior year...” (personal communication, February 17, 2020).

***Shifting campus culture.*** Participants were asked how they could better support integrative learning around education abroad in light of some of the structural barriers that might be preventing a shift in campus culture or student mindset. Both Laura and Cathy discussed the possibility of introducing discussions of study away early on in the student experience, such as in first-year seminars. This would allow students to think more holistically about the impact of the experience earlier on, and it would allow educators to shift the narrative around study away.

Renee noted that historically at the college, there were ample financial resources for study away, which allowed educators to support students in pursuing whatever avenue they wanted. This may have created a barrier to thinking critically about the study away experience. Renee stated:

Ironically, the substantial resources available to study away have made it difficult to change. We’ve lived in an environment when it was possible to support everybody who wanted to do whatever they wanted to do. It could be that this moment, where we’re really having to think about our resources differently, that this could be a very *good* thing

to make us focus on what is the value-added for students, and is this right for everybody, and is this current approach to a semester long program...is this the only way to have international experiences, and is it the best model for every student? (personal communication, February 17, 2020)

Another barrier to shifting the campus culture is the language itself used around study away.

Renee noted:

...we even use the word '*extracurricular*'; something that wasn't part of the academic experience, it was seen as something that some office took care of, and it wasn't a part of faculty purview. And I think this is where we have done good work on this campus, I feel like there's more acknowledgement that study abroad, in particular, really *is* supposed to be a learning experience, and that there is some responsibility there. But it's certainly not universally understood in this way, for as many people there are in this room, there are others where it's out of sight/out of mind/not my responsibility to do that...and that's a hard thing to change. (personal communication, February 17, 2020)

James expanded on this sentiment, noting that study away:

still remains kind of an afterthought for a lot of the faculty advising...Outside of advising about choosing courses for next semester, it is considered kind of extra; "I'm not getting rewarded for it so..." That would be a faculty-wide conversation about the role of advising in our work. (personal communication, February 17, 2020)

***Lack of understanding around program structures.*** Throughout the focus group discussion, there emerged a general consensus that there needs to be more intentional integration and understanding of the study away experience. In order to move in that direction of meaningful curricular integration, participants noted that there needs to be a better understanding on the part

of both faculty and students of the different types of education abroad programs, whether direct enroll, third-party provider program, faculty-led program, etc. Renee noted:

Often students are disappointed, as they're imagining what they want out of study abroad is to develop cross-cultural awareness, learn how to engage across difference - that's what they *want*. And then they go on these programs, and it's this kind of bubble experience, and they're with Americans, and it's very frustrating for some of them - some of them love it - we have a whole spectrum. I think it's true that that information is provided, but students don't know how to hear it yet. (personal communication, February 17, 2020)

Laura agreed, responding:

I think both the faculty member and the student have to do a serious job about looking at courses, and what the pre-requisites are, and whether they are at a level where the course would be appropriate for them. And I'm pretty sure that doesn't happen routinely. (personal communication, February 17, 2020)

Cathy noted that with the vast number of programs offered at the college, it is challenging to have a deep familiarity with all of them, and thus it is beneficial to spend time developing a curated list of programs. Renee added:

...we need to wean ourselves off the model of the plethora of options; I think that would help us then do the work we need to do. It is actually so overwhelming for departments, or individual faculty, to get a handle on the huge list of options. (personal communication, February 17, 2020)

***New college curriculum.*** Within the past few years, the college launched a new general education curriculum designed to help students integrate their academic courses and interests

more meaningfully and intentionally. The new curriculum encourages students to connect academic pursuits with off-campus experiences. Participants were asked what they thought the impact of this new curriculum might be on helping students to achieve the learning goals of study away. James noted that in some ways, the current language of the curriculum is further encouraging highly individualized experiences, which does not help in narrowing down the education abroad options offered to students. On the other hand, he noted that in theory, the new curriculum should help students to think more intentionally about the programs they are choosing, and how those experiences connect with their academic pursuits.

