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**A NARRATIVE INQUIRY OF LONG-TERM LEARNING OUTCOMES OF
COMMUNITY COLLEGE EDUCATION ABROAD**

by

Heidi Fischer

A.A. August 2001, Randolph Community College

B.A. May 2003, High Point University

B.S. May 2003, High Point University

M.A. May 2005, American University

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Approved by:

Dr. Mitchell R. Williams (Director)

Dr. Felecia Commodore (Member)

Dr. Rosalind L. Raby (Member)

ABSTRACT

A NARRATIVE INQUIRY OF LONG-TERM LEARNING OUTCOMES OF COMMUNITY COLLEGE EDUCATION ABROAD

Heidi Fischer
Old Dominion University, May 2021
Director: Dr. Mitchell R. Williams

Since 2007-08, the number of community colleges who reported sending students abroad has tripled. Community college students represent diverse demographic backgrounds, socio-economic statuses, and life experiences that are often underrepresented in higher education and education abroad (EA). The purpose of this narrative inquiry was to explore the long-term learning outcomes gained by 27 community college alumni who studied abroad between Fall 2015 and Fall 2019. Data collection consisted of two rounds of in-depth, individual semi-structured interviews as well as a pre-interview survey. Participants had graduated within the past five years and participated in both short-term, faculty-led and mid-length, faculty-in-residence programs on four continents.

Findings of the study indicate that community college alumni report a variety of learning outcomes that have remained impactful for them in the years after studying abroad. Three participants chose to move abroad for graduate school or work, while other participants reported that EA supported the development of skills to support the transition to independent adulthood. Further, study participants made professional connections regarding their desired careers along with academic connections, which consist of knowledge and attitudes regarding academic coursework or continual learning. Findings of this study also revealed that participants acquired knowledge about their host culture, which led to a lasting shift in perspectives about that culture and the participants' relationship with host nationals. Finally, participants narrated a

development or shift in their personal identities, as well as meaningful contributions to their social capital.

Implications of the study for practitioners include the importance for advisors and faculty to encourage their students to study abroad, the need for assets-based preparation of EA participants, as well as the importance of helping EA alumni to actively process their experience abroad to better articulate outcomes. Results also support the need for practitioners to serve as advocates for their students and for EA program development. Implications for campus leaders and policymakers include the need to support EA programs on their campuses, and to potentially leverage these programs to differentiate individual community colleges in new student recruitment. Campus leaders must also work to create cross-campus buy-in and toward raising funds for EA programs.

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This dissertation is dedicated to those who dare to explore the world.

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The first words of this dissertation were written in fall 2018. Throughout the years since then, I have received unrelenting encouragement, constructive feedback, and suggestions for improvement from countless individuals. I wish to thank them in these acknowledgements, knowing that these words of thanks will fall well short in capturing just how meaningful and significant each person was on my journey toward completing this dissertation.

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Zum Schluss danke ich meiner Familie in Deutschland: meinem Vati, meiner Mutti, und meinen Schwestern Andy und Anni. Ich bin sehr dankbar für ihre Unterstützung meines internationalen und pädagogischen Lebensweges.

Writing a dissertation is akin to climbing a mountain. I was forewarned that the climb could, at times, be a lonely journey. Thanks to the many academic and personal mentors who chose to climb the mountain with me, I did not find it thus.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
LIST OF FIGURES	xii
LIST OF TABLES.....	xiii
 Chapter	
I. INTRODUCTION.....	1
Background of the Study	2
Outcomes of Education Abroad in the Literature	4
Purpose Statement.....	7
Research Questions	7
Professional Significance.....	7
Overview of the Methodology	9
Delimitations.....	12
Definitions of Key Terms	12
Conclusion	14
II. LITERATURE REVIEW	16
Delimitation of Review of Studies.....	16
Method of Literature Review	16
Chapter Organization	17
Education Abroad at U.S. Community Colleges	19
Historical Development of Education Abroad.....	23

	Page
Learning Outcomes for Students at Four-Year Institutions	34
Additional Research on Post-Program Learning Outcomes	54
Studies That Include Community College Students	55
Discussion of Methodological Issues and Directions for Future Research	59
Summary and Implications	64
Conclusion	67
III. METHODOLOGY	69
Purpose Statement and Research Questions	69
Research Paradigm.....	70
Conceptual Framework and Theoretical Underpinnings	72
Research Design.....	74
Limitations	88
Conclusion	88
IV. FINDINGS	90
Changed Understanding of Host Culture	96
Development or Shift of Personal Identity	102
Choice to Live Abroad.....	110
Contributions to Social Capital	116
Skills Related to Transition to Adulthood or University-Life	121

	Page
Academic Connections and Desire for Continual Learning	124
Professional Connections and Work Skills	130
Other Outcomes	136
Factors Contributing to Developing Learning Outcomes	141
Conclusion	147
V. DISCUSSION	148
Summary of the Current Study	148
Findings Related to the Literature.....	156
Implications.....	164
Concluding Remarks.....	171
REFERENCES	172
APPENDIX A.....	192
APPENDIX B	193
APPENDIX C	194
APPENDIX D.....	199
APPENDIX E	199
VITA.....	202

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure	Page
1 Three Dimensions of Learning	18
2 Outbound Students' Fields of Study at Community Colleges versus All Institutions, 2018-19	20
3 Outbound Students' Race at Community Colleges versus All Institutions, 2018-19.....	22
4 Education Abroad Program Duration for Community Colleges, 2007/08 to 2017-18.....	23
5 Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity	45
6 Model of Experiential Learning.....	63
7 Revised Conceptual Framework of Education Abroad Learning Outcomes.....	152
8 Revised Conceptual Framework of Education Abroad Learning Outcomes Applied to the Current Study	153

LIST OF TABLES

Table	Page
1 Study Site Characteristics, Fall 2018	81
2 Participant Background Information: Education	911
3 Participant Background Information: Education Abroad Program and Post-Community College Employment	93
4 Participant Demographic Characteristics and Prior International Travel	955
5 Findings and Dimensions.....	154

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Students enrolled in U.S. institutions of higher education have pursued education abroad (EA) opportunities for the better part of a century (Institute for International Education [IIE], 2018). From a U.S. foreign policy perspective, these educational endeavors are believed to bring humankind closer together in a nonviolent fashion, allowing for the peaceful exchange of ideas. EA programs also contribute to the goal of U.S. international political interests by humanizing the other with the hope that nations would cease their desire to destroy one another (Fulbright, 1976; Nye, 2011). From the perspective of college and university administrators, an educational experience abroad can also be marketed as a way to gain job skills that will enable the participants to better market themselves to future employers (Gardner et al., 2009). In addition to enhanced job skills, participants acquire a variety of learning outcomes. As the number of participants in EA programs grows, it remains crucial to assess the various learning outcomes of the students' experiences (Bolen, 2007).

Over the decades, outcomes assessment in EA in U.S. higher education has largely followed one of three prongs. First, researchers have focused on student success outcomes. These include the effects of EA participation on retention and graduation rates, grade point averages (GPAs), or, in the case of U.S. community college participants, the rates of transfer to four-year institutions (Raby et al., 2014; Rhodes et al., 2016). Secondly, researchers have focused on the study of intercultural competencies, such as language acquisition, cross-cultural adaptation, or intercultural development (Bennett, 2014; Deardorff, 2004; Hammer et al., 2003; Kim, 1988). For community colleges, the focus has been on intercultural competencies (Emert & Pearson, 2007; Paras, et al., 2019; Wood, 2019).

Finally, EA and career development administrators have interpreted EA learning outcomes as transferrable skills in the context of a global marketplace, focusing on the gains that might lead to a future employment opportunity for the participant. Traits such as being able to work independently and interacting with people who have different values and perspectives are highly valued by employers (Gardner et al., 2009; NACE, 2019). All of these lines of inquiry certainly have merit in the realm of outcomes assessment of EA. All can inform practitioners and policymakers about the value of EA programs and lead to future program enhancements. However, many of these single-focused, often quantitative, approaches may delimit participants' experiences to a number or score, rather than an individual or collective story. This narrative inquiry aims to fill the gap in the academic literature on outcomes assessment of EA, by giving voice to U.S. community college alumni.

Background of the Study

In 2020, 41 percent of U.S. undergraduate students were enrolled at community colleges (AACC, 2021). These institutions play an important role in preparing globally competent graduates for a diverse workforce, and thus are key actors in higher education's internationalization efforts (Zhang, 2011). Community colleges first began to internationalize in the 1960s (Raby, 2020). Although there is an increasing focus on campus internationalization of community colleges today (Raby & Valeau, 2016b), community colleges faculty and administrators face considerable challenges when trying to increase outbound mobility on their campuses (Raby & Rhodes, 2018). At many community colleges, EA is simply not a priority, which is reflected by its lack of inclusion in college policies (Raby & Rhodes, 2018). In fact, a survey revealed that 73 percent of community college mission statements did not reference internationalization in 2006 (Raby, 2008). Further, and perhaps more significantly, only one fifth

of community colleges included campus internationalization as a key component of their institution's strategic plans (Raby, 2008). The growth of EA programs is also hindered by lack of institutional funding for a designated department of EA, resulting in a limited number of EA programs being offered (Raby & Rhodes, 2018).

This lack of institutional support for EA programs may be in large part due to the community college mission being perceived to be primarily toward its local community (Cohen et al., 2013). This perception is perpetuated by ideas such as EA being a luxury endeavor for a few students and internationalization of community college curricula having no direct impact on the jobs graduates obtain. However, campus internationalization need not be counter to the community college local mission (Raby et al., 2014; Zook, 1947). In fact, in a white paper for the IIE, Raby (2008) argued, “[c]ommunity colleges that do not offer education abroad are not meeting their mandate of preparing students for their future roles in a global economy, where international literacy is a basic skill needed in the workplace” (p. 8).

Ten years later, in the 2018-19 academic year, more than 7,800 U.S. community college students studied abroad (IIE, 2020). Although this number comprises only a small percentage (2%) of the overall number of students who studied abroad (IIE, 2019), community college outward mobility has made great strides (Raby, 2019). In 2007-08, 88 community colleges reported sending students on EA programs. A decade later, that number had more than tripled to 297 institutions (IIE, 2009; 2019). Similarly, community colleges are leaders in sending non-ethnic majority students abroad. In some instances, the percentage of certain non-ethnic majority populations is greater than those percentages at the state or national level (Raby, 2019).

Community colleges have also improved access to education abroad for their students through

creating consortia or partnerships, cultivating funding support, and developing institutional commitments to EA (Baer, 2019).

Nevertheless, there have been relatively few studies that take a comprehensive approach to explore the cognitive, affective, and behavioral learning outcomes of community college EA participants. Similarly, the voices of community college alumni are not as frequently represented in the academic literature as those of their four-year HEI peers. As is the case for many university EA alumni, however, the experience can be transformative (Hunter, 2008) and merits exploration. Researchers have also called for the exploration of the long-term impacts EA experiences may have (Kehl & Morris, 2007; Mapp, 2012; Varela, 2017; Williams, 2005). Yet what and why community college alumni say they learned abroad that is still relevant to them today remains largely unexplored.

The majority of studies on EA learning outcomes have been quantitative in nature, utilizing survey instruments. Scholars have argued, however, that research that focuses on a single learning outcome is not representative of the participant's experience, and a qualitative approach may draw out more detail (Redwine et al., 2018; Varela, 2017; Williams, 2005; 2009). The goal of this study is to contribute to the literature on the experiences of community college EA participants by conducting a narrative inquiry that results in a narrative collage of participant voices.

Outcomes of Education Abroad in the Literature

Outcomes for participation in an EA program span three dimensions of learning outcomes: cognitive, affective, and behavioral (Kraiger et al., 1993; Varela, 2017). For university students, cognitive learning outcomes, such as language learning, are often examined in the literature. One example is Watson et al.'s (2013) study on almost 500 third- and fourth-year

students at a U.S. military academy. The students participated in language immersion programs. Results indicated significant language gains for the majority of participants. Studies exploring community college students' language learning abroad are less common, perhaps in part due to only 2.3 percent of community college EA students pursuing credentials in world languages or international studies (IIE, 2020a). Research does support, however, that community college students in language learning programs abroad benefit greatly from the experience (Brenner, 2016).

A second dimension of learning outcomes is affective. An example of this dimension is intercultural development. In the past two decades, several studies have explored intercultural development in students studying abroad, and results have been mixed. Some studies report that EA participants show greater intercultural development post-EA than non-EA students (Anderson & Lawton, 2011; Terzuolo, 2018). Other studies reported gains only with the use of an intervention, such as a reflection-based online course or a cultural mentor (Pedersen, 2010). For community college EA practitioners, intercultural development has been a focus area for assessment, perhaps in part due to the outcomes importance in relation to workforce competencies (NACE 2019; Raby 2008; 2020). Results indicate that community college students progress in intercultural development by studying abroad, particularly on programs in EA programs designed to support this development in students (Emert & Pearson, 2007; Paras, et al., 2019; Wood, 2019). The third dimension of learning outcomes is behavioral. Examples include self-efficacy and cultural intelligence. Nguyen et al.'s (2018) study explored longitudinal data for undergraduate students at the University of Massachusetts who participated in a program in the Caribbean. Results of the study indicate that participants experienced gains in both cultural intelligence and self-efficacy at the end of their five-week program, with monocultural

individuals experiencing greater gains than multicultural participants (Nguyen, 2018). While this study was not specific to community college students, it was of a duration common of EA programs at community colleges and the ethnic makeup of program participants was similar to that of community college programs, making this a fruitful area of research for the community college EA population.

In addition to outcomes within the three dimensions of learning, much of the literature has also focused on the overarching concept of intercultural competence, which includes all three dimensions of learning. Intercultural competence is defined as “the ability to communicate effectively and appropriately in intercultural situations based on one’s intercultural knowledge, skills, and attitudes” (Deardorff, 2004, p. 194). The concept impacts participants’ verbal and nonverbal communication (Deardorff, 2004), as well as aspects of language acquisition, cultural intelligence, and cross-cultural adaptation. Community college researchers have explored this concept in relation to student engagement for non-EA students (Riley et al., 2016), but more could be explored on these concepts for community college students who study abroad.

Further, researchers have examined the impact of EA programs in terms of academic achievement or student development. In a study with community college student participants, researchers investigated whether participation in EA programs impacted students’ institutional engagement, and whether there was a link between participating in EA and academic achievement (Raby et al., 2014; Rhodes et al., 2016). The results showed that EA participation had a positive impact on early, midstream, and terminal outcomes, such as retention and transfers to university. In the case of student development, research with community college students shows that participation in EA leads to a perceived developmental change in academic, athletic, and interpersonal competence for the students. Further, students who study abroad improve their

ability to respect and communicate with diverse others (Drexler & Campbell, 2011). The current study adds to this body of literature by considering the qualitative dimensions of the learning outcomes achieved by the participants.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this narrative inquiry was to explore the long-term learning outcomes gained by U.S. community college alumni who participated in an education abroad program. Learning outcomes were defined as “the knowledge, skills, and abilities an individual student possesses and can demonstrate upon completion of a learning experience or sequence of learning experiences” (Bolen, 2007, p. 173). In the context of this study, learning outcomes were either cognitive, behavioral, or affective (Kraiger et al., 1993; Varela, 2017), as well as additional uncategorized outcomes, such as the participants’ identity development (Varela, 2017).

Research Questions

The research questions guiding this study were:

1. How do U.S. community college alumni who studied abroad describe post-program learning outcomes?
2. To what factors do U.S. community college alumni who studied abroad attribute any learning outcomes they described?

Professional Significance

Existing studies on learning outcomes in EA have primarily taken a quantitative approach and have typically researched one learning outcome per study, such as intercultural development (Terzuolo, 2018; Vande Berg et al., 2009; Watson et al., 2013) or language acquisition (Vande Berg et al., 2009; Watson et al., 2013; Watson & Wolfel, 2015). The current dissertation took a qualitative approach to explore learning outcomes one to five years post-program, allowing

participants to share their lived experiences through stories, and to prioritize the learning outcomes they acquired, rather than those that were of interest to the researcher.

According to the *Open Doors report* (2019) published annually by the IIE, there were 297 community colleges that reported sending students abroad in 2017-18, and the impact of these programs on its participants merits further study. With the growing focus on campus internationalization at community colleges (Raby & Valeau, 2016), it is important to conduct research on student learning outcomes (Medina-Lopez-Portillo, 2004). Utilizing only participation data and student satisfaction data is not enough to comprehensively assess the impact of study abroad programs (Vande Berg, 2004).

Even though community college participation in EA has increased in recent years, the majority of the research published in the academic literature has been conducted with university-level students. There are studies that include community college EA participants (Brenner, 2016; Emert & Pearson, 2007; Paras, et al., 2019; Raby et al., 2014; Rhodes et al., 2016; Wood, 2019), but many of these studies focused on quantitative measures such as GPA, retention rates, and transfer rates to four-year universities. Further, there is limited research on EA outcomes with alumni, both at the community college and university-level. The current dissertation adds to that literature by taking a narrative inquiry approach with community college alumni, thereby contributing to the scholarly literature by assessing the long-term nature of EA program learning outcomes.

Increasingly, university and college graduates need to be able to articulate the benefits of their EA experiences to future employers. Employers value competencies such teamwork and collaboration, as well as global or intercultural fluency (NACE, 2019). Similarly, EA advisors and coordinators at community colleges will be able to use the results of this study to advise

students on future programs by demonstrating the outcomes other community college students were able to achieve through their participation. Learning how participating in an EA program can impact their skills, behaviors, and knowledge may encourage more community college students to go abroad in the future.

At an institutional level, resources for EA program are often scarce. This is particularly the case at community colleges that have a mission toward their local communities (Cohen et al., 2013; Raby & Rhodes, 2018). The results of this study can help community college administrators make the case for additional funding of EA positions with their leadership. Less than seven percent of community colleges have a dedicated staff member whose sole responsibility is the coordination of EA programs, which inhibits the growth of outbound participants (Raby & Valeau, 2019). This low percentage may be exacerbated in the wake of layoffs and furloughs due to the coronavirus pandemic. The current dissertation can help tell the story of the importance of EA at community colleges to institutional leadership. Senior community college leaders will benefit from the results of this study as they seek to understand the importance of EA to their students, their local communities, economic development, and their institution's reputation.

Overview of the Methodology

This narrative inquiry adds to the academic literature on EA experiences in higher education in the United States. The study explored the lived experiences regarding the outcomes of participation in an EA program by community college alumni. I conducted two rounds of in-depth, individual semi-structured interviews with 27 alumni of four community colleges.

Research Design

I took a narrative inquiry approach to explore the experiences of community college EA participants, grounded in a social-constructivist research paradigm (Clandinin, 2013). Social constructivist theory asserts that “[r]ealities are multiple, and they exist in people’s minds” (Guba, 1990, p. 26). In other words, the participants may all be EA alumni, but their life experiences and perceived identities impacted their experiences related to EA. A relativist ontology and subjectivist epistemology underpin social constructivism; the researcher becomes the instrument to uncover the multiple realities of the participants (Guba, 1990).

Narrative inquiry is a method for exploring rich phenomena. It allows the researcher to investigate the past and future dimensions that shape participants’ stories and explore the underlying assumptions of what shapes their realities (Bell, 2002; Leedy & Ormrod, 2019). In narrative inquiry, “a view of experience...[is] represented through narrative forms of representation” (Clandinin, 2013, p. 15). This methodology allows for the recounting of the lived experiences of the student participants through stories to inspire meaningful societal change.

Participants

Participants of the research were drawn from students who have previously studied abroad at an Intermountain Region and two Westcoast community colleges, and a Westcoast community college district, which were among the leading associate’s institutions in EA (IIE, 2020a). Students were alumni who had graduated within the past five years. Participants in this study participated in both short-term, faculty-led and mid-length (semester-long) programs. Participants were selected through a mixture of convenience and purposeful sampling.

Data Collection

In narrative inquiry, methods of data collection include in-depth unstructured and semi-structured interviews, autobiographical writings, poetry, and narrative documents, as well as photographs or visual materials (Leedy & Ormrod, 2019). For this study, the primary method of data collection was two rounds of individual semi-structured interviews. Each interview lasted approximately 40-60 minutes, with two to four weeks between the two rounds of interviews. These interviews were conducted via videoconferencing. Each participant was interviewed twice to establish a more prolonged engagement (Hays & Singh, 2012). Interviews were video recorded with the participants' permission. The interview protocols (Appendix A and B) included several open-ended questions and I asked follow-up questions and provided probes as the interviews unfolded. The secondary method of data collection was a survey completed by participants prior to their first interview that included questions regarding program information, participant demographics, and participant background information. Additional data was in the form of my field notes and memos taken during and after each interview and during analysis.

Process of Analysis

After concluding the interviews, I transcribed them verbatim. I then coded the text for themes and tensions using the web-based software Dedoose, identifying patterns in the text that addressed the research questions (Leedy & Ormrod, 2019). In the first round of coding, I applied descriptive codes, carefully reading and re-reading the transcript, looking for patterns in the text (Creswell, 2013; Saldaña, 2016). In the second round of coding I used axial coding, sorting the codes into the three dimensions of learning (Kraiger et al., 1993; Saldaña, 2016). During the process of analysis, I restoried the narratives obtained from the participants (Leedy & Ormrod, 2019). Restorying is the concept of reorganizing the data to retell the participants' experiences in

a cohesive, typically chronological, story. I analyzed the data collected and placed it into a framework that best represented the participants' voice and context (Bell, 2002; Creswell, 2013). I also worked collaboratively with the participants to member-check the meaning behind their words.

Delimitations

The current study has several delimitations. First, the study explored outcomes of EA programs at four U.S. community colleges. As such, results should not be extrapolated to students in other countries or students at universities. The study did also not consider upper-level or graduate students, as community colleges do not have juniors, seniors, or graduate students. Second, the study did not consider academic outcomes, such as grade point averages or retention rates. The current study is a qualitative narrative inquiry based on semi-structured interviews and therefore did not consider quantitative elements of the students' experiences. Third, the study excluded students participating in credit-bearing internships or service-learning experiences and focused instead on experiences tied to classroom or out-of-class instruction.

Definitions of Key Terms

Key concepts in this study include:

- **City:** According to the IPEDS, all four of the community colleges that served as research sites for this study were located in cities (IPEDS, 2020). Falling into the category of urban, cities are “[territories] inside an urbanized area and inside a principal city” with certain populations (NCES, 2006). For a large city, the population is 250,000 or more. For a midsize city, the population is less than 250,000 and greater than or equal to 100,000. For a small city, the population is less than 100,000.

- Community college: For the purposes of this study, “community colleges are defined as regionally accredited institutions, which primarily award the associate degree as their highest award [and] will include colleges that offer a limited number of baccalaureate degrees” (AACC, 2019).
- Community college alumni: The phrase community college alumni refers to any former students enrolled at a community college. Alumni are graduates of the college, but also include those who transferred or left the institution without a credential.
- Education abroad: This is defined as credit-bearing study outside the student’s home country. Education abroad is the overarching term that includes programs such as exchange programs, one-way study abroad experiences, or short-term, faculty-led experiences. These programs can be a semester or year in length or as short as Spring break.
- Learning outcomes: These are defined as “the knowledge, skills, and abilities an individual student possesses and can demonstrate upon completion of a learning experience or sequence of learning experiences” (Bolen, 2007, p. 173). In the context of this study, learning outcomes fell under three dimensions: cognitive, behavioral, or affective (Kraiger et al., 1993; Varela, 2017). Additionally, the study uncovered learning outcomes that do not neatly fit into these three dimensions.
- Long-term learning outcomes: The term long-term is defined as a participant having returned from studying abroad at least one year prior to the interview. The study explored learning outcomes that persisted beyond a student’s graduation or transfer from the community college.

- Mid-length programs: Mid-length study abroad programs are defined as a duration of eight weeks to one semester (IIE, 2020a).
- Narrative inquiry: Narrative inquiry is one of the five approaches of qualitative research (Creswell, 2013). It is a method for studying rich phenomena by exploring the past, present, and future dimensions that shape participants' stories (Bell, 2002; Leedy & Ormrod, 2019). The results of data collected from sources such as semi-structured interviews are presented in narrative form (Clandinin, 2013).
- Restorying: This concept refers to the process of analysis in narrative inquiry. It is defined as "reorganizing the stories into some general type of framework," typically in chronological order (Creswell, 2013, p.72). Clandinin and Connelly (2000) add that the retold story exists in a three-dimensional space: the interaction (personal and social aspects), continuity (aspects related to the past, present or future), and situation (aspects of place).
- Short-term programs: Short-term study abroad programs are defined as a duration of eight weeks or less (IIE, 2020a).

Conclusion

As the number of EA participants in the United States grows, the research of program impact on the participants remains important. Most of the studies published in the academic literature have focused on university students, often researching one learning outcome per study. The present dissertation adds to this literature by taking a narrative inquiry approach with community college alumni. The narrative inquiry employed in this study allowed participants to describe an array of multiple learning outcomes that present a more complete picture. The results of this study can aid community college administrators to recruit future EA participants. Further,

the results can help those administrators make the case for additional funding for EA positions and programs.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

In ten years, the number of community colleges who reported sending students abroad has more than tripled, from 88 to 297 institutions (IIE, 2019; Raby, 2019). Community college participation in education abroad (EA) programs was approximately 7,800 students in 2018-19 (IIE, 2020a). Community college students who study abroad represent a variety of diverse demographic backgrounds, socio-economic status, and life experiences. Yet the voices of community college alumni are not as frequently represented in the academic literature on EA outcomes as those of students enrolled at four-year HEIs. The goal of this study was to contribute to the literature on the lived experiences of community college EA participants.

Delimitation of Review of Studies

In this literature review, I evaluate empirical studies that investigate one or more learning outcomes of U.S. post-secondary students in credit-bearing EA programs. In an effort to narrow the scope of participants to most closely mirror those of the current study, research with high school students who study abroad or students outside the United States who study abroad are excluded from this review. Further, as the present study was conducted solely with credit-bearing EA programs, the review does not include studies with service-learning components or internship programs abroad, unless the program contained an academic, in-class requirement. As there is less literature on community college EA outcomes, I have expanded the review of studies to students at four-year institutions.

Method of Literature Review

This chapter is a systematic review of the academic literature on outcomes in EA. The analysis of the studies is grouped by the three dimensions of learning outcomes developed by

Kraiger et al. (1993). The dimensions are cognitive learning outcomes, such as language acquisition and cultural learning; affective learning outcomes, such as intercultural development and program satisfaction; and behavioral learning outcomes, such as cross-cultural adaptation and cultural intelligence. To discover studies on this topic, I searched the Old Dominion University library catalog and the journal databases ERIC, JSTOR and EducationSource. I also used Google Scholar to find additional articles.

The first search terms I used were “education abroad,” “international,” or “study abroad” combined with the terms “outcome,” “learning outcome,” or “impact.” I further added to the search by including specific concepts such as “intercultural development,” “program satisfaction,” “cross-cultural adaptation,” “cultural intelligence,” and “cultural learning.” In addition, I searched for “community college abroad” and “qualitative study abroad” to uncover studies that included community college participants or used qualitative research methods. Finally, I added the terms “identity,” “cultural wealth” to the word “abroad” to search for outcomes outside of the three dimensions of learning. Criteria for studies to be included in this literature review were publication in a peer-reviewed journal, a publication date of no more than 20 years ago, participants of the study that were U.S. higher education students, and relevance to the research topic. I also included dissertations and books on the topic that were relevant to this study. I excluded studies related to academic outcomes related to EA, such as improved grade point averages or increased retention rate as well as those exploring student development as they fall outside of the conceptual framework used in this study.

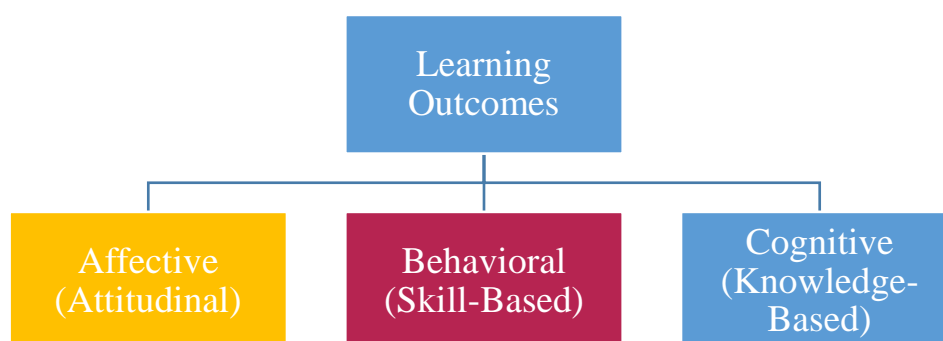
Chapter Organization

The review begins with an overview of EA at community colleges and an outline of post-secondary EA throughout U.S. history. This allows me to put the studies in the context of the

evolution of the field of EA over time. The remainder of the chapter is an evaluation of empirical studies in the academic literature, grouped by the three dimensions of learning outcomes developed by Kraiger et al. (1993) (see Figure 1). First, I consider cognitive learning outcomes. Cognitive learning outcomes are defined as the acquisition of new knowledge. Examples are language acquisition, cultural learning, and creative thinking (Kraiger et al., 1993; Varela, 2017).

Figure 1

Three Dimensions of Learning



Note: Adapted from “Application of cognitive, skill-based, and affective theories of learning outcomes to new methods of training evaluation,” by K. Kraiger, J. K. Ford, and E. Salas, 1993, *The Journal of Applied Psychology* 78(2), 311–328. (<http://doi.org/10.1037/0021-9010.78.2.311>). Copyright 1993 by the American Psychological Association.

Second, I review studies that consider affective learning outcomes. These are defined as changes in the participants’ attitudes, such as the disposition toward people in the host country. The affective learning outcomes reviewed in this chapter are intercultural development and program satisfaction (Kraiger et al., 1993; Varela, 2017). The third dimension of learning outcomes is behavioral in nature. Behavioral learning outcomes are defined as skills the

participants develop during their international sojourns. The examples of behavioral outcomes in an EA context considered here are cross-cultural adaptation and cultural intelligence (Kraiger et al., 1993; Varela, 2017).

The review of the university-level literature on EA learning outcomes can inform assessment and practice at community colleges. After this review, I will consider studies conducted with community college students and studies focused specifically on long-term post-program outcomes. The chapter will conclude with an analysis of methodological issues in the studies reviewed, a suggested theoretical emphasis, as well as directions for future research.

Education Abroad at U.S. Community Colleges

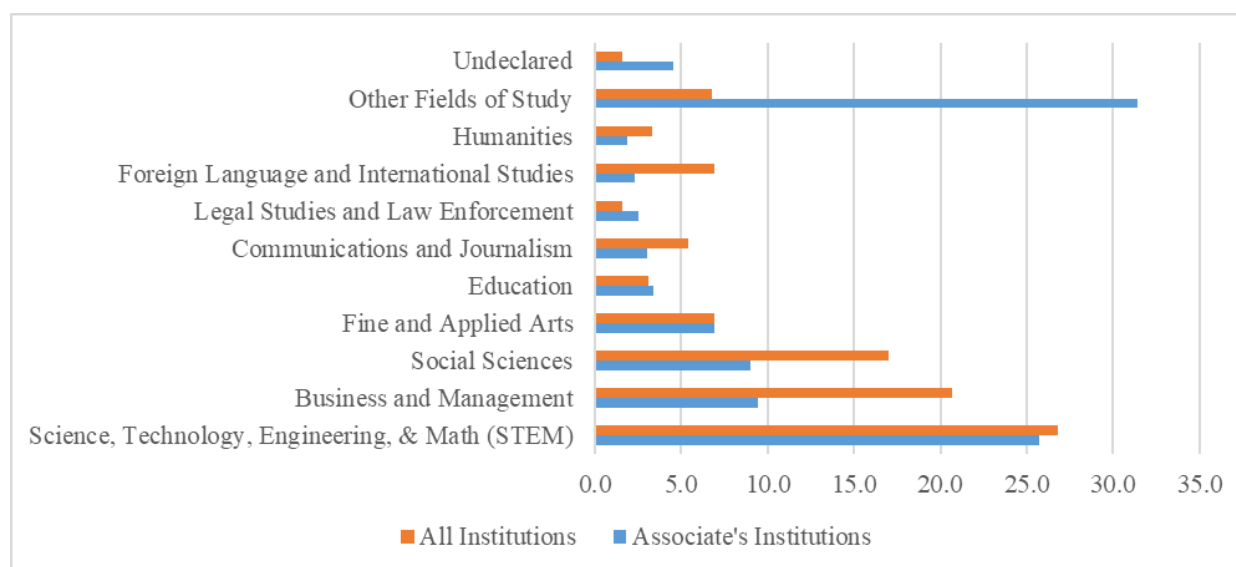
According to the IIE (2020a), there were more than 7,800 students who studied abroad while enrolled at 297 community colleges in the 2017-18 academic year. The actual numbers are likely higher, as reporting mobility data to the IIE is optional, and not all institutions do so each year. These 7,800 students represent 1.9 percent of all outbound mobility reported to IIE in U.S. HEIs (IIE, 2020a). In 2007-08, 88 community colleges send students abroad on academic sojourns, a more than threefold increase in the span of a decade (IIE, 2009)

Between 2015-16 and 2016-17, the rate of community college students who studied abroad increased by 4.49%, at almost twice the rate of all institutions' EA students. This trend has continued for the most recent year data are available (2018-19), when community college outbound mobility increased by 5.8 percent over the previous year, compared to only a 1.6% overall growth of mobility (IIE, 2020a). Further analysis of the outbound mobility data per HEI sector indicates that the low number of community college students studying abroad may in fact be due to the relative number of programs available within each institutional sector (i.e. the largest percentage of EA students participate at doctoral-granting HEIs) (Raby, 2019).