Renee described how the new curriculum has offered a framework which has enhanced staff advising around off-campus engagement experiences. She explained, “there is a conversation at least where before there was none, across internships, study away, community engagement, and I think there’s much better advising from the staff side than previously (Renee, personal communication, February 17, 2020). Additionally, the new curriculum recognizes the value of off-campus experiences as a critical component of a well-rounded education. Renee noted:

There’s a lot of evidence that shows, at least for undergraduates, that so much real learning is happening *beyond* [the classroom]. So there is a tension, I think. How do we as faculty recognize, and respect, and support the learning that’s happening *not* in our own classrooms? (personal communication, February 17, 2020)

***Potential seminar course.*** Participants were asked how they might imagine designing a required pre-departure and re-entry course to support integrated learning in education abroad. Everyone agreed that it would be a good idea, and there was consensus that it could be a one-credit seminar. Renee further contextualized the need for this; considering a study away semester

is one-eighth of the college experience, there is almost an obligation to “at least make sure that we’re providing *something* of an intellectual framework for students” (Renee, personal communication, February 17, 2020). Maria agreed, adding:

I think it’s something that should go beyond departmental divisions. Especially given the climate of classes not filling, and other classes are overloaded. We have too many sparsely populated classes. We need to start sharing more classes across the departments. (personal communication, February 17, 2020)

Cathy offered that it could include an element of peer advising, leveraging the fact that students are influenced a lot by their peers. Sophia noted that even if not a for-credit course, there could be workshops offered, and students could be incentivized to attend the workshops by tying participation to funding.

**Interview findings.** Individual interviews were conducted with two additional faculty at College A: Alison, professor of Slavic studies and director of an interdisciplinary, international center, and Daniel, professor of human development. These faculty shared their experiences and opinions on integrated, reflective learning regarding education abroad, as well as institutional challenges and barriers to achieving these goals.

**Integration.** Alison and Daniel discussed how recent campus internationalization work partly centered around integrating education abroad more deeply into the college curriculum. Something concrete that emerged was the development of a physical structure put in place “to advance international and global education for all students” (Alison, personal communication, February 18, 2020). Daniel mentioned that for a long time, there “wasn’t clear systematic thought for why they were going abroad, it was mostly because they could. And they thought of it as excursions largely, with you know very straightforward ideas about consuming” (personal

communication, February 14, 2020). Now, as part of the study abroad application process, students are asked to write detailed rationales for why they want to go abroad, why they are choosing a particular program, and how this program connects to their discipline. Regarding advising students around study abroad, Daniel noted:

The discussions that I've had with them are largely around, you know, why do you want to go? But they've somewhat pre-decided, and there's not much you can do to change it, unless there's a whole framework to kind of guide them through that process. (personal communication, February 14, 2020)

Both Alison and Daniel discussed the importance of curricular integration of the education abroad experience. Alison described how the Slavic studies curriculum prepares students linguistically and culturally for education abroad in Russia. To further facilitate integration, she also pairs students with peers who have already gone abroad. Alison noted that critical language disciplines are characteristically different from other disciplines, in that “there’s a direct connection to the country, to the language and culture,” (personal communication, February 18, 2020) and going abroad is an inherent component of the major. Daniel teaches a globalization course that gets at issues of social and global inequality, and he touches upon education abroad within these contexts. In his qualitative methods course, students are exposed to diverse knowledge frameworks, and they apply newly learned methodologies to community projects, examining “positionality, knowledge-making, experiences of participants, lived experience, how to do an interview” and they address questions about “politicization of knowledge, or knowledge as power, and so on” (personal communication, February 14, 2020). These lessons have deep implications for how students will engage with an education abroad experience.

Outside of the major disciplines, the question of curricular integration may take different forms. To ensure students are meeting the study away learning goals articulated by the college, Alison suggests these goals be operationalized and institutionalized; to do so, they need to be “put into a curricular place, even if it’s a retreat, where students read and discuss them at some point, with someone, before they go” (personal communication, February 18, 2020). Integrating these learning goals also means ensuring that education abroad programs themselves align, and ideally, “the best way to institutionalize those goals are to build programs that meet them” (Alison, personal communication, February 18, 2020), or to partner with other institutions whose goals align. In other words, having more knowledge of and control over the types of programs in which students are participating will help to ensure quality and integration.