Approximately one quarter of community college students who study abroad take coursework in preparation to major in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) fields, as is true for outbound mobility of all students (see Figure 2), (IIE, 2020a).

Figure 2

Outbound Students' Fields of Study at Community Colleges versus All Institutions, 2018-19



Note: From *Open Doors: Community College Data Resource*, by IIE, 2020a. Copyright 2021, Institute of International Education, Inc. Used with permission.

Of the community college students, 9.4 percent are pursuing a business-related credential, compared to 20.7 percent overall. This is followed by 9 percent of students studying social sciences, in comparison to 17 percent of all institutions. The majority (31.4 percent) of community college students who study abroad are studying 'other' fields of study (IIE, 2020a), while 4.5 percent are undeclared. For all institutions combined, the percentages for these two categories are 6.8 and 1.6, respectively (IIE, 2020a).

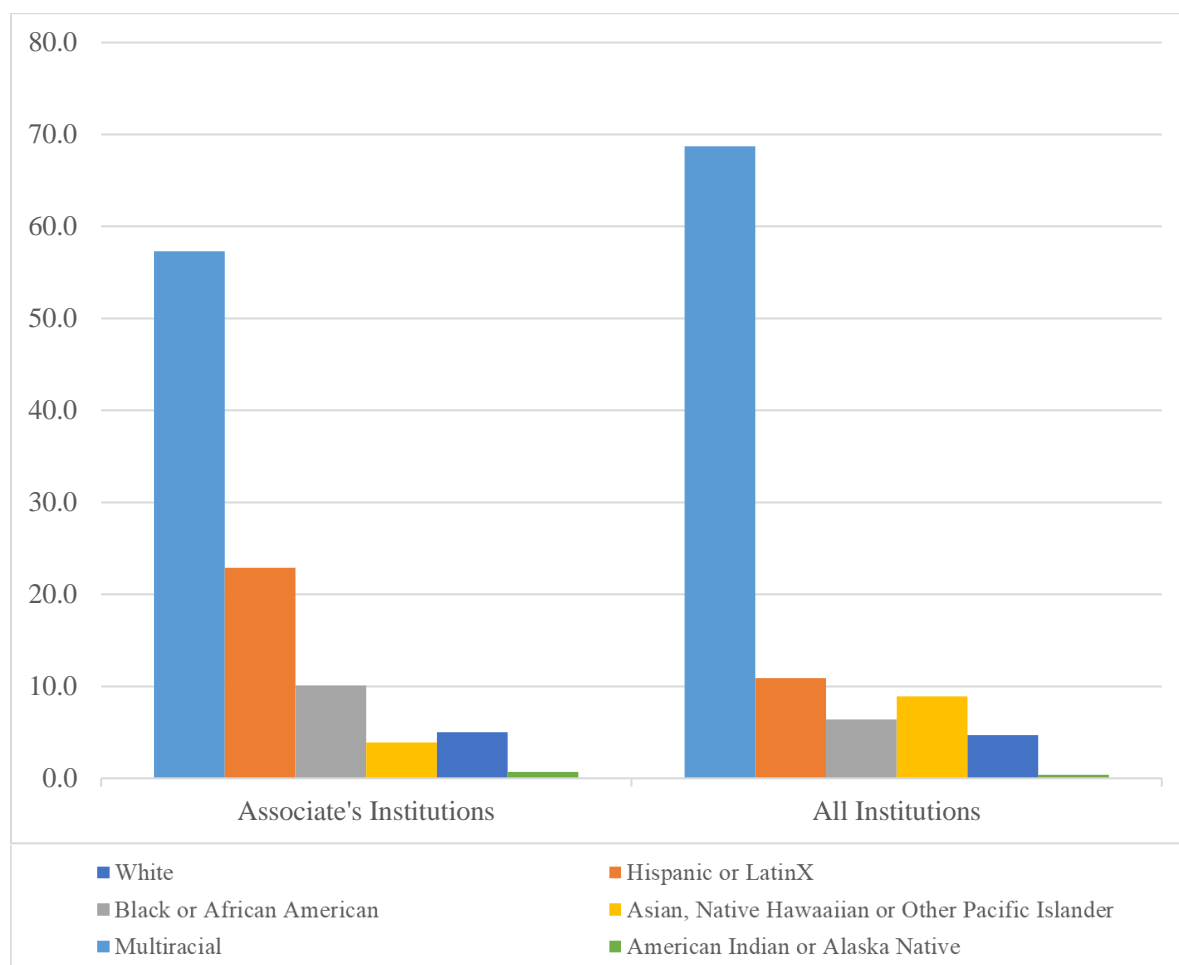
In 2018-19, the most recent year for which data were available, the majority of EA participants have been female and White. Both overall and for community colleges in particular, the percentage of participants who are female has increased slightly. Between 2015-16 and 2018-19, the percentage of female participants at community colleges has increased from 65.3 to 70.2 percent. For all institutions, those percentages were 66.5 and 67.3 percent respectively (IIE, 2020a). At the same time, in 2018-19, the enrollment at all U.S. community colleges was 57 percent female (AACC, 2020), so the number of female community college students who study abroad is disproportionately higher.

Community colleges lead the way for non-White students who study abroad. In 2015-16, 38.5 percent of community college EA participants were non-White, compared to 28.4 percent of all institutions' EA participants. By 2018-19, those percentages had further improved to 42.6 and 31.3 percent, respectively (see Figure 3), (IIE, 2020a). Nevertheless, community college enrollment that is non-White was 56 percent in 2019, and this percentage continues to increase (AACC, 2020). These numbers indicate a disparity between ethnicity of community college students nationwide and that of community college students who study abroad.

In terms of program duration, the vast majority of EA students participate in short-term programs of eight weeks or less (IIE, 2019). Overall, 64 percent of students studied abroad on short-term programs in the 2017-18 academic year. For community colleges, that number was 85.9 percent of participants (see Figure 4) (IIE, 2019). In the past decade, the number of community college students who participated in mid-length programs of eight weeks to a semester in length has decreased from 31.5 to 13.9 percent (IIE, 2019).

Figure 3

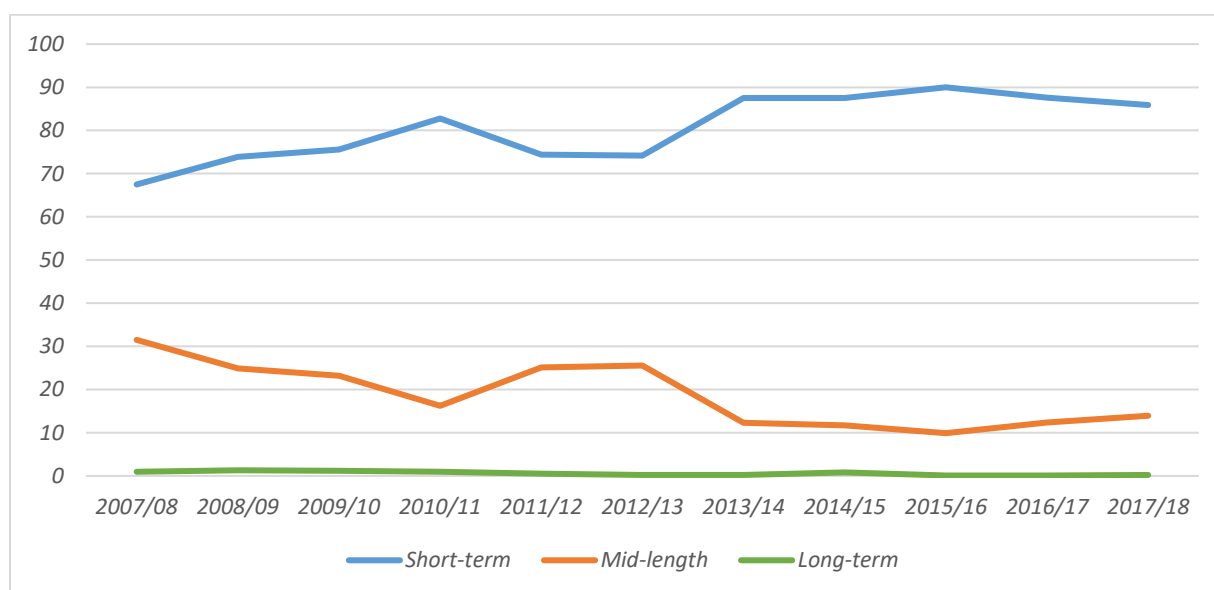
Outbound Students' Race at Community Colleges versus All Institutions, 2018-19



Note: From Open Doors: Community College Data Resource, by IIE, 2020a. Used with permission.

Figure 4

Education Abroad Program Duration for Community Colleges, 2007/08 to 2017-18



Note: From *Open Doors: Community College Data Resource*, by IIE, 2019. Used with permission.

Historical Development of Education Abroad

When investigating the outcomes of EA programs for U.S. undergraduate students, it is important to consider the historical context of EA. There are political, economic, and cultural considerations, as well as institutional aspects to consider (Twombly et al., 2012). In terms of institutional considerations, the historical context of EA shapes HEIs' decisions to offer exchange programs or short-term, faculty-led programs. Although the former are typically more immersive, direct-enroll programs at international universities, community colleges often choose to offer the latter, which take place during spring breaks or during the summer. EA has spanned

the gamut of program types since the beginning of international higher education, but popularity of the different program models has changed over time.

In the case of U.S. higher education, EA as a HEI-sponsored endeavor traces back to the late nineteenth century. In its infancy, EA typically took the form of a junior year abroad (JYA), generally for language or cultural study, or faculty-led study tours that took students travelling to several countries to explore their cultural sites. Georgetown and Indiana University were pioneers in developing programs in the early 1900s (Twombly et al., 2012). Post-World War II, U.S. leadership passed several legislations to support educational exchanges. Examples of these are the *Smith-Mundt Act of 1948* (P.L. 80-402) and the *Foreign Assistance Act of 1961* (P.L. 87-195), which led to the establishment the U.S. Agency for International Development and the Peace Corps (Twombly et al., 2012). Although USAID and the Peace Corps do not directly impact EA programming at U.S. HEIs, they did spotlight the value of international travel and education.

In the 20th century, organizations such as the Institute for International Education (IIE), the Association of International Educators (NAFSA), the Council for International Education Exchange (CIEE), and the American Institute for Foreign Study (AIFS) were established, which either promoted EA or, in the case of the latter two, facilitated it. Government-sponsored faculty exchange programs, such as the Fulbright program, gave faculty the opportunity to conduct research and study abroad, and often those faculty members became among the best recruiters of students for EA programs upon their return. In addition, the IIE began tracking the in- and outbound mobility of students in the U.S. with its annual *Open Doors report* that was first published in 1954 (Twombly et al., 2012). More recently, EA has benefited from the establishment of the Gilman Program in 2000, a federal program that provides scholarships for

students who are typically underrepresented in EA, such as first-generation, low-income, and community college students. All of these initiatives demonstrate that EA is a highly valued endeavor, not only at the individual or institutional level, but also at the level of the federal administration of the United States.

Historically, there have been four rationales that promote internationalization of higher education generally, and EA in particular. The political rationale considers the important contribution of EA to national security and foreign policy goals. The economic rationale explains that international higher education supports the training of a global workforce and the production of human capital. The humanistic rationale makes the case that cross-cultural training has a direct influence on the lives of EA participants. Finally, the academic rationale indicates that international mobility contributes to the enhancement of student success measures (Raby & Valeau, 2016a).

In the case of community colleges, scholars have situated community college international education in four phases (Raby & Valeau, 2007) as well as in three eras (Treat & Hagedorn, 2013). Raby and Valeau (2007) propose that community college EA has matured through the recognition phase of 1967 to 1984, the expansion and publication phase of 1980 to 1990, the augmentation phase of 1990 to 2000, and the institutionalization phase of 2000 to 2007. Each phase was characterized by further growth of EA programs and finally institutionalization of community college internationalization. Derived from Raby and Valeau's (2007) four phases, Treat and Hagedorn (2013) suggest that community college international education history consists of three eras: pre- and post-9/11 and "post flat" era. In this characterization, community college international education began in a "spiky world" pre-9/11 during which few community colleges were committed to internationalization. Post-9/11 then,

community colleges entered a “flat world” in which the need for international understanding came to the forefront and community colleges increasingly engaged in EA and adding global learning outcomes to the curriculum. Finally, the third era of community college international education is the “post flat world” in which community colleges can contribute to international community college systems and to provide skills development through online learning (Treat & Hagedorn, 2013). This is perhaps even more attainable in the post-COVID era during which online education has been normalized.

The purpose of educational experiences abroad for students may have changed over time. At the beginning of the 20th century, students primarily studied abroad to help build relationships with other nations, to exchange cultural knowledge, and to promote peace. Throughout the Cold War, this purpose continued along those lines with a goal to combat Communism (Walton, 2010). In fact, then Senator J. William Fulbright (1976) stated,

[i]nternational educational exchange is the most significant current project designed to continue the process of humanizing mankind to the point, we would hope, that men can learn to live in peace--eventually even to cooperate in constructive activities rather than compete in a mindless contest of mutual destruction. (para. 1)

Senator Fulbright urged his fellow citizens to get to know the “other,” and ultimately helped pass legislation to establish a federal program that would support these efforts (Surplus Property Act of 1944, Ch. 479, 58 Stat. 765).

In the 21st century, students may choose to study abroad to gain transferrable skills and knowledge that will impress a future employer in a job interview (Gardner et al., 2009). Skills such as being able to work independently as well as collaboratively, and to interact with people who have different values and perspectives are highly valued by employers in the 21st century

(Gardner et al., 2009, NACE 2019). Students also report learning independence, time-management, and budgeting skills by managing their independent travels. Further, students gain intercultural communication skills by learning how to communicate with people from different cultures (Kim, 2001).

1917-1939 Creation of Education Abroad Programs

United States involvement in World War I led to a renewed interest in European affairs, in spite of a previous isolationist approach of the country's leadership. Then President Woodrow Wilson helped establish a League of Nations (today's United Nations) to ally friendly nations and prevent future large-scale wars. In the postwar years, young Americans participated in humanitarian work camps in Western Europe. In addition, educational institutions supported cultural immersion and arts-based programs. EA as it is known today, a credit-bearing, institutional program in another country, began in the 1920s. Different from the grand tours or *Wanderjahre* of the 1800s, EA in the 1920s took on one of three designs. A JYA was traditionally a year-long immersion program during the students' third year of study (Hoffa, 2007). Students typically studied languages in their respective countries. Although these programs lasted until the onset of the second World War, they were small in number (Hoffa, 2007). A second program model was the faculty-led study abroad class. Typically, these programs were taught in English and students traveled as a group to several different countries. The third model was individual summer EA programs at institutions overseas (Hoffa, 2007).

1945-1965 Postwar Campus Internationalization and U.S. Students Abroad

During the war years of 1939 to 1945, higher education in the United States saw a drop in enrollment across institutions, as students, faculty, and staff were drafted into or volunteered for the war. All JYA programs were suspended at the beginning of the war (Hoffa, 2007). In the

years following the conclusion of World War II, then president Truman commissioned the report *Higher education for American democracy*. This report outlined the responsibilities of HEIs in U.S. foreign relations and the social role they must play in American democracy (Zook, 1947). One of the goals set out for HEIs in the report is that they must bring to all members of U.S. society “[e]ducation directly and explicitly for international understanding and cooperation” (Zook, 1947, p. 7). In the aftermath of the atomic bomb, Truman’s commission on higher education urged HEIs to foster “an active appreciation of different cultures and other peoples” in their students (Zook, 1947, p. 8).

This call for the internationalization of U.S. HEIs did not bear fruit instantly. In the 1950s, students began to travel abroad more, though not necessarily for educational purposes. Many students dropped out for an academic year to study overseas, even though the credits did not transfer toward their U.S. degree at the end of the experience. Students independently pursued these opportunities without university assistance, and as in years past these students largely came from affluent families (Hoffa, 2007).

In terms of credit-bearing EA, some HEIs began offering faculty-led study tours again. Institutions such as Boston University, Temple University, and the University of Iowa all offered programs of this type in the 1950s. Programs were often open to faculty, staff, and community members in addition to students, and enrolling in the academic credit was often optional. At the same time, JYA programs began to start up again. Primarily offering language and cultural immersion programs, institutions created new programs as early as 1949, in addition to the programs suspended prior to World War II (Hoffa, 2007).

In 1958, Stanford University opened the first branch campus near Stuttgart, Germany. This allowed students who did not have advanced language skills to study abroad for a semester

or academic year and take courses taught by Stanford faculty members. Other Stanford University branch campuses opened in Italy, France, England, Austria, and Spain. The unique approach to overseas study was a great success, and the centers operated at 96 percent capacity in 1968. In terms of numbers, in the academic year 1957-58 just above 700 students participated in credit-bearing EA. There were 41 programs in 11 countries sponsored by 17 institutions. All but the Stanford programs had students living with host families (Hoffa, 2007). By 1965, that number had risen to just over 18,000 students (Keller & Frain, 2010).

1965-1989 Vietnam and Cold War Eras

Enrollment in higher education reached an all-time high in 1970 with more than 8.6 million students at 2,573 colleges and universities (Thelin, 2019). In part, this increase in enrollment was due to the Baby Boomer generation enrolling in HEIs (Stallman et al., 2010). In addition, the U.S. war against North Vietnam began in 1965, which was in part responsible for this increased enrollment as citizens sought to escape the draft. The lengthy war with North Vietnam and ongoing tensions with the USSR dampened participation in EA programs by U.S. students in the USSR and Europe, but not overall. To put this in numerical terms, EA participation was close to 25,000 students in the 1979-80 academic year, which was one third less than that in 1973. By 1986-87, that number had risen to 48,483, and by the following year it had climbed to 62,341 (Keller & Frain, 2010).

Beginning in 1965, several college consortia that offered EA opportunities began to expand. An example is the Intercollegiate Center for Classical Studies (ICCS), which was founded in 1965 with ten university members. It afforded member institutions the opportunity to place students in an EA program in Rome, Italy, where they could study classic languages and art. Similarly, Cornell University and the University of Michigan opened a consortium in Seville,

Spain, in 1985. Cornell, Brown, and the University of Pennsylvania followed suit in London, UK, in 1987. No longer was the focus of EA programs language and cultural immersion through advanced language study and living with local host families. Instead, U.S. faculty members taught classes in English and students lived in apartments (DeWinter & Rumbley, 2010). At the same time, U.S. institutions began to develop bilateral partnerships with universities abroad. Although not all of these partnerships were fruitful, they did open up new avenues for U.S. students to participate in EA, and at the same time, the programs brought international exchange students to U.S. campuses (DeWinter & Rumbley, 2010).

For the first time in 1969, community colleges began to offer EA programs (Raby, 2019). The first community colleges to offer EA programs were Rockland Community College in New York (Hess, 1982) and by Cabrillo and Glendale Community Colleges in California. The state of California community colleges continued to lead the way with its California Colleges for International Education (CCIE) consortium. The consortium grew from 28 community college members in 1988 to 64 in 2002 (Raby, 2020). On the East Coast, Rockland CC was successful in its effort to send students abroad in part due to its Office of International Education's ability to compel campus leadership to include EA activities in the institution's operating budget (Hess, 1982).

The impact of EA on community college students and faculty was profound. For colleges that sent students abroad, enrollment in EA was between five and 18 percent of campus enrollment, creating opportunities for international exposure. Further, faculty with international backgrounds or interests became champions of EA programs, and often internationalized their courses upon return. Unique to community colleges, EA provided opportunities for community members to study abroad. The colleges' 'open access' mission allowed community members to

participate in EA programs, thereby creating a new segment of the student population (Hess, 1982).

1989-2001 Globalization in the Post-Cold War Era

The Berlin Wall fell in 1989, and that momentous event ushered in the end of the Cold War between the Western world and the USSR and Eastern European countries. This not only led to a rise of interest in EA programs in Eastern Europe, but it also led to a demand for increased EA participation in general. NAFSA, CIEE, and IIE prepared a 1990 report calling for increased participation in EA in light of the new era. *A national mandate for EA: Getting on with the task* encouraged colleges and university to work toward 10 percent EA participation by 2000 and 20-25 percent by 2008, a lofty goal indeed (Keller & Frain, 2010). This period represented a transition in the content of EA programs, with students now studying transnational issues such as migration, pollution, and climate change (Keller & Frain, 2010).

This was also a decade of expansion of EA participation at community colleges. Using CCIE as an example, the consortium offered 53 EA programs in 1989 and 83 in 1999. In the same timeframe, international associate's degree and certificate programs increased from four to 50 programs (Raby, 2020). This internationalization of the curriculum likely impacted student and faculty interest in EA. In fact, 89 percent of the consortium's members offered EA programs in 1998 (Raby, 1998). At the same time, degree programs in modern languages were added to the community college portfolio (Raby, 1998), supporting the ability of faculty and students to study abroad in non-English speaking countries.

Post 9/11 and Education Abroad in the Third Decade of the 21st Century

The terrorist attacks on the United States in New York City and in Washington, DC, in 2001 did not only jar the world, but it also had a lasting impact on EA programming in the U.S.

It may seem counterintuitive, but the events strengthened calls for international training and the study of international relations (DeWinter & Rumbley, 2010). In fact, 143,590 students are reported to participate in EA in the 2001 Open Doors report, while in 2005 that number had increased to above 205,000 students. However, although the number of students studying abroad continued to climb, the percentage increase from year to year actually decreased. The annual growth rate between 1996 to 2001 averaged ten percent compared to a post 9/11 growth rate of 7.4 percent (Keller & Frain, 2010).

To provide access to non-traditional students to EA programs, the *International Academic Opportunity Act of 2000* (P.L. 106–309) established the Benjamin A. Gilman scholarship program for Pell Grant recipients who had applied to participate in EA. These students had to demonstrate a financial need to attend a college or university, and the program awarded up to \$5,000 toward an EA experience, with an additional \$3,000 if the student studied a critical language, such as Arabic, Chinese, or Korean. In addition to this federal fund, the Freeman Award for Study in Asia was established in the private sector, providing financial support to students with financial need who planned to study abroad in Asian countries (Keller & Frain, 2010). These scholarships favor community college students who are disproportionately more likely to be underrepresented in EA and who are more likely to be from a lower socio-economic status (Frost & Raby, 2009).

In the 2015-16 academic year, more than 325,000 U.S. students participated in EA programs for academic credit (IIE, 2019). During the same year, more than 60 percent of students participated in short-term programs, such as spring break or summer programs (Fuchs et al., 2019). This period also reflected a shift in the disciplines that students were studying abroad. In 1992, the vast majority of EA students majored in the humanities with 44.9 percent. During

the 2005-06 academic year, that number had dropped to 14.2 percent. At the same time, the percentage of business majors increased from 12 to 17.7 percent and that of social science majors rose from 17.3 to 21.7 percent (Stallman et al., 2010).

For community colleges, institutions who offer EA programs continued to increase. In 2007/08, 85 community colleges conducted EA programs. This number has more than tripled to 297 in 2017/18 (Raby, 2019; IIE 2019). This growth can be sustained with further institutionalization of EA, long-term planning for diverse program offerings, and countering the deficit model of the community college student (Raby, 2019). Community colleges lead the nation in the percentage of non-ethnic majorities who study abroad (Raby, 2019). Continuing the work of previous decades will have meaningful impact on institutional communities.

Today, EA is often discussed in conjunction with the discourse of campus internationalization in general. No longer is it sufficient to simply send students overseas to study, but there is a call for a larger strategy involving international students and infusing the curriculum with global or international concepts in addition to EA programs. That said, EA participation remains the most visible and talked about component of campus internationalization (Larsen & Dutschke, 2010).

Impact of COVID-19

During spring 2020, HEIs worldwide were faced with the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Currently, the long-term repercussions of the pandemic on EA programs are uncertain. Preliminary reports indicate that most of the spring 2020 EA programs were canceled or postponed to future semesters (IIE, 2020b). In fact, a recent survey showed that 81 percent of students who were already abroad at the onset of the pandemic returned to the United States (IIE, 2020c). As the pandemic persisted, US HEIs canceled or postponed 2020-21 EA programs and

85 percent of institutions said they expected a decline in outbound mobility as a result of the health and economic impacts of the pandemic (IIE, 2020c).

In addition to the impact on individual students or programs, COVID-19 has also affected HEIs more broadly, particularly in the financial realm. Results of a survey conducted in April 2020 indicated that 65 percent of respondents had faced or expected to face changes in EA staffing such as furloughs, eliminated positions, hiring freezes, and salary reductions (NAFSA, 2020). This adverse impact of the pandemic may be significant of years to come. An unanticipated positive outcome is the development or expansion of virtual exchange programs: online curricular student exchanges between partner institutions in different countries. The current study, which was conducted with students who studied abroad prior to the pandemic, can help establish a baseline of EA learning outcomes for community college students prior to the widespread implementation and assessment of learning outcomes for virtual exchanges. Next, I will consider the learning outcomes gained by students who participate in an EA program.

Learning Outcomes for Students at Four-Year Institutions

Much of the academic literature on EA learning outcomes is based on studies with university students. The results of these studies can inform assessment and practice of EA at community colleges. These studies can also inform the present study,

Cognitive Learning Outcomes

The first dimension of learning outcomes reviewed is the cognitive dimension. Cognition refers to “the quantity and type of knowledge and the relationships among knowledge elements” (Kraiger et al., 1993, p. 313). Cognitive learning outcomes answer questions regarding what students know and how students know (Braskamp et al., 2009). Braskamp et al. (2009) highlighted that it is not only important to understand one’s knowledge and understanding of

reality, and how it came to be, but also to consider multiple cultural perspectives in knowledge formation. In the realm of EA, cognitive learning outcomes include language acquisition, cultural knowledge, creative thinking, and general knowledge. Each of these learning outcomes have been assessed quantitatively as well as qualitatively in the academic literature.

Language Acquisition. The most frequently researched cognitive learning outcome in EA is language acquisition. Data collection methods range from placement tests and proficiency interviews by faculty members to self-reports and interviews by certified trainers. These methods have varying levels of formality, which ultimately affect the reliability and validity of the results (Savicki, 2011).

A fair number of studies utilize the American Council for the Teaching of Foreign Languages Oral Proficiency Interview (OPI), (Baker-Simemoe et al., 2014; Davidson, 2010; Magnan & Back, 2007; Watson et al., 2013; Watson & Wolfel, 2015). Interviews are conducted via phone or in person by trained testers. The OPI scores range on a scale from Novice Low (1) to Superior (10) and contain three sublevels (Low, Mid, and High) for all but the highest level (Baker-Simemoe et al., 2014). Vande Berg et al. (2009) utilized a Simulated Oral Proficiency Interview (SOPI) where a trained tester rates a recorded tape, rather than a live interview. This might inadvertently improve results, as the student is likely less anxious taping than during an interview, and the student also has the option to attempt the recording multiple times. Kinginger (2008) employed the Test de Français International (TFI). “The TFI is a standardized, multiple-choice test of reading and listening comprehension administered by the Educational Testing Service that yields global proficiency scores ranging from 0 to 990” (Kinger, 2008, p. 28). Other instruments include the Speech Act Measure (Paige, Cohen, & Shively, 2004), the Defense Language Proficiency Test (Watson et al., 2013; Watson & Wolfel, 2015), the Interagency

Language Roundtable (ILR) proficiency scales for listening, reading, and speaking, and the American Councils' Assessment and Curriculum Development Division, known as "A-CLASS" (Davidson, 2010).

The majority of studies on language acquisition abroad focus on semester- or year-long programs (Kinging, 2008; Magnan & Back, 2007; Paige et al., 2004; Watson et al., 2013; Watson & Wolfel, 2015). Participant numbers in these studies range from 20 to 498. All employed a pre-post comparative design, with Kinginger (2008) administering tests pre-mid-post and Paige et al. (2004) employing a true experimental design with a non-EA control group and an intervention. Results indicate that in each study, students improved in their language proficiency to some degree. Magnan and Back (2007) reported that twelve of their 20 participants improved: six by one level and six by two levels on the ACTFL proficiency scale. Kinginger's (2008) study results also indicate significant improvement of proficiency, with the most improvement in listening, and the lowest in reading. All participants moved out the elementary range and 50 percent of students are able to demonstrate working proficiency. Watson and Wolfel (2015) also report significant improvement of their participants with a medium to large effect size. Watson et al.'s (2013) study of near 500 third- and fourth-year students at a U.S. military academy participating in semester-long immersion program studying Arabic, Chinese, French, German, Portuguese, Russian, or Spanish shows that 66 percent of participants demonstrated improvement in their language skills. In fact, 51 percent crossed a threshold (e.g. from or 2+ to 3) on the Interagency Language Roundtable scale. In addition, the vast majority of participants achieved a gain of one step in oral proficiency (Watson et al., 2013).

The results of a study entitled Maximizing Study Abroad (MAXSA) have been reported in three different sources (Cohen et al., 2005; Paige et al., 2004; Paige et al., 2012). The 86

students in this study studied abroad in France and various Spanish-speaking countries. This is a rare study on language acquisition employing an intervention: an online course based on the book *Maximizing study abroad: A students' guide to strategies for language and culture learning and use* (Paige et al., 2002). The *Guide*, as it is often referred to, prompts students to complete inventories, attempt language and culture learning strategies, as well as maintain an eJournal of their experiences abroad. Results indicate that the experimental group had greater language gains than the control group on the combined score of the entire instrument. The difference was statistically significant at $p = 0.05$, which provides some support for the effectiveness of the intervention (Paige et al., 2012).

Results of language acquisition based on housing types are mixed. Magnan and Back (2007) report no difference in language acquisition based on living arrangements. Contrary to this, Watson and Wolfel (2015) show that for students studying Arabic, Chinese, or Russian, those living with host families had greater language gains than those who did not, particularly in listening and reading. For students studying French, German, Portuguese, and Spanish there were differences in all areas of language acquisition, though none were statistically significant (Watson & Wolfel, 2015).

Although there has been considerable research on language acquisition in semester- or year-long programs, studies on short-term programs are relatively sparse. Using none of the abovementioned language proficiency measures, Allen and Herron (2003) instead created their own oral and listening proficiency tests. In their study of 25 students who participated in a six-week program to France, the researchers found a significant increase in oral French skills from pretest to posttest at $p < 0.001$, with an effect size of 0.78. Increases in listening French skills were significant at $p < 0.001$, with an effect size of 0.6. The researchers add, “[the] most

improved quality was comprehensibility - the ability to make oneself understood and to convey meaning. The least improved quality was grammatical correctness of speech” (Allen & Herron, 2003, p. 382).

Two large-scale studies researching language proficiency gains in EA participants are the Georgetown Consortium Project (GCP), (Vande Berg et al., 2009) and a project conducted by the American Councils for International Education (ACTR), (Davidson, 2010). Both studies employed pre- and post-testing. The GCP had 968 participants who were language learners, 830 of them were studying on one of 61 programs abroad. This study had a non-EA control group and results indicate that students who studied abroad improved their oral proficiency at a rate of 22 percent higher than those that did not (Vande Berg et al., 2009). The ACTR study was conducted with 1,881 U.S. students from more than 200 U.S. HEIs, ranging from small private liberal arts institutions to large public research universities who were studying on ACTR-administered formal language education programs at Russian universities. The duration of the programs varied from two to nine months (Davidson, 2010).