For Daniel, integration also means a critical analysis of study abroad, “in the context of empire, poverty, inequality, social justice frameworks...to me, if it’s in the syllabus, then there’s much greater potential for social transformation in the ideas...” (personal communication, February 14, 2020). Before going abroad, Daniel believes that students should engage in courses that are more community-based, to learn about the “ways in which the abroad manifests itself here...so curriculum around that, so it’s not seen as this, oh I was here locally, and now I get to go abroad and have this foreign experience” (personal communication, February 14, 2020). In other words, there should be a deeper integration of the global and the local, so that education abroad experiences are not considered separate or add-on, but an integral part of a whole. Daniel also thinks “our curriculum just needs to build in categories or ways of thinking that are transformational, at the level of the curriculum, at the level of epistemology” (personal communication, February 14, 2020).

*Structural barriers/challenges.* Both Alison and Daniel reflected on the challenges to integration of education abroad at the institutional level. Regarding teaching practices, Alison noted:

Faculty have little knowledge or interest in what happens on study abroad. All of the onus is on students to integrate. And when the curriculum itself does not integrate, when faculty themselves do not integrate, expecting students to do that - it's not unreasonable, it is unlikely that it will happen. (personal communication, February 18, 2020)

Daniel noted that one structural barrier in fostering meaningful integration of the education abroad experience is “not having highly systematic reflection of their [the students’] own disciplinary positioning, including personal positioning” (Daniel, personal communication, February 14, 2020). In other words, it is imperative that students are guided to reflect on how their academic disciplines and other aspects of their positionality may shape their experiences. Additionally, he believes that students in all disciplines should be introduced to diverse knowledge frameworks (e.g., critical theories, liberation theory, indigenous knowledge systems, etc.). Daniel reflected, “I would say that maybe not having access to those critical knowledge systems, is one barrier” (personal communication, February 18, 2020).

Daniel further expanded upon the challenges he observes with education abroad integration, stating:

The way we still think about study abroad is from an old-fashioned perspective of venturing out into another world, without knowing that that world was once connected to this very world. At the level of structural barrier, at the level of knowledge itself, study abroad and international education, I think we still think of them fundamentally disconnected. There's a question of all these critical issues of power difference, who has

access, and then there's the other question of what I would call disciplinary integration, which is not necessarily happening. If you take a decolonizing perspective, then you really have to decolonize them, all the way, and part of the goal of decolonizing, is some parts need to be dismantled, but dismantling that means you are asking questions about should we even have study abroad. Let's start with that question, like who gets to go, who can study whom. (Personal communication, February 14, 2020)

***Reimagining study abroad.*** Drawing upon his reflections of the structural challenges and barriers to education abroad integration, Daniel offered a new way to think about education abroad, stating:

I think the whole idea of study abroad in some ways you have to kind of flip, in the way they think about what study abroad is - needs to be very much seen as really a part of a rigorous academic exercise. Other questions that are put up there you know of epistemology, ontology, values, and methodology, where it's like a subject of its own self. Right now, it's seen experientially, so you do studies, and you write papers in your major; study abroad is more experience. And so, we need to flip that and change that, to do much, much more...while experience is important and it's rooted, but also to have study abroad itself as a knowledge domain. Which is like any other major in some ways...it would be interdisciplinary, you would use history, you would use feminist theory, human development theory, psychology, to ask questions about this interaction between students when they're abroad, both at the conceptual level - the systems they are a part of - as well as intercultural experiences they're having there. So, to prepare them in very much more serious ways, and to ask questions beforehand and not just do coursework. (personal communication, February 14, 2020)

## Discussion

The findings revealed several overarching themes, such as the need for education abroad to include intentional programmatic support before, during, and after the experience; the importance of reflective learning; the need for integration of education abroad in the broader curriculum; and institutional and structural challenges. These themes are further explored in the following sections.