Results from both studies show that program duration has a definitive impact on language acquisition (Davidson, 2010; Vande Berg et al., 2009). For students entering their program abroad with an oral proficiency of at or just below Intermediate High, a semester abroad contributed to an improvement to the just above Intermediate High level. At the same time, those students who were abroad for two semesters achieved an average rating of Advanced Low (Vande Berg et al., 2009). Similarly, the mean speaking outcome for a semester of intensive Russian EA was Intermediate High, when for the academic year participants, it was Advanced Mid. Gains in reading proficiency improved into the Advanced range for summer and semester participants, whereas most of the academic year students achieved the Superior level. More

specifically, of those participants that began their program with 2-level reading ability, 39 percent of the summer program participants reached 3-level proficiency, compared to 44 percent of those in the semester program and 81 percent of those studying in Russia for an academic year (Davidson, 2010).

Baker-Simemoe et al.'s (2014) study of 102 language learners abroad was a third study that had participants in various program lengths. Similar to Vande Berg et al. (2009) and Davidson (2010), on average, the pre-OPI score of participants in Baker-Simemoe et al.'s (2014) study was approximately an Intermediate Mid on the ACTFL OPI scale and the average post-OPI score was between an Intermediate High and Advanced Low. The average percentage of students who improved in the oral language skills was 60 percent. Unfortunately, the program length was not controlled for in the analysis, so it is unknown whether language gains differed between students on semester or six-week-long programs (Baker-Simemoe et al., 2014).

A major drawback of two of these studies is that only oral proficiency is assessed, forgoing the assessment of reading, writing, and listening skills (Baker-Simemoe et al., 2014; Vande Berg et al., 2009). However, what these studies indicate is that students can make significant progress in their language acquisition during an EA program. Further research would benefit from analyzing the data by program type (i.e., short-term with or without home institution faculty, direct enrollment programs, or island programs), and assessing multiple aspects of language learning. Research focused on community college students' language learning abroad are less common, perhaps due in part to the small percentage of community college EA students studying world languages or international studies (IIE, 2020a). Studies do support, however, that community college students in immersive language programs abroad experience growth in their language abilities (Brenner, 2016).

Cultural Learning. A less well researched area of cognitive learning outcomes is cultural knowledge. This has been described as knowledge of aspects of the cultural iceberg, that is the culture that is visible (above the water) and that is invisible (below the water) (Hall, 1976). This is also referred to as Big C culture and small c culture (Watson et al., 2013). To give a few examples, Big C culture consists of items such as dress, religion, socio-cultural information, and language. Small c culture on the other hand includes cultural values or norms. Watson et al. (2013) have developed a similar concept referred to as regional awareness and competence. This concept includes knowledge of geography, climate, transportation, as well as social and political aspects. Additionally, cultural knowledge can be seen from a comparative lens, comparing the host and home countries' historical and sociopolitical contexts, norms, and values, as well as knowledge of cross-cultural learning and adjustment (Czerwionka et al., 2015).

Researchers have taken both quantitative and qualitative approaches to examine cultural and regional knowledge of students who study abroad. Studies have shown that studying abroad can achieve enhancements in both learning outcomes (Czerwionka et al., 2015; Watson et al., 2013). Czerwionka et al. (2015) researched cultural knowledge enhancements with participants of a summer program in Spain. The program consisted of a homestay, two courses taught in Spanish, and excursions. Data were gathered through interviews conducted in the target language. Results indicate 13 themes, including People, Daily life, Interactions, Values and Politics, Schedule, and Big C. Students improved their knowledge in each of the 13 themes. Some of the subthemes, such as art and Madrid sites within Big C, resulted in knowledge gains for the majority of students. More than 80 percent of students presented new knowledge in the themes Big C, Daily life, Food and Drink, and Values and Politics (Czerwionka et al., 2015).

The impact of program duration on learning cultural knowledge merits further study. Watson et al. (2013) study with students from a military academy reports results that indicate a statistically significant increase in regional learning for students studying abroad for a semester in China ($p = 0.038$) and in Western European countries ($p = 0.014$). In addition, students in Western Europe increased their cultural knowledge of not only their host country, but other Western European countries as well. The authors attribute this to regional travel during the students' semester abroad (Watson et al., 2013).

These studies provide valuable insight into the cognitive learning outcomes of students who participate in both short-term and semester-long language programs. Certainly, spending time studying in another country can add to cultural knowledge about food and drink, but the outcomes related to values and politics in Czerwionka et al.'s study (2015) are encouraging, as are the regional knowledge gains for the military students (Watson et al., 2013). The Czerwionka et al. (2015) study would have benefited from interviews conducted in the students' native language (English), as ultimately conducting interviews in a language in which one is not fluent can result in missing available data. Further, the researchers do not appear to have conducted member-checking, which would have added validity to the data. The authors concede that the coursework had an impact on the students' increased knowledge of Big C, such as history and art (Czerwionka et al., 2015). However, had the students not selected to study abroad, they would not have had the opportunity to enroll in these specific classes.

More research is warranted in the seldomly studied phenomenon of cultural knowledge. Studies such as Czerwionka et al. (2015) and Watson et al. (2013) provide insight into the various aspects of cultural learning and regional awareness, which are important aspects of cognitive learning outcomes in EA participants. Research on this topic would benefit from

including the voices of community college students. Further, the two studies could be replicated by exploring participants who are not studying abroad in a language immersion context, as the students in these two studies were. Further research might also explore students who participate in programs at various levels of interaction with the host culture (island programs, direct enroll, exchange).

Creative Thinking. In a rare study on creative thinking of students participating in an EA program, Lee et al. (2012) employ a comparative design with two control groups. One control group contained students who were planning to study abroad and the other contained those who did not. Researchers administered the Abbreviated Torrance Test for Adults (ATTA) (Goff & Torrance, 2002), as well as the Cultural Creativity Task (CCT) (Lee et al., 2011) to measure domain general creative thinking and culture specific creative thinking respectively. The ATTA consists of three three-minute verbal and drawing tasks. The CCT is made up of five three-minute culture-specific activities (Lee et al., 2012).

Scores were analyzed using ANCOVA. Contrary to the researchers' hypothesis, results indicate that EA participants had higher creativity scores on both measures than those students in the two control groups. The researchers conclude that "studying abroad supports complex cognitive processes that underlie creative thinking in culture specific and domain general settings" (Lee et al., 2012, p. 775). The study benefits from participants from a broad range of ethnicities and controlling for factors such as GPA. However, the study reveals nothing about the EA program components, leaving the reader to wonder whether the participants were abroad for a short-term, faculty-led program or a semester immersion program. If participants represented more than one program model, a comparison of results would have added to the depth of the results.

Knowledge in General. Finally, the enhancement of general knowledge is another cognitive learning outcome of EA programs. Redwine et al. (2018) conducted a qualitative phenomenology with students in a Texas university Agricultural Leadership, Education, and Communications (ALEC) department's program to Namibia. The 34 students were mostly female and undergraduates, predominantly White and between the ages of 18 and 28. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews that were analyzed using grounded theory (Redwine et al., 2018).

Results indicate that students learned about agriculture in Namibia and Southern Africa in general, but they also increased their knowledge of independent decision-making, photography, landscapes, and international issues. By employing a qualitative instrument, the researchers are able to add complexity and subjectivity to the study of cognitive learning outcomes (Redwine et al., 2018). Further research might compare findings with students in different disciplines on a similar program, or students participating in programs of different length and in different locations.

Summary of Research on Cognitive Learning Outcomes. Research in the domain of cognitive learning outcomes of university EA most prominently features language acquisition outcomes, both in short-term and mid-length programs. Results indicate that the majority of participants improve their language skills during a term of EA, whether it be on a short-term program, a semester-long program, or even an academic year. Studies have shown that program duration has an impact on language learning, with students who were abroad for a year making the greatest progress (Davidson, 2010). Other studies have considered cognitive gains in cultural knowledge, creative thinking, and general knowledge. All have indicated advancements in the knowledge of the students who studied program.

Assessment of cognitive learning outcomes with U.S. community college students who study abroad is less common. However, the studies reviewed here can shape community college research. In particular, the cultural learning discussed by Czerwionka et al. (2015) can inform research questions and interview questions for future studies. These questions can be equally relevant for English-speaking programs as for the Spanish program in Czerwionka et al.'s (2015) study. This is particularly relevant, as the majority of community college students who study abroad do so on short-term programs.

Affective Learning Outcomes

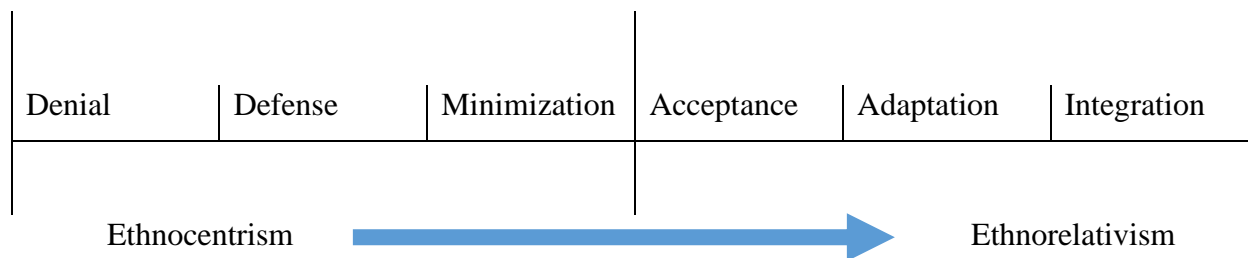
The second dimension of learning outcomes is affective. Affect consists of attitudinal and motivational components (Kraiger et al., 1993). Affective learning outcomes answer questions regarding how students feel and how students are motivated. These learning outcomes include concepts such as self-efficacy, goal-setting, and attitudes toward the 'other.' As it relates to EA, affective learning outcomes include intercultural development and program satisfaction (Varela, 2017). Intercultural development has been the subject of a multitude of respected studies. On the contrary, scholars have advised that program satisfaction alone is not enough to assess the quality of EA programs, nor the learning outcomes gained by participants (Vande Berg, 2004).

Intercultural Development. Intercultural development is a concept of engaging with cultures different from one's own (Bennett, 2014). In the past two decades, several instruments have been developed that aim to measure intercultural development. Two of them, the Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI) and the Cross-Cultural Adaptability Inventory (CCAI) are theoretically underpinned by the Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS; see Figure 5).

The model, which is based on grounded theory, is a framework that presents a continuum of the stages in the process of engaging with different cultures (Bennett, 2014). The model's six stages are grouped by those that are monocultural or ethnocentric (meaning one's own culture is central to one's perception of reality: denial, defense, and minimization) and those that are intercultural or ethnorelative (meaning one perceives different cultures relative to the context: acceptance, adaptation, and integration) (Bennett, 2014; Hammer, 2011). All of the researchers reviewed in this critique set out to explore whether participating in an EA experience will result in participants moving along the continuum toward a more ethnorelative stage.

Figure 5

Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity



Note: Adapted from *The Developmental model of intercultural sensitivity*, by M. J. Bennett, 2014. (<https://www.idrinstitute.org/dmis/>). Copyright 2018 by the IDRInstitute.

Several studies utilized the IDI to measure intercultural development. Developed by Hammer and Bennett (1998), the IDI measures one's "primary orientation toward cultural difference" (Hammer, 2008, p. 248). The IDI is a 50 item, five-point Likert-type scale assessment that tests for both perceived intercultural development as well as actual development (Hammer, 2011). Two additional instruments, the Intercultural Sensitivity Index (ISI) and the

Global Mindedness Scale (GMS) have been developed to assess intercultural development. The ISI was developed by researchers Olson and Kroeger (2001). The ISI measures global competencies and intercultural sensitivity, as well as the relationship between a participant's effectiveness and his or her experience abroad. The factors measured include "substantive knowledge (knowledge of cultures, languages, world issues, etc.), perceptual understanding (open-mindedness, flexibility, resistance to stereotyping), and intercultural communication (skills such as adaptability, empathy, and cultural mediation" (Williams, 2005, p. 361). The GMS was developed by Hett (1993). This particular instrument is comprised of 30 statements, with a five-point Likert-type scale (Kehl & Morris, 2007).

The results of the studies under consideration reveal several patterns. In all but one of the studies that had a non-EA control group, the variance in the post-test scores was significant between the groups, with the EA group being more interculturally sensitive (Anderson & Lawton, 2011; Kehl & Morris, 2007; Terzuolo, 2011; Vande Berg et al., 2009; Williams, 2005). This was the case even when the pre-test scores did not vary significantly. Contrary to these results, for the study designed as a true experiment, only the post-test scores of the group receiving the intervention were statistically significant from those of the two control groups (non-EA and EA without the intervention) (Pedersen, 2010). It is interesting to note that despite the enhancement of test scores, for those studies based on the DMIS, the EA participants on average still placed in minimization, which is an ethnocentric stage (see Figure 4), (Rexeisen et al., 2008; Terzuolo, 2018; Watson et al., 2013).

For the studies that considered differences between results of short-term and mid-length EA programs, Kehl and Morris (2008) reported that there were no significant differences between the short-term program participants and the control group, but that the semester-long

participants had significantly different increases. In line with these results, Medina-Lopez-Portillo (2004) and Vande Berg et al. (2009) reported that semester-long program participants showed greater enhancement of intercultural development than those who participated in a short-term program. Further, Terzuolo (2018) found that personal characteristics had a greater correlation to intercultural development than program characteristics.

Program Satisfaction and Limits of this Learning Outcome. The assessment of EA learning outcomes must be an integral part of campus internationalization during times of ever higher quality assurance standards in higher education (Wood, 2019). Many EA practitioners administer end-of-program evaluations, which ask students to rate their program in terms of quality of logistics and overall experience (Deardorff, 2009). Results of these satisfaction surveys certainly provide one aspect of the evaluation of program efficacy. In fact, emotional reactions to participation in an EA program, such as satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the logistical aspects of the sojourn, can be considered to be affective outcomes (Varela, 2017).

Nevertheless, scholars have advised that student satisfaction by itself does not suffice to assess the quality of EA programs, nor to delineate the learning outcomes that result from participation (Hovland et al., 2009; Vande Berg, 2004). Deardorff (2009) remarked that EA offices were moving away from the program satisfaction approach toward a more specific and varied approach of assessing learning outcomes. During the past decade, reports based on satisfaction surveys or program evaluations have fallen further out of favor with the academic community, as is evidenced by the lack of articles on this topic. Researchers disagree on whether satisfaction with an experience can have longitudinal impacts on the participants. Varela (2017) argued that program satisfaction is not a long-term learning outcome. Conversely, Chelliah et al.

(2019) contended that satisfaction may influence the behaviors and motivations of program participants' actions into the future.

One example of using satisfaction surveys in the literature on EA learning outcomes is Behnke et al.'s (2014) longitudinal review of faculty-led hospitality-themed programs. The authors seek to explore student preferences about the programs' logistic execution and academic content. In an effort to recruit future students to participate in similar EA programs, Behnke et al. (2014) argue that satisfaction surveys can be used to make program modifications that will appeal to future students. Other researchers recommend moving beyond the Likert-type scale satisfaction surveys and implementing a multi-faceted, qualitative approach to gathering data of participants' learning experiences. In fact, end-of-program surveys can be used in a more illuminating manner by crafting open-ended questions that explore students' outcomes beyond their immediate positive or negative reactions to program components (Williams, 2009).

Summary of Research on Affective Learning Outcomes. The affective dimension of learning outcomes explores concepts such as intercultural development and program satisfaction. Of the two concepts, the former is the more frequently studied, while the latter has largely fallen out of favor with the academic community. The majority of studies researching intercultural development show that participating in EA programs positively impacts students' movement along the DMIS continuum (Anderson & Lawton, 2011; Kehl & Morris, 2007; Terzuolo, 2018; Vande Berg et al., 2009; Williams, 2005). Unfortunately, participants on average remained in the minimization stage, which is an ethnocentric stage (Rexeisen et al., 2008; Terzuolo, 2018; Watson et al, 2013).

A second affective outcome is program satisfaction, though this has widely been discredited as a meaningful learning outcome for EA participants (Hovland et al., 2009; Vande

Berg, 2004; Varela, 2017). End-of-program evaluations may be useful to inform EA practice, particularly for program enhancements, logistical improvements, and the recruitment of future participants. However, for many years, researchers have made the case that these evaluations are more advantageous when used to collect multi-faceted qualitative data (Williams, 2009).