### **Holistic Programming: Before, During, and Beyond Education Abroad**

Participants demonstrated the importance of providing meaningful, intentional programmatic support for students throughout the entire arc of the experience in order to help students to critically reflect on the education abroad experience, and to foster critical reflexivity for life-long learning (see Table 1 for examples). A learning partnerships model (Baxter Magolda, 2009) offers educators the chance to tune into where students are developmentally, challenge students by asking critical questions and prompting reflection on the education abroad experience, and facilitate the learning experience through ongoing, guided support.

By putting structures in place throughout the education abroad experience, with the proper amount of challenge and support (Sanford, 1966), educators can foster critical thinking and support students along their path towards self-authorship. In pre-departure, a learning partnership may take the form of individual advising, as advisors challenge students to think critically about why they are choosing to participate in education abroad and support them in determining what programs may align with their academic or career path. The advisor can help students to set individual learning goals, and to develop realistic expectations around the education abroad experience (see Table 3 for more examples of pre-departure supports). Educators can further support critical thinking in the education abroad experience before

departure by teaching students what reflection is and why it is valuable, and they may offer concrete ways in which students can engage in reflection throughout the international experience. Students can also be taught about the experiential learning cycle and gain an awareness of their own learning styles.

Research participants described ways of maximizing the time abroad and capturing student learning in the moment. Freire (1968) emphasized that concrete experience is the starting point for education, and educators can help students draw meaning from their experiences abroad by putting intentional programming and structures in place. In practice, this programming could take the form of guided journaling, weekly virtual or on-site check-ins with an advisor, or an online course, such as Karen's online writing course that students take while abroad. Courses taken while abroad allow for relational learning, as the course facilitator prompts students to reflect more deeply on their experiences through various written assignments, and students also engage with peers who are experiencing similar challenges. When students learn from one another, challenge each other's viewpoints, and adopt new perspectives, they are moving towards transformative learning (Mezirow, 1991). Within the structure of an online course taken while abroad, the facilitator can push students towards premise reflection, asking students to think deeply about why they hold a certain worldview, and how that worldview might be shifting throughout the experience abroad.

Maggie's description of the online course that students take during their international internships provides another strong example of structured educator intervention while abroad. Within the structure of an online course, students are supported in moving through the experiential learning cycle (Kolb, 1984) as they are guided to reflect on their concrete experience, conceptualize their learnings by drawing on theories, and experiment with new ways

of thinking and being. Students are validating and constructing meaning from their experiences through engagement with peers and with the course facilitator, and they are prompted to question pre-existing beliefs and viewpoints. They are balancing action, or concrete experience, with reflection and dialogue, leading them towards transformative learning. This type of educational support follows John Dewey's teachings on reflective learning, as students are guided to reflect critically upon their experiences, ask questions, draw hypotheses, and experiment with new ways of thinking. Dewey also emphasized that reflection should occur in community, as the act of sharing one's experience with others facilitates learning.

To support students in reflecting on their education abroad experiences and in developing critical reflexivity, participants also discussed various forms of re-entry programming. Providing spaces for students to unpack their experiences together supports reflective learning in community, one of Dewey's criterion for critical reflection. As students participate in meaningful dialogue with their peers and mentors, they solidify and deepen their learnings by engaging in reflective observation and abstract conceptualization, the second and third stages of Kolb's (1984) experiential learning cycle. Academic projects, such as post-travel projects, presentations, or senior honors theses, provide a means for students to integrate their learnings from abroad with their academic disciplines, draw new connections, and gain deeper insights into their field of study. Through this integration, students are engaging in abstract conceptualization and active experimentation, the third and fourth stages of the experiential learning cycle.

The re-entry period is also an opportunity for students to learn about fellowship opportunities and refine career goals. Students should have the opportunity to reflect with an advisor, faculty mentor, or career services professional, and articulate how their international experiences have shaped their thinking about career goals and future opportunities. Educators

can help guide students to stay engaged with issues and learnings encountered abroad by getting involved with the local community. Rather than allowing the education abroad experience to fade away, educators can help students to integrate those experiences meaningfully and help them draw connections to their academics and their professional pursuits. As the findings suggest, integration of the education abroad experience into the complete curriculum would greatly facilitate these connections, as described in more detail in the following section.