Behavioral Learning Outcomes

The third dimension of learning outcomes is skill-based, or behavioral. These learning outcomes are developed by the “linking of behaviors in a sequentially and hierarchically organized manner” (Kraiger et al., 1993, p. 316). Skills are often gained by observing behaviors of others, and, when practiced sufficiently, will eventually lead to automaticity. Behavioral learning outcomes answer questions regarding what students can do and how students choose to act as a result of a learning experience. In the field of EA, behavioral outcomes refer to the participants’ ability to adapt to the local customs, such as cross-cultural adaptation and cultural intelligence (Varela, 2017).

Cross-Cultural Adaptation. Cross-cultural adaptation is the process of a person’s adjustment to a “degree of change in their original cultural patterns” (Kim, 1988, p. 38). This multi-faceted concept has affective, cognitive, and behavioral dimensions and is underpinned by stress-adaptation-growth dynamics (Kim, 1988). In the context of EA, this means that the participants encounter cultural differences that cause them to experience a certain degree of stress. As a result, the students need to adapt to the changes they face (Hamad & Lee, 2013; Kim, 1988). Students’ communication skills are particularly important to cross-cultural adaptation, one aspect of which is foreign language proficiency (Kim, 1988; Masgoret et al., 2008). Cross-cultural adaptation is reviewed as a behavioral learning outcome as the behavior of effectively using

skills such as communication skills fosters a change in the participants that ultimately leads to growth or adaptation (Kim, 1988).

The cross-cultural adaptability inventory (CCAI) is one instrument that can be administered to measure the growth in participants' cross-cultural adaptability. Also based on the DMIS, the CCAI was developed by psychologists Kelley and Meyers (1995). This 50-question instrument identifies strengths and weaknesses in the area of cross-cultural effectiveness and adaptability (Williams, 2005). The instrument has four subscales: Emotional Resilience, Flexibility Openness, Perceptual Acuity, and Personal Autonomy. An instrument that can be used to measure socio-cultural adaptability of the participants is the sociocultural adaptation scale (SCAS) (Ward & Kennedy, 1999). This 29-item instrument measures the participants' ability to act culturally appropriately and to assimilate while interacting with the host culture (Hamad & Lee, 2013). The scale asks the students to indicate the degree of difficulty with which they negotiated the other culture (Ward & Kennedy, 1999).

Studies on cross-cultural adaptation have revealed promising results in EA participants. Results of the CCAI used with students studying abroad indicate significant changes post-program in the scores of all four subscales, as well as the total score. Participants experienced the greatest enhancement in scores on the emotional resilience subscale (Mapp, 2012; Williams, 2005). Further, there is evidence that the length of time the students had previously spent abroad, or the fact that a host country was English-speaking did not impact enhancements in cross-cultural adaptation (Mapp, 2012).

Program length has been shown to impact language acquisition (Davidson, 2010; Vande Berg et al., 2009) and intercultural development in EA participants (Kehl and Morris, 2008; Medina-Lopez-Portillo, 2004; Vande Berg et al., 2009). Counter to these results, EA participants

can experience cross-cultural adaptation even on short-term programs, whether measured with the CCAI, SCAS, or qualitatively (Hamad and Lee, 2013; Mapp, 2012; Sandel, 2014). In analyzing data collected through interviews, Sandel (2014) found that even students who participated in a summer program gained socio-cultural adaptation skills such as navigation of their surroundings. These skills contribute to confidence building in the participants, as well as a greater sense of well-being.

Although the results of studies on cross-cultural adaptation are encouraging, further research is warranted to explore this concept. Sandel's (2014) study did not include participants of faculty-led programs, so the question of how students on such structured programs fare with their improvement of cross-cultural adaptability remains less explored. In addition, it is plausible that program length influences the long-term enhancements of cultural adaptation. Further inquiry is warranted to explore the long-term effects of EA on cross-cultural adaptation.

Cultural Intelligence. A second multi-dimensional learning outcome is cultural intelligence (CQ). This construct is defined as the ability to navigate culturally diverse settings and is often used to evaluate a person's suitability to work internationally (Ward et al., 2011). CQ is composed of three components: the mental aspects (metacognitive and cognitive), the motivational aspect, and the behavioral aspect (Van Dyne et al., 2008). Behavior, which is comprised of verbal and nonverbal actions, is perhaps the most critical focus of CQ as it is visible during social interactions (Van Dyne et al., 2008). Van Dyne and colleagues (2008) developed the Cultural Intelligence Scale, an instrument that measures CQ. This 20-item self-reported questionnaire asks participants to rate statements for each of the four components of CQ. Respondents indicate their agreement with each statement on a seven-point Likert-type scale that ranges from strongly disagree to strongly agree (Engle & Crowne, 2014).

In EA, CQ is most often studied in short-term programs, which are defined as eight weeks or less in length (IIE, 2019). The programs under exploration in the studies reviewed here ranged in length from seven days to five weeks and took place in countries in Asia, Europe, and the Caribbean (Engle & Crowne, 2014; Nguyen et al., 2018; Peng et al., 2015; Rustambekov & Mohan, 2017). Pre- and post-tests of the CQS were administered in each of the studies. Two of the studies also had a non-EA control group (Engle & Crowne, 2014; Rustambekov & Mohan, 2017).

In all four studies, CQ scores increased for all four subcomponents in the EA participants (Engle & Crowne, 2014; Nguyen et al., 2018; Peng et al., 2015; Rustambekov & Mohan, 2017). Engle and Crowne (2014) also reported that there was no correlation between previous international experience and post-EA CQ. In the control groups, there was no significant increase of CQ scores (Engle & Crowne, 2014; Rustambekov & Mohan, 2017). This leads to the conclusion that international study can enhance CQ, even if participants have prior international experiences (Engle & Crowne, 2014).

Peng et al.'s (2015) study explores motivational CQ as the independent variable, assessing its effects on cultural effectiveness and suitability for work in an international setting. The researchers argue that participants with high motivational CQ are more likely to seek out meaningful cross-cultural interactions. The study explored undergraduate business majors who participated in a five-week summer program that was highly structured, facilitated interaction with locals, and included several reflective assignments. Also using the CQS as one of the instruments, Peng et al. (2015) report that CQ had a positive, significant correlation with cultural well-being and suitability for overseas work. As a result of the findings in these studies, several authors stressed the importance of the facilitation of interventions geared toward enhancing the

participants' motivational CQ scores prior to departure. This can include reading assignments, guest lectures, or watching films, as well as reflective essays (Peng et al., 2015; Rustambekov & Mohan, 2017).

Summary of Research on Behavioral Learning Outcomes. Behavioral learning outcomes related to EA include cross-cultural adaptation and CQ. Both of these concepts are multi-faceted, containing among others, cognitive as well as behavioral dimensions. However, for both learning outcomes, their behavioral dimensions are perhaps the most visible (Kim, 1988; Van Dyne et al., 2008). In addition, both cross-cultural adaptation and CQ are linked to the participants' encounter and behavior with cultural differences (Kim, 1988; Ward et al., 2011).

Studies indicate that previous international experiences are not correlated with enhancement of cross-cultural adaptation and CQ, which affirms that students can still improve on outcomes even after having previously spent time abroad (Engle & Crowne, 2014; Mapp, 2012). Further, there is evidence that short-term international education programs can have a positive impact on both cross-cultural adaptation and CQ (Hamad & Lee, 2013; Mapp, 2012; Sandel, 2014).

This research is encouraging for EA professionals at community colleges. Results indicate that carefully crafted EA programs can lead to learning in regard to cross-cultural adaptation and CQ. Results of these studies are also relevant for studies on this topic with community college students, whose life experience may include international travel (Raby, 2019) and who typically participate in short-term rather than mid-length EA programs (IIE, 2018). The current study plans to expand on the existing literature by exploring the post-program learning outcomes of community college alumni.

Researchers who study behavioral aspects of studying abroad have called for more longitudinal studies to evaluate the long-term impact of the international education experience (Mapp, 2012; Williams, 2005). In addition, researchers have stressed the importance of meaningful interaction with the host culture in order for students to achieve enhancement of cross-cultural adaptation and CQ. The facilitation of these interactions must be reflected in the program's structure to provide maximum opportunities for the learning of communication and cross-cultural interaction skills by participants (Peng et al., 2015; Williams, 2005).

Additional Research on Post-Program Learning Outcomes

There have been additional studies of post-program learning outcomes that are not as easily categorized into Kraiger et al.'s (1993) framework. A large, multi-institutional study researching post-program impact was the Study Abroad for Global Engagement project (SAGE), which had an EA sample of over 6,000 participants from 22 institutions and study abroad providers (Paige et al., 2009). The SAGE researchers set out to explore how EA participants have "become globally engaged during their lives since their overseas sojourns and the degree to which they attribute these contributions to their having studied abroad" over a 45-year span (2009, p.3). Paige et al. (2009) employed a mixed-method design, including an online questionnaire and 63 follow-up interviews. Survey results showed that more than 55 percent of participants attributed their level of involvement in areas such as international civic engagement, voluntary simplicity, social entrepreneurship, educational design, and career choice to their experience abroad. The qualitative results reported in the article (three interviews out of 63) demonstrated a lasting impact of education abroad participation on the students' lives and professional trajectories (Paige et al., 2009).

The SAGE study makes a valuable contribution to the field of international education. The study could have been enhanced by including community college students who may represent a more mature sample, which may be a factor for global engagement. Nonetheless, the SAGE research can inform the present study by including interview questions that draw out participant responses regarding their academic, personal, and professional trajectories.

In a more recent study, Hubbard (2019) assessed transferrable skills in students who had studied abroad. Results of the study indicate that students who participate in EA programs have increased employability over those who do not. The study also found that students report a range of skills post-program, even if they are unable to express them with descriptive terms or relate them to specific instances during their time abroad (Hubbard, 2019). The results of Hubbard's study lend credence to the importance of a prolonged engagement with participants. The initial interview, followed by participants' individual reflections on their time abroad, may result in more descriptive and specific answers to questions in the second interview.

Review of Studies That Include Community College Students

Academic Outcomes and Student Development

Much of the focus on EA outcomes with community college students has been on academic achievement or student development. An example is the California Community Colleges SOAR study, in which researchers investigated whether participation in EA programs impacted students' institutional engagement, and whether there was a connection between EA participation and academic achievement (Raby et al., 2014; Rhodes et al., 2016). Findings supported the idea that EA participation had a positive impact on early, midstream, and terminal outcomes, such as retention and transfers to university. Further, in the case of student development, research with community college students shows that studying abroad can lead to a

perceived developmental change in academic, athletic, and interpersonal competence for the students (Drexler & Campbell, 2011). Additionally, EA participants tended to improve their ability to respect and communicate with diverse others (Drexler & Campbell, 2011). These outcomes, though many of them are quantitative in nature, make the case that community college students can benefit from studying abroad. This work informed the current study by providing a baseline of academic and developmental outcomes upon which to layer qualitative, non-academic outcomes.

Cognitive Post-Program Outcomes

A large, multi-institutional study on the topic of education abroad outcomes assessment with alumni is the Georgia Learning Outcomes of Students Studying Abroad Research Initiative (GLOSSARI, for the 34 public University of Georgia system institutions). The study included community college students, though results were not categorized by institution-type. This project represents a major contribution to the field of international education. Researchers Sutton and Rubin (2014) reported working with a study abroad group of 255 participants, and a control group of similar size for their study. Both groups completed a questionnaire with learning outcomes in seven factors: functional knowledge, knowledge of world geography, knowledge of cultural relativism, knowledge of global interdependence, verbal acumen, interpersonal, accommodation and cultural sensitivity (Sutton & Rubin, 2014). Results indicate that EA participants scored significantly higher on the first four factors, but there was no difference between groups on the last three factors, even when controlling for pre-program GPA or academic major as potentially confounding variables. The GLOSSARI project was the first major attempt to generalize post-program learning outcomes of education abroad participation at public colleges and universities.

Affective Outcomes: Intercultural Development

There have been several studies with community college EA participants on intercultural development. Using the IDI, Paras et al. (2019) assessed intercultural development of students studying abroad on short-term programs. For the program with community college students, two community college participants experienced an increase in IDI scores, while five experienced no change. The program was two weeks in length, with the IDI administered immediately prior and after the program (Paras et al., 2019). Findings of another study confirm the work with the IDI of university students that even with enhanced intercultural development scores, EA participants still mostly place in minimization on the DMIS continuum (Emert & Pearson, 2007; Rexeisen et al., 2008; Terzuolo, 2018; Watson et al., 2013). The case can be made, however, that even a small movement away from ethnocentric tendencies is worthwhile in the development of any student (Emert & Pearson, 2007).

Another community college developed its own assessment rubric based on the DMIS (Wood, 2019). The college set three learning outcomes based on the DMIS for its EA participants, and the faculty leaders of the program rated the participant's written reflections on certain prompts. Results indicate that overall, program participants demonstrated growth when comparing pre- and post-program scores. In particular, the greatest growth was measured for participants on career-focused EA programs (Wood, 2019). The chapter in which this study was included lacks further detail however, as its focus was outcomes assessment at community colleges in general. Nonetheless, it makes an important contribution to the field and can serve as an example for other colleges as they assess the outcomes of their EA programs.

Behavioral Outcomes: Global Competencies Skill Development

Research on skill development with community college EA participants is less common. Thomas (2016) explored this concept in a case study of students completing an internship course abroad, giving voice to four community college students. Findings indicate that student interns enhanced their development in one or more of the global competency skills communicating, collaborating, and critical thinking. These results support work with university students (Kim, 1988; Peng et al., 2015; Williams, 2005) on communication skills outcomes, and expands upon this research by including additional but related skills.

Identity Development

Outside the cognitive, affective, and behavioral dimensions, additional research has focused on the identity development of community college students from ethnic minority backgrounds who studied abroad. Identity development can have a long-term impact on EA participants (Willis, 2012; 2016). Willis' (2012; 2016) work has not only explored microaggressions experienced by Black community college students who studied abroad, but also how the intersections of students' cultural capital and experiences abroad resulted in a shift in worldview. Participants shared enhanced relationships with their peers, as well as a new sense of patience, empathy, and humility, regardless of program duration or location (Willis, 2012; 2016).

Multi-Outcome Qualitative Research on Community College Outcomes

More recently, research has expanded on previous studies with community college students by taking a comprehensive qualitative approach to exploring EA outcomes. Findings of Brenner's (2016) case study on community college EA transformative learning suggest that community college EA participants experienced meaningful relationships, enhanced language

learning, and a new curiosity about other cultures as a result of studying abroad. In a study that analyzed university and community college alumni's focus group responses, Raby et al. (2021), explored questions regarding participants' changed worldviews and what they learned about themselves through studying abroad. Findings of the study revealed that students report a variety of outcomes related to their experiences abroad, including learning about their personal strengths and identifying socio-cultural changes (Raby et al., 2021). Although results were not categorized by institution-type, the study gave voice to community college alumni who had studied abroad and can serve as a reference point to the current study. These qualitative studies add validity to the assertion that EA outcomes are multiple and may be more comprehensively explored by applying a qualitative methodology.

Discussion of Methodological Issues and Directions for Future Research

This section contains a discussion of the methodological concerns regarding the studies reviewed in this chapter, as well as fruitful directions for future research. First, I address the lack of studies regarding EA learning outcomes that consider multiple dimensions of outcomes by utilizing a qualitative approach. Second, I discuss limitations of existing studies regarding the populations utilized for study. Third, I suggest researching additional learning outcomes that may exist outside the framework developed by Kraiger et al. (1993). I conclude this section with a discussion of adding a theoretical emphasis to studies related to learning abroad, including Kolb's (1984) theory of experiential learning.

Lack of Multi-Dimensional and Qualitative Studies

There is a need for the examination of multiple learning outcomes in every study. For many years, language acquisition, and intercultural development were at the forefront of research on EA learning outcomes. More recently, however, researchers have argued that studies of a

single learning outcome may not be representative, and a more holistic paradigm is needed to reflect the learning that takes place abroad (Varela, 2017). Williams (2005, 2009) has advocated for employing qualitative methods to draw out multiple aspects of learning at the same time. In fact, data collected through observations, interviews, or focus groups can add complexity to an otherwise myopic subject (Redwine et al., 2018).

Limited Studies with Community College Students and Alumni

Two additional aspects that have been largely excluded from research are the populations of community college students and alumni. There are studies that consider the academic outcomes of the first population, such as grade point average, retention rates, or rates of transfer to four-year institutions (Raby et al., 2014; Rhodes et al., 2016) as well as student development outcomes (Drexler & Campbell, 2011). However, dedicated studies on community college EA learning outcomes outside student success outcomes merit further empirical examination. There is work that includes this population, such as the Georgetown Consortium Project (GCP), but often, results of these studies are not reported by institution type (Paras et al., 2019; Vande Berg et al., 2009).

Community college EA participants face unique challenges when compared to students enrolled at four-year institutions. At many community colleges, even though internationalization may be included in the institution's mission, EA is not contained within college policies. This lack of prioritization may be due to limited institutional funding for a designated department of EA as well as the fact that the college offers a small number of EA programs (Raby & Rhodes, 2018). In addition, community college students navigate different challenges than many students enrolled at four-year institutions. This includes full-time employment, lower socio-economic status, first-generation status, adult student age, and obligations for children or elderly

dependents (Frost & Raby, 2009). Regardless, nontraditional students enrolled at community colleges want to and do study abroad, in spite of institutional constraints (Raby, 2018; 2020). Their nontraditional status may imply, however, that these students have different predispositions, set different goals for international study, and experience different learning outcomes. This merits further exploration.

Further, work on EA learning outcomes with alumni remains sparse. Researchers have long called for studies that assess EA learning outcomes months post-program (Kehl & Morris, 2007; Mapp, 2012; Williams, 2005). The vast majority of studies in the field evaluate students immediately upon return from their program abroad or during the semester upon return. The question of whether the learning outcomes last beyond a student's date of graduation remains less explored (Varela, 2017).

Learning Outcomes Outside the Three Dimensions

To be sure, the three dimensions of learning outcomes are a comprehensive approach to categorize learning (Kraiger et al., 1993). The conceptual framework has endured for almost three decades and has been cited in the academic literature more than 2,000 times. More recently, however, researchers have suggested that there may be learning that can take place outside of the three dimensions, such as personal growth, identity, or a participant's understanding of their own privilege (Varela, 2017; Whatley et al., 2020; Wick et al., 2019; Willis 2012, 2016). Previously, researchers asked how a student's ability to speak or write a second language improved through studying abroad. Today, researchers ask how EA advances students' personal values and their commitment to enhancing society (Whatley et al., 2020).

An example is a qualitative study with 25 first-generation Latinx Americans who studied abroad in Costa Rica. (Wick et al., 2019). The study explored forms of community cultural

wealth. Results indicate that the participants were able not only to recognize but also to appreciate the complexity of their ethnic and national identities. In addition, the students strengthened their pre-existing familial and linguistic capital, enhanced their bicultural identities, and grew to want to encourage other Latinx students to study abroad (Wick et al., 2019). The study is an example of recent research on EA outcomes from an assets-based perspective. The current study approached data collection and analysis with an open frame of mind to identify learning outcomes that did not neatly fit into Kraiger et al.'s (1993) three dimensions.

Additional Theoretical Emphasis: Experiential Learning Theory

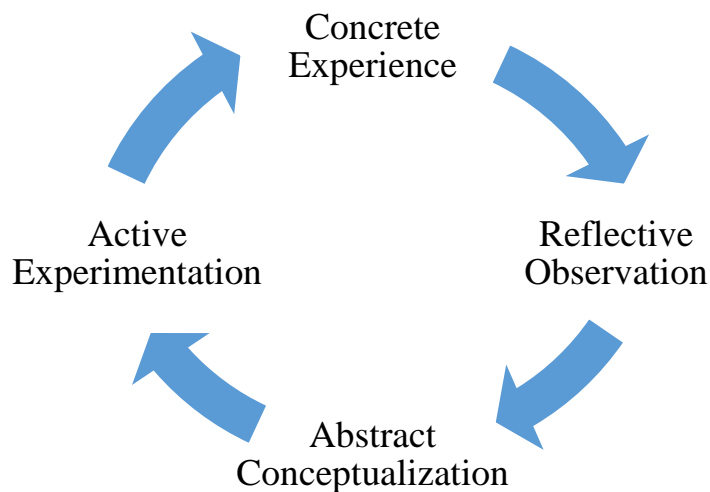
One of the most common theoretical frameworks for EA learning outcomes was developed for intercultural development. The developmental model of intercultural sensitivity (DMIS), (see Figure 4) contextualizes the participants' movement along the ethnocentrism – ethnorelativism continuum, and two instruments have been developed to test EA participants' position in the model (Bennett, 2014). Further, there are widely respected theories related to cross-cultural adaptation and cultural intelligence (Kim, 1988; Van Dyne et al., 2008). None of these theories, however, are concerned with *how* learning takes place.

Studying abroad is often referred to by students and practitioners as a life-changing endeavor and a high-impact practice (Hunter, 2008; Kuh, 2008). One theory that explains how learning takes place abroad is Kolb's (1984) theory of experiential learning. Drawing from elements of social psychology, philosophy, and cognitive psychology, Kolb's (1984) "experiential learning model pursues a framework for examining and strengthening the critical linkages among education, work and personal development" (p. 4). The experiential theory combines and connects the educational philosophy of John Dewey, the social psychology of Kurt Lewin, and the cognitive development psychology of Jean Piaget (Kolb, 1984).

Kolb considers learning to be a holistic adaptative process that includes concepts such as creativity, problem solving, and decision making. He defines learning as “*the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience*” (Kolb, 1984, p. 38, emphasis in original). This experiential learning is negotiated through interactions between the learner and the environment. Kolb stresses the importance of this bilateral relationship: the person impacts the environment and the environment impacts the person in the process of experiential learning (Kolb, 1984).

Figure 6

Model of Experiential Learning



Note: Adapted from *Experiential Learning: Experience as the Source of Learning and Development*, by D. A. Kolb, 1984, p. 33. Copyright 1984, Prentice-Hall.

Kolb's (1984) theory of experiential learning has three critical aspects. First, the focus in experiential learning is the process of adaptation, rather than content or outcomes. Further, knowledge is continually created in this transformative process. It is not an independent event. Finally, learning in turn transforms a person's objective and subjective experience. Kolb's model of experiential learning is comprised of four adaptive learning modes: concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation (Figure 6). For experiential learning to take place, learners move through each of the phases.

Although Kolb (1984) avers that experiential learning happens when a learner moves through the four phases of learning, he also derived four learning styles from his model. Learners, he indicates, may have a primary orientation toward either learning through concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, or active experimentation (Kolb, 1984). Participants' primary learning styles are beyond the scope of this study. However, incorporating this additional theoretical emphasis of experiential learning in the study will allow for an exploration the question regarding *how* learning takes place abroad.

Summary and Implications

Grouping the studies reviewed in this chapter into the conceptual framework for learning outcomes developed by Kraiger et al. (1993) aids in understanding the complex nature of learning outcomes related to EA. According to this framework, learning outcomes have three dimensions: cognitive, affective, behavioral (Kraiger et al., 1993). Varela (2017) applied this framework to learning outcomes specific to international education programs. Cognitive learning outcomes, such as language acquisition and cultural knowledge, address questions regarding what or how students know (Braskamp et al., 2009; Varela, 2017). Affective learning outcomes, which include intercultural development and program satisfaction, answer the question regarding

how students feel. Finally, behavioral learning outcomes, such as cross-cultural adaptation and cultural intelligence, respond to questions regarding what students can do and how students act (Varela, 2017).

Summary of Points Related to Reviewed Studies

In terms of cognitive learning outcomes, there are a fair number of studies on language acquisition, most of which focus on semester- or year-long programs (Kinging, 2008; Magnan & Back, 2007; Paige et al., 2004; Watson et al., 2013; Watson & Wolfel, 2015). In all of these studies, the participants' language abilities improved in the majority of cases. Further, in a study that employed a non-EA control group, gains in language ability were greater in the participants who studied abroad (Paige et al., 2012). In terms of program length, students who participated in year-long EA programs made the greatest strides in their language abilities (Davidson, 2010; Vande Berg et al., 2009). Yet students on short-term programs showed improvements as well, and results indicate that the greatest improvement in language ability for those students was comprehensibility (Allen & Herron, 2003; Brenner, 2016). Results of language ability dependent on the type of accommodations in which students live are mixed and warrant further study (Magnan & Back, 2007; Watson & Wolfel, 2015).

A second cognitive learning outcome is cultural knowledge. This concept is of particular interest for the current study, as data are typically collected through qualitative means. Studies have shown that even students on short-term summer programs experience cultural learning (Czerwionka et al., 2015). Studies of this concept for non-English speaking programs or with community college students remain sparse. Additional cognitive learning outcomes include creative thinking and general knowledge (Lee et al., 2012; Redwine et al., 2018).

The most frequently studied affective learning outcome is intercultural development, a concept underpinned by the DMIS (Bennett, 2014). The majority of studies on this construct found that the variance in the post-test scores was significant between groups of students who did and did not study abroad, with the EA group being more interculturally sensitive (Anderson & Lawton, 2011; Kehl & Morris, 2007; Terzuolo, 2018; Vande Berg et al., 2009; Williams, 2005). Similarly, students who study abroad for one semester are reported to move further along the continuum of intercultural development than those who participate in a short-term program (Kehl & Morris, 2008; Medina-Lopez-Portillo, 2004; Vande Berg et al., 2009). Work on intercultural development with community college students supports these findings, making the case that studying abroad is beneficial to enhancing intercultural development in a variety of students, regardless of their backgrounds (Emert & Pearson, 2007, Paras et al., 2019; Wood, 2019).

Research on behavioral learning outcomes related to EA include work on cross-cultural adaptation and cultural intelligence (CQ). Both constructs have multiple dimensions, and the behavioral dimension is likely the most observable (Kim, 1988; Ward et al., 2011). Results of studies on cross-cultural adaptation and CQ indicate that students who study abroad experience greater enhancements of these skills than students who do not, even on short-term programs (Engle & Crowne, 2014; Rustambekov & Mohan, 2017; Williams, 2005). For community college participants, there is evidence of enhanced global competency skills, such as communication, collaboration, and critical thinking (Thomas, 2016). Further research is needed to determine the long-term impact of EA on behavioral learning outcomes, as well as the importance of meaningful interactions with the host society (Mapp, 2012; Peng et al., 2015; Williams, 2005).

Rationale for the Current Study

Much of the academic literature is limited in its scope and in the populations included. Many of the studies on the topic of EA learning outcomes focus only on one or two learning outcomes per study. Researchers have expressed a need for multi-dimensional research on this topic (Redwine et al., 2018; Varela, 2017; Williams 2005; 2009). Further, studies on what community college students learned during their EA experiences are less frequently included in the literature, though there have been increasing contributions in the past five years (Brenner, 2016, Raby et al., 2021; Thomas, 2016; Willis, 2016; Wood, 2019). Community college students are an under-researched population with a unique background, such as nontraditional age, ethnicity, or student status. But they do study abroad in growing numbers, and their experiences merit further study (Frost & Raby, 2009; Raby 2018). Finally, there is limited research on the long-term impact EA can have on alumni years post-program. The current study contributes to this line of inquiry.

Conclusion

EA participation in the United States has resulted in a plethora of studies assessing the learning outcomes of students studying abroad. The articles reviewed in this chapter make a valuable contribution to the topic of EA learning outcomes assessment and some of them can inform community college EA. After careful review of these studies, it is evident, however, that there is less research into learning outcomes post-program for community college students and alumni. The voices of this diverse group of alumni merit reflection in the academic literature. The field of EA can benefit from additional research of post-program learning outcomes of community college alumni who studied abroad.

In particular, there appears to be a lack of studies exploring EA learning outcomes from a post-graduation perspective. To address this deficiency, the current study explored participants' learning outcomes one to five years after participating in an EA program. Further, the field of international education could benefit from additional qualitative studies on this topic. The present study builds upon the work of Brenner (2016) and Raby et al. (2021) by utilizing a multi-dimensional narrative inquiry approach, which explored multiple aspects of the participants' learning outcomes years after their time abroad.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

This chapter explains the methodological considerations of the current study of education abroad (EA) learning outcomes for community college alumni. It begins with the purpose statement and research questions guiding the study. This is followed by the research paradigm and theoretical grounding of the study. The bulk of the chapter is the elucidation of the research design, which includes the study context, information about participants, data collection procedures, and the data analysis process. The chapter concludes with a discussion on trustworthiness and study limitations.

Purpose Statement and Research Questions

The purpose of this narrative inquiry was to explore the long-term learning outcomes gained by U.S. community college alumni who participated in an education abroad program. Learning outcomes are defined as “the knowledge, skills, and abilities an individual student possesses and can demonstrate upon completion of a learning experience or sequence of learning experiences” (Bolen, 2007, p. 173). In the context of this study, learning outcomes were either cognitive, behavioral, or affective (Kraiger et al., 1993; Varela, 2017), as well as additional uncategorized outcomes, such as the participants’ identity development (Varela, 2017).

The research question guiding this study were:

1. How do U.S. community college alumni who studied abroad describe post-program learning outcomes?
2. To what factors do U.S. community college alumni who studied abroad attribute any learning outcomes they described?

Research Paradigm

This study was grounded in a social-constructivist research paradigm. Social constructivist theory acknowledges that the participants may perceive different realities. In other words, truth is not objective, but rather is multiple and varies from person to person (Guba, 1990). In the context of this study, the participants all participated in an EA program at a U.S. community college, but their varied backgrounds, life experiences, and underlying assumptions influence the construction of learning outcomes gained from studying abroad. In social constructivism, the researcher acts as the instrument to discover the multiple realities of the participants (Guba, 1990).

Having a social constructivist perspective was important for this study because the paradigm acknowledges that truth and meaning are not objective (Creswell, 2013; Crotty, 1998). In the case of EA participants, taking a social constructivist view affirmed that the participants negotiated their acquisition of learning outcomes with the people around them: other students on the program, faculty leaders, and people of the host culture. Meaning in this study was understood to be shaped by norms, both historical and cultural (Creswell, 2013), but also intercultural.

Furthermore, taking a social constructivist view means acknowledges that the results of this study were negotiated between the participants and the researcher. Researcher positionality, as well the interview questions and probes, shaped the participants' responses. The researcher's influence on the data collection and analysis were mitigated to a degree by interviews being semi-structured and the interview questions open-ended. It was also important to collect background data on the participants, as their educational and professional journeys shape their realities as well (Creswell, 2013).

Generally, the emergence of social constructivism has made significant contributions to research in the social sciences. Specifically, the paradigm influences researchers who undertake studies such as ethnography, phenomenology, and hermeneutics. Unlike researchers with a positivist worldview, those informed by a social constructivist paradigm are co-constructing realities with their participants (Crotty, 1998). Social constructivists aim to present the lived experiences of rich phenomena, and unlike critical theorists, they do so in an uncritical manner (Crotty, 1998). In this paradigm, the goal of the researcher is to understand and reconstruct the participants' realities, where positivist would aim to predict or explain causally, and critical theorists would seek to critique and transform (Lincoln & Guba, 1998).

In the context of this study, taking a social constructivist perspective added to the approach that has been taken by scholars on the topic of EA learning outcomes in the past. Previously, much of the research published in the academic literature was quantitative in nature. Concepts such as language acquisition (Baker-Simemoe et al., 2014; Watson et al., 2013; Watson & Wolfel, 2015) or intercultural development (Anderson & Lawton, 2011; Terzuolo, 2018; Watson et al., 2013) were represented in numeric or categorical form by using a score on a survey instrument or rubric. Researchers have called for a multi-dimensional approach to research learning outcomes gained while studying abroad (Redwine et al., 2018; Varela, 2017; Williams 2005; 2009). By taking a qualitative approach informed by the social constructivist paradigm, this study was able to add understanding to this phenomenon. In addition to the social-constructivist research paradigm, this study was guided by a conceptual and a theoretical framework.

Conceptual Framework and Theoretical Underpinnings

This narrative inquiry was underpinned by a conceptual and a theoretical framework that shaped the interview protocols and process of analysis for the study. For RQ1, the conceptual framework of learning outcomes developed by Kraiger et al. (1993) guided the study. RQ2 was guided by Kolb's (1984) experiential learning theory.

Conceptual Framework for Learning Outcomes

For the first research question, this study explored what learning outcomes are described post-program by community college alumni who have studied abroad. The conceptual framework that shaped the questions for the interview protocol, as well as coding during data analysis was Kraiger et al.'s (1993) three dimensions of learning outcomes. This framework aids in understanding the complex nature of learning outcomes related to EA. In general, learning outcomes have three dimensions: Cognitive, affective, and behavioral (Kraiger et al., 1993). To provide examples from the EA context, cognitive learning outcomes are concepts such as language acquisition and cultural knowledge. Outcomes in the cognitive dimension address questions regarding what or how students know (Braskamp et al., 2009; Varela, 2017). Affective learning outcomes, which include intercultural development and program satisfaction, answer the question regarding how students feel. Finally, learning outcomes in the behavioral dimension include cross-cultural adaptation and cultural intelligence. These learning outcomes respond to questions regarding what students can do and how students act (Varela, 2017).