Opportunities for reflection should be present not only upon return from the international experience, but at regular intervals after the experience, so that students are able to gradually integrate their learnings over time.

Overall, participants illustrated the value of reflective learning, the need for educator intervention to support reflective learning, the need for students to critically reflect in order for transformative learning to occur, and the importance of reflective learning as an ongoing process that spans the arc of the education abroad experience and beyond.

### **Integration**

In order to facilitate deep reflective learning, the findings demonstrate that integration of the education abroad experience into the broader curriculum is critical. First, it is important that educators guide students in identifying an education abroad experience that will complement and add value to their academic path. This intentional program choice delivers the message to students that education abroad is not an add-on or extracurricular experience, but an integral component of the overall academic experience. When students participate in programs that add depth and breadth to their studies, they may be more open to drawing connections, and reflecting on how the experience is contributing to their learning.

Furthermore, the findings demonstrate that integration of education abroad experiences must go beyond a specific program to reach the broader curriculum as a whole. Education abroad learning goals should be embedded into the complete curriculum, operationalized, and institutionalized. Global learning has the potential for deep integration into the fabric of the institution, and this can happen by embedding themes such as cultural studies, intercultural competence, area studies, coloniality, intersectionality, positionality, structural and global inequality, power, and privilege into the broader curriculum. As Daniel noted, “if it’s in the syllabus, then there’s much greater potential for social transformation in the ideas” (personal communication, February 14, 2020).

As noted in the literature review, education abroad has moved towards an experiential/constructivism paradigm (Vande Berg et. al., 2012). This paradigm recognizes that a student’s background knowledge and experience greatly inform the ways in which he or she will engage with the education abroad experience. By embedding themes of cultural studies, intercultural competence, etc. into the curriculum, as noted previously, educators can position students to engage more meaningfully with the education abroad experience, to reflect more deeply, to draw connections, and to gain new insights. By gaining a deeper understanding of one’s place in the world, of one’s social positioning, of local and global histories, and of structural inequalities in place, a student can approach the experience abroad with an open but critical mind, armed with greater awareness and discernment. These insights demonstrate Bennett’s (2012) assertion that a worldview is not a static construct, but is dynamic and evolving, and that intercultural adaptation requires one to engage in self-reflexivity.

### **Institutional and Structural Challenges**

The findings of this study demonstrate the need for deep integration of education abroad at the institutional level. Participants pointed to institutional and structural challenges including the lack of integration of education abroad with the academic curriculum, lack of faculty awareness of and interest in education abroad, the decentralized structure of higher education, a campus culture of education abroad as seen as an add-on activity, and issues around access and limited resources.

While student mobility is just one of six target areas of comprehensive internationalization, and the most prominent one at that (ACE, 2017), it cannot be considered a stand-alone form of global education, but rather one part of a greater whole. There must be a shift away from the notion of education abroad and global learning as “*extracurricular*” (Renee, personal communication, February 17, 2020) or “peripheral to the academic discipline” (Ben, personal communication, February 6, 2020) towards an “immersive campus culture” (Linda, personal communication, January 22, 2020). For student mobility to be an effective form of global education, there must be an “articulated institutional commitment” (ACE, 2019) which trickles down to every aspect of the institution. As Ben noted, “I find that the structure and placement in the academic hierarchy is critical in reaching goals in internationalizing the campus” (personal communication, February 6, 2020).

Education abroad and global learning should be embedded into the fabric of the institution, spanning the complete curriculum, with deep awareness and interest on the part of faculty regarding their curriculum, their advising, and their policies around education abroad. In order to create a shift in the student mindset away from the idea that education abroad is an

excursion or add-on experience, faculty must be intentional in their advising and policies, rather than assume that advising around education abroad is happening elsewhere on campus.

Finally, collaboration and partnerships are essential to meaningful integration of education abroad, and for helping students to develop critical reflexivity. Because of the decentralized nature of higher education, collaboration among senior leadership, academic faculty, education abroad staff, and career services is critical for integration to occur. To address issues around limited resources and access to opportunities, educators can form partnerships with education abroad organizations, with other colleges and universities, with organizations abroad, and with local community organizations to explore how global issues are manifested locally. As Karen noted, “I think as our student loads increase and our budgets decrease, the more we can share, the better” (personal communication, January 30, 2020).

### **Conclusions**

This Capstone research explored education abroad integration through the lens of the following questions: how can educators help students to critically reflect on what they gained from their education abroad experience, and on who they are in a larger global society? How can educators foster this critical reflexivity in students for life-long learning? To best support students, educators may consider the following recommendations:

- Intentional supports and programming should be put in place before, during, and after the education abroad experience with opportunities for guided, critical reflection present throughout. These supports may include individual and group advising, for-credit courses, workshops, and integrative projects. Educators should continue to challenge and support students beyond the education abroad experience.

- International programs should be aligned with a student's academic discipline and professional pursuits. This requires awareness and dedication on the part of faculty, and collaboration among senior leadership, faculty, education abroad staff, and career services.
- Education abroad should be deeply integrated into the broader curriculum and within the structure of the institution, and it can be further supported through integration in individual disciplines. This may include embedding themes such as cultural studies, intercultural competence, area studies, coloniality, intersectionality, positionality, structural and global inequality, power, and privilege into the broader curriculum.
- Collaboration and partnerships provide an opportunity for broader student support, as this enables the sharing of resources, increased access to opportunities, deeper curricular integration, and connection between the global and the local.

### **Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research**

Throughout the course of this research, there arose several discussion topics that could be explored more deeply. This research was completed over a six-month period, and given more time, further research and analysis could have been conducted. First, through the surveys and interviews with international educators at various institutions, I encountered a number of secondary sources including course syllabi, program materials, advising manuals, activity descriptions, and conceptual documents. These secondary sources, along with those available through the Forum on Education Abroad's Curriculum Toolbox, a repository of course and program syllabi and profiles from faculty and other IE professionals, are full of valuable insight that could provide great depth and breadth to this research.

Second, through surveying and interviewing a diverse set of international educators at a broad range of institutions, it was made apparent that while there are many commonalities and best practices in supporting integrative, reflective learning in education abroad as a whole, different types of programs and different types of institutions will have unique needs. Future research could include a comparison of the impacts of and educational supports needed for various types of education abroad programs, including semester study abroad, international internships, short-term or faculty-led programs, service learning, and international research. Additionally, within semester study abroad, one could analyze the different impacts and supports needed for direct enroll programs versus provider programs, and so on.

Third, this study specifically explored education abroad within the context of higher education and surveyed only higher education professionals. Further research could be conducted with international education professionals outside of higher education, including third-party providers and professionals in secondary education. Collecting data from students themselves would be an additional opportunity for further research and would add breadth and depth to the understanding of how to best support students in integrating their education abroad experiences.

Finally, the findings suggest that opportunity remains for rethinking the field of education abroad as a whole. Further research could analyze structures of inequality, power, and privilege in the context of education abroad, as well as an examination of coloniality, and ways to de-colonize education abroad.

### **Closing Statement**

In closing, there are a multitude of ways in which educators can support students in reflecting critically upon their education abroad experiences, and in fostering critical reflexivity for lifelong learning. These educational supports will vary depending on the type of program, the

type of institution, the individual needs of the students, and so on. Supports and programming may include targeted advising, guided reflection, for-credit courses, seminars, workshops, and integrative projects. To support students in these pursuits, educators should have an understanding of student development theories, reflective learning pedagogies, and current learning paradigms in cultural and intercultural learning. More work can be done at the institutional level to integrate education abroad and global learning into the fabric of the institution, and collaboration and partnerships will be a key to success.

This research further demonstrated the widely understood value of global learning and education abroad experiences on student growth and development. By integrating education abroad experiences more meaningfully into the broader curriculum and helping students to engage in critical reflection throughout the arc of the experience, educators can make this high-impact practice of education abroad an even more powerful tool in fostering critical reflexivity in students for life-long learning.