These three dimensions of learning outcomes became the parent codes during data analysis, but I kept an open mind in an effort to identify themes that may lie outside the framework as well, such as the participant's concept of identity (Varela, 2017) or their

understanding of their personal privilege. Kraiger et al.'s (1993) conceptual framework merely provided a starting point for making sense of the data collected.

Theory of Experiential Learning

For RQ2, the present study was also concerned with *how* learning takes place during an EA program. One theory that can explain the life-changing experiences of EA participants is Kolb's (1984) theory of experiential learning. Kolb's model consists of four adaptive learning modes: concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation (see Chapter 2, Figure 5). In applying the four stages to the EA context, Montrose (2002) explains that the concrete experience is the actual living and doing in a different culture. Reflective observation refers to the moments that students reflect on the differences they have observed and relating these differences to their home culture. In the third stage, participants make meaning of their experiences by generalizing and interpreting them. Finally, students try out new behaviors in their international context (Montrose, 2002).

Studying abroad is particularly conducive to experiential learning when the EA programs contain experiential aspects (Pagano & Roselle, 2009), such as meaningful interaction with the host culture or hands-on learning like an art history lecture during a walking tour of Florence. The most important aspect of experiential learning, however, is the critical reflection that takes place after the concrete experience (Kolb, 1984; Montrose, 2002). Montrose (2002) explains, "[t]he key to understanding experiential learning is realizing that it is not the activity itself, but the critical analysis of that activity that transforms the [EA] program into a worthwhile academic experience."

Research Design

Having explored the research paradigm, conceptual framework, and theoretical underpinning that inform the study, I now turn to an explication of the research design. This was a qualitative study that explored the learning outcomes of EA participation by community college alumni. Specifically, I conducted a narrative inquiry to explore this phenomenon. The benefit of using a narrative inquiry approach for this topic was twofold. First, narrative inquiry allows the researcher to investigate the past, present, and future dimensions of participants' experiences (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Second, using this approach permitted the exploration of the underlying assumptions that shape the participants' realities (Bell, 2002; Leedy & Ormrod, 2019).

The results of this study on learning outcomes of EA participation are presented in narrative form (Clandinin, 2013). Through story fragments, I recount the participants' experiences and the learning that took place. This is an effective way to share the results of the study as it combines various data sources, such as two rounds of individual semi-structured interviews and the pre-interview survey in a cohesive manner. For each participant, the narrative was written as a comprehensive whole that represents their backgrounds and the participant's learning outcomes.

Narrative Inquiry

The narrative methodology was an important approach for this study because it served as a way to make sense of a person's lived experiences. EA is a form of an educational experience that can be represented and understood by narrative (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Narrative inquiry is defined as "an approach to the study of human lives conceived as a way of honoring lived experience as a source of important knowledge and understanding" (Clandinin, 2013, p.

17). The method contributed a way of representing the learning outcomes acquired by community college alumni who studied abroad in a holistic manner, taking into account the participants' interactions with communities and exploring "the social, cultural, familial, linguistic, and institutional narratives within which individuals' experiences were, and are, constituted, shaped, expressed, and enacted" (Clandinin, 2013, p. 18).

Riessman (2008) delineates four types of analysis in narrative inquiry: structural, dialogic/performance, thematic, and visual. First, researchers using structural analysis work to place the data into a framework of various narrative elements. The resulting narratives begin with an abstract and orientation before describing the complicating action, evaluation, resolution, and coda of the stories. The focus in structural analysis is less on the content of the data, and more on its context and affect (Labov, & Waletzky, 1997; Riesman, 2008). Second, dialogic/performance analysis is concerned with the who of data analysis. Researchers who use this type of analysis place particular emphasis on the co-production and interpretation of the data between the researcher and the participant. Interaction and dialog become key components of the process of analysis, and the narrative is typically represented in unedited language that includes pauses, non-lexical utterances, and the researcher's field notes (Riesman, 2008). Third, researchers can employ visual analysis of the data. In this method, the researcher shares the participants' stories with or about images. Forms of visual analysis, such as videos and performance art were beyond the scope of this study.

In the current study, I employed the fourth type of analysis to identify learning outcomes and the circumstances that surrounded that learning. The fourth type of narrative analysis is thematic analysis and the most utilized of the four types. Using the thematic approach, data are analyzed using existing theory, with little focus on the structure, audience, and local contexts of

the data collection procedure that procured the narrative (in this case interviews). Instead, the researcher focuses on the content of the transcripts or documents, representing the participants' stories with lengthy excerpts from interviews or document segments, or as summaries written in third person (Riessman, 2008). These stories were created by taking into consideration the cross-cultural and interpersonal contexts of each participant.

Researcher Reflexivity Statement

Qualitative research is fundamentally influenced by the researcher who becomes an instrument of the inquiry (Guba, 1990). My background and interests present perspectives in the research I conducted that may be different from those of the participants. When designing and engaging in the study, it was paramount that I carefully navigated these perspectives in order to add trustworthiness and validity to the study. Doing so began with a statement of reflexivity on myself as the researcher as it related to a study on learning outcomes in EA, and I begin with this statement here.

My research and professional interests center on the outcomes of participation in EA programs. I am an international student from East Germany. Upon graduating from high school there, I pursued a year-long exchange program at a high school in rural North Carolina. This experience had a lasting impact on the trajectory of my personal and professional life. Not only was I able to hone my English-language skills, learn to drive a vehicle, and participate in the high school's marching band, but I gained an appreciation for the U.S. culture that led me to continue my education in the United States. Ultimately, I became a permanent resident.

I first enrolled at a rural community college in North Carolina and later earned my master's degree in International Affairs at a university in the District of Columbia. Subsequently, I worked as an EA professional for thirteen years, interacting with thousands of students who

studied abroad. In interviews for EA leadership positions, I often asked the question, “what did you get out of studying abroad?” I ask this question again in the current study, albeit in a different format. Even though I am an international student and represent a minority of sorts, I am also of Caucasian decent and thus recognize the White privilege I have experienced throughout my life. Further, I am a first-generation college student, but at the same time I am currently pursuing doctoral study – the pinnacle of education.

In my role as a researcher, I was both an insider and an outsider to the community of EA alumni at the community college study sites. I held a very specific position due to my age, ethnicity, religious belief, physical ability, immigration status, and sexuality, among many other categories (Tinker & Armstrong, 2008). I was an insider, because like the study participants I, too, had studied abroad. Some of the participants were cis-gender women who were White, but others did not identify by these terms. For these participants, I was an outsider in the sense that we did not share certain demographic factors. Further, I was older than many of the participants and unlike them, I did not study abroad outside the U.S. I was also be introduced to them as a doctoral student, making me an outsider in the educational attainment category.

Research has shown, however, that being a researcher outside the community of participants can have benefits for qualitative inquiry. First, participants may be more open and honest in their responses due to less fear of being judged by the interviewer (Tinker & Armstrong, 2008). If the interviews for this study had been conducted by a Dean or Vice President, the participants may have been more hesitant in sharing their experiences. Second, participants may be more detailed in their responses if made aware that the researcher is not an expert in the specific topic (Tinker & Armstrong, 2008). In the case of this study, participants

who studied abroad in Asia or Africa may have expanded on their answers once they were made aware that I had never traveled to those continents.

Nevertheless, it is important for qualitative researchers to continually navigate their positionality throughout the study, in data collection, and data analysis (Hays & Singh, 2012). For this reason, I kept an electronic reflexivity journal. In this document, I recorded notes to questions regarding my authenticity, unconditional positive regard, and empathy (Hays & Singh, 2012). I wrestled with questions regarding my role as a researcher and my positionality toward the participants of the study, particularly issues of race and identity.

In my interviews and email interactions with the participants, I encountered non-White students, as well as participants who dropped out of the community college without earning a credential or graduating without pursuing further education. Those, and perhaps other factors I did not consider, may have created a power differential throughout data collection and analysis. Prior to each interview, I collected background information on each participant through a screening survey (Appendix C). This allowed for consideration of myself as an insider and outsider in various categories compared to each participant prior to each interview. During the interviews, I strove to maintain a positive, friendly affect, to provide room for silence, to listen with unconditional positive regard, and to stay open-minded throughout the interview process in an effort to mitigate the power dynamic as much as possible. As described by Rogers, in order to provide unconditional positive regard meant setting aside my own experiences and perspectives and listening to the participant with a caring and accepting frame of mind (Rogers, C. reprinted in Kirschenbaum & Henderson, 1990).

Nevertheless, the experiences shared by participants of color were unfamiliar to me, both their reactions to encounters abroad and memories shared from navigating K12 education. My

disconnect from these realities for participants of color represented a blind spot for this researcher that likely affected my ability to ask pertinent follow-up questions or probes, or to identify certain meaningful aspects of their experiences during data analysis. During interviews with participants of color, I found myself hesitant wanting to ask for clarifications on issues surrounding race, ethnicity, and national origin, while being mindful that when asked at the wrong time or in the wrong tone of voice, this may alienate the participants. Ultimately, I chose to ask the questions in an attempt to capture participants' experiences authentically.

In part for these reasons, there was a need to both remain critical during data analysis, and to keep an open mind each time the transcripts were read (Tinker & Armstrong, 2008). At the conclusion of this stage of the study, I member-checked a draft of chapter four with participants after writing up the results, and again maintained a positive and open regard toward their responses. Responses from participants of color to this draft were similarly positive to those of White students, so it is my hope that I captured their voices in a way that honors their experiences. Hays and Singh (2012) suggested that qualitative researchers should approach data analysis with intellectual curiosity, rather than expertise; I strove to follow that model.

Study Sites

This study took place with alumni from one Intermountain region and two Westcoast community colleges, and a Westcoast community college district. The study sites have been assigned fictitious names: Pine Grove Community College (Pine Grove CC), Cedar Forest Community College (Cedar Forest CC), Lakeside Community College District (Lakeside CC District), and Ocean View Community College (Ocean View CC). The colleges and district were selected because they have consistently been among the leading associate's granting institutions in EA reported in the Open Doors report (IIE, 2020a) and had a large number of EA alumni to

draw from. I contacted the EA coordinators at Pine Grove CC and Cedar Forest CC at random and was introduced to the coordinators at Ocean View CC and Lakeside CC District by a committee member.

According to IPEDS (2020), the study participants' community colleges were public, associate's granting colleges that are located in cities. In fall 2018, total enrollment at each institution was approximately between 6,000 and 20,000 students. In that same semester, about two thirds of first-time, full-time students at Pine Grove CC and Cedar Forest CC received financial aid (IPEDS, 2020). All four of the study sites are minority-serving institutions. The three study sites that are individual community colleges are Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSIs). In the Lakeside Community College District, two colleges are HSIs and Asian American Native American Pacific Islander - Serving Institutions (AANAPISIs) and two are AANAPISIs only. Additional enrollment data, including the percentage of adult students and ethnic makeup of the students can be found in Table 1.

Participants

Participants for this study were alumni of the four community colleges who have graduated within the past five years. In the first phase of participant selection, I invited alumni from Pine Grove CC, Cedar Forest CC, and Ocean View CC. This recruitment period resulted in 25 participants. In an effort to achieve more ethnic diversity in the participant sample, I then invited additional participants from Lakeside CC District, a district known to have a large number of students of color who study abroad (IIE, 2020a). This invitation resulted in two additional participants, both identifying as students of color.

Table 1*Study Site Characteristics, Fall 2018*

Characteristic	Pine Grove CC	Cedar Forest CC	Ocean View CC	Lakeside CC District (4 colleges)
Campus Setting	City: Large	City-Midsize	City: Small	City: Large
Carnegie Classification	High Transfer-Mixed Traditional/Nont rditional	Mixed Transfer/Career & Technical-High Traditional	High Transfer-High Traditional	varies
Enrollment	20, 387	20,000	14,646	6,053-10,404
Full-time	6,172	6,000	6,354	1,205-2,613
Non-degree	4,612	2,739	1,726	981-2,133
% of Full-time First Time who receive				
Financial Aid	71%	75%	42%	58-72%
Pell	47%	26%	22%	31-50%
Age 25 and over	34%	39%	n/a	38-50%
Ethnicity				
White	47%	46%	39%	14-23%
Hispanic	30%	36%	37%	23-34%
Black	6%	2%	3%	15-24%
MSI Type	Hispanic-Serving Institution (HSI)	HSI	HSI	AANAPISI & HSI (2 colleges), AANAPISI (2 colleges)

Note: AANAPISI stands for Asian American Native American Pacific Islander - Serving Institutions

All participants completed their EA program between fall 2015 and fall 2019 and all had participated in credit-bearing EA programs. The study is thus comprised of a mixture of convenience and purposeful samples of self-selecting students. All students who studied abroad

at the community colleges between fall 2015 and fall 2019 were invited to participate in the study. The self-selecting participants constitute a convenience sample, which is an example of non-probability samples and more common in qualitative research. They are called convenient as the participants are readily available (Taherdoost, 2016). In an effort to further diversify the sample, I purposefully contacted a community college district with diverse EA participants, adding a purposeful sample to the participants (Taherdoost, 2016). Adding this purposeful sample allowed for further analysis regarding students of color and their identity development through studying abroad (Wick, et al.; Willis, 2012).

Participants gave electronic consent (Appendix D) and committed to participating in two 45 to 60-minute individual interviews with two to four weeks between each interview. Interested participants completed a screening survey to provide background information about their pathways after the community college, demographics, and the EA program in which they participated (Appendix C). A total of 27 participants were interviewed at least once; 25 of them completed both interviews. Participants represent a variety of EA programs, fields of study, destinations, and demographics, first-generation status, and Pell eligibility.

Data Collection Procedures

Methods of data collection in narrative inquiry include in-depth unstructured and semi-structured interviews, autobiographical writings, poetry, narrative documents, as well as photographs or visual materials (Leedy & Ormrod, 2019). For this study, the primary method of data collection was two rounds of individual semi-structured interviews with community college alumni who studied abroad. Round 1 interviews lasted between 30 and 93 minutes and an average of 59 minutes. Round 2 interviews were conducted two to four weeks later and lasted between 19 and 71 minutes for an average of 40 minutes. The secondary method of data

collection was the screening survey (Appendix C) that provided valuable background information on each participant and was used for data triangulation.

Participant interviews were conducted via videoconferencing. Interviews were video recorded with the participants' permission. The interview protocols were informed by the conceptual and theoretical frameworks underpinning the study (Kolb, 1984; Kraiger et al., 1993). For the first round of interviews, the protocol (Appendix A) included open-ended questions about the participants' EA experience. The majority of these questions stemmed from the academic literature on EA learning outcomes and were aimed at drawing out responses regarding learning retained by the participants post-program. Questions also aimed to draw out responses regarding the impact the learning outcomes may have had on the participants' lives after attending the community college.

After the first round of interviews, I preliminarily coded the data for patterns (Saldaña, 2016). Coding was informed by previous reading of the literature on EA learning outcomes, particularly previous qualitative work (Raby et al., 2021; Williams, 2005; 2009) and more recent work on identity development in students of color (Wick et al., 2019). The results of the coding process in turn informed the interview protocol for the second round of interviews. Questions for the second set of interviews (Appendix B) were tailored to each participant based on their responses in the first interview, and the themes of learning outcomes identified from the analysis of the first round of interviews. This allowed me to clarify meaning that may have been left unclear, as well as explore whether learning outcomes reported by some students were also valid for other participants. The second interview protocol also included the question "How has studying abroad shaped your sense of personal identity?" in response to Wick et al.'s (2019) work.

I collected additional data in the form of my field notes and memos during and after each interview. Field notes contained records regarding the participant's tone, affect, and body language during the interview. Memos noted initial thoughts about codes, themes, and potential follow-up questions. The data collected from the participants of the study and the participants' identities were protected to the full extent allowed by law. All participants were asked to choose or be assigned a pseudonym. Data files were kept on a password-protected computer and only I and the members of my dissertation committee had access to the files. Recordings of interviews from the participants will be destroyed after three years. All results from the study were deidentified to protect the identity of the participants. Finally, the study sites have been assigned fictitious names.

Data Analysis

Coding. After the conclusion of each interview, I transcribed the recordings verbatim, refining the automated transcript