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## Appendix A: Survey

*Note: This survey was distributed to participants as a Google form. When participants read the letter of invitation, they were able to click through to the survey, which opened with the Participant Informed Consent form. In order to continue on to the survey, the participant had to electronically sign the Informed Consent form.*

Link to survey: <https://forms.gle/wCicxnEaGoA33az48>

Thank you for your participation in this study. Please answer the following questions to the best of your ability. Your participation is voluntary. You may choose not to answer any given questions, and you may withdraw your consent and discontinue your participation at any time.

*A note on terminology:*

In this questionnaire, “education abroad” refers to student mobility programs for undergraduate students including study abroad, international internships, international service learning, and international research.

“Intercultural competence” refers to the set of attitudes, values, knowledge, and skills that allow an individual to communicate effectively in a variety of cultural contexts.

### Part I: Background

1. What type of institution do you work for?
  - Community college
  - Liberal arts college
  - Research university
  - Other \_\_\_\_\_
2. What is the estimated undergraduate enrollment at your institution?
3. What is your job title?
4. What are your primary job responsibilities?
5. How long have you been working in this role?
6. How long have you worked in the field of international education?

### Part II: Programming

7. What types of education abroad programs does your institution offer? Please check all that apply.
  - Semester study abroad
  - Short-term (2-4 weeks) study abroad
  - Faculty-led study abroad
  - International internships

- International service-learning trips
  - International research
  - Other \_\_\_\_\_
8. What types of educational support and/or programming (if any) does your institution provide to students partaking in education abroad experiences? Please check all that apply.
- Individual or small group advising before departure
  - Pre-departure workshops
  - For-credit seminars or courses
  - Re-entry programs
  - Facilitated reflection throughout education abroad experience
  - E-portfolios
  - Other \_\_\_\_\_
9. Do you have any documentation, resources, or website links for these educational support(s) and/or programming that you would be willing to share? Examples are provided next to the category of programming. If yes, please describe, attach, or include web links here.
- Individual or small group advising before departure (Brief description of advising process)
  - Pre-departure workshops (PowerPoint presentations, facilitator guides, workshop outlines, etc.)
  - For-credit seminars or courses (Course syllabi, reading lists, assignments, etc.)
  - Re-entry programs (PowerPoint presentations, facilitator guides, workshop outlines, etc.)
  - Facilitated reflection throughout education abroad experience
  - E-portfolios (Instructions for portfolio development, website links to student portfolios, etc.)
  - Other \_\_\_\_\_
10. Has your institution received recognition for any of the above programming supporting education abroad integration? (For example, the Simon Award for Comprehensive Internationalization, the IIE Heiskell Award, the New York Times Award for Innovation in Education Abroad, etc.). If yes, please specify the program or initiative and award received.

### Part III: Discussion

11. What types of supports and/or programming do you believe to be most impactful in facilitating **reflective learning** in education abroad?

12. What types of supports and/or programming do you believe to be most impactful in facilitating **intercultural competence** in education abroad?
13. Are there any areas in which student learning in education abroad could be better supported at your institution? If yes, where are the gaps?
14. Are there any other aspects of student learning within education abroad that you would like to comment on?

Thank you for your participation in this study. Your time and contributions are greatly appreciated.

I am interested in conducting a limited number of interviews to develop a deeper understanding of the content addressed in this questionnaire. The interview would last around 30-45 minutes, would take place over a video conference platform, and would occur only one time. Are you willing to be contacted about participating in an interview? Yes\_\_\_\_ No\_\_\_\_\_

Would you like to receive a copy of the finalized research paper? The expected completion date is May 2020. Yes\_\_\_\_ No\_\_\_\_

## **Appendix B: Interview Guide**

*The interview was semi-structured. I prepared a list of guiding topics, categories, and questions, and I was open to following the participant's lead in shaping the discussion around enhancing the impact of education abroad.*

### Participant Background

- Please describe your role at your institution. In what capacity do you work in or with education abroad?

### Education Abroad Learning Outcomes

- What do you hope for students to gain through partaking in education abroad experiences?
- Does your institution have an articulated set of learning goals for study abroad (or international internships, service learning, etc.)?
  - If yes, do you feel that students meet these indicated learning goals?
  - How do you imagine these learning goals could be better met?
- In your experience working with students who partake in education abroad, what some observable trends in the learning that occurs through these experiences? (i.e. knowledge of other cultural worldviews, improved language proficiency, greater self-awareness, enhanced intercultural sensitivity, increased confidence, etc.)
- Do you observe any instances of unintended or adverse learning that occurs through education abroad experiences? (i.e. a reinforcement of negative stereotypes)

### Integrative Programming

- Research has shown that significant intercultural learning does not occur solely from living and/or studying in another country, but through intentional guided reflection before, during, and after the education abroad experience. What do you and/or your colleagues do to facilitate guided reflection and meaningful engagement with the host culture?
- In the survey, you indicated that your institution has developed programming in \_\_\_\_\_. Can you describe this programming in more detail?
- I see from the survey that your institution received \_\_\_\_ award for \_\_\_\_\_. Can you tell me more about this program/initiative at your institution? What were the outcomes of this program/initiative?
- Given that many institutions face the challenge of limited resources (human, financial, physical, etc.), what would you prioritize as the most impactful programming that supports optimal integrative learning for education abroad experiences? (i.e. for-credit seminars, re-entry workshops, etc.)
- Do you have any additional comments you would like to share?

### Appendix C: Focus Group Guide

*The focus group was semi-structured. I prepared a series of prompts and allowed open discussion among participants on the topic of how to enhance the impact of education abroad.*

1. Let's go around the table and introduce ourselves. Briefly describe your role at the college. In what capacity do you work with or support education abroad (either in general, or within your individual departments)?
2. Through the seminar, you were exposed to new ideas in integrating education abroad more fully into the broader curriculum.
  - a. What were your biggest take-aways from the seminar?
  - b. What surprised you?
  - c. What have you done in your department since participating in the seminar?
  - d. If you have not been able to implement changes, why not?
  - e. In your individual roles, what are you currently doing to support integrated, reflective learning in education abroad?
3. College A's study away office has articulated a set of study away learning goals. Do you believe our students are meeting these learning goals through education abroad experiences offered at the college?
  - a. What are some of the structural barriers that may prevent students from meeting these learning goals?
  - b. What can the college do better to support student learning abroad?
  - c. What impact do you think the new curriculum (with its emphasis on advising students to connect academic pursuits with off-campus experience) will have on helping students achieve the learning goals of study away?
4. If we were to require students to complete a seminar course before departure and upon return, what might that course look like? How would it be structured, and what type of content would we include?
5. Does anyone have any additional comments to share?

**Appendix D: Interview Guide (College A)**

1. I am aware that an examination/review of the College A's study away program was one part of the recent internationalization initiative with which you were involved. What were some of the big ideas that came from this work?
2. Research has shown that significant intercultural learning does not occur solely from living and/or studying in another country, but through intentional guided reflection before, during, and after the education abroad experience.
  - a. What do you and/or your colleagues do to facilitate guided reflection and meaningful engagement with the host culture?
  - b. What type of work would you like to be doing around education abroad integration, but that has not yet come to fruition?
3. College A has articulated a set of study away learning goals. Do you believe our/your students are meeting these learning goals through education abroad experiences offered at the college?
  - a. What are some of the structural barriers that may prevent students from meeting these learning goals?
  - b. What can the college do better to support student learning abroad?
4. What do you believe to be some of the biggest institutional barriers around integrating education abroad more meaningfully into the broader curriculum?
5. Given that many institutions, including College A, face the challenge of limited resources (human, financial, physical, etc.), what would you prioritize as the most impactful programming that supports optimal integrative, reflective learning for education abroad experiences? (i.e. for-credit seminars, re-entry workshops, e-Portfolios, etc.)
6. Do you have any additional comments you would like to share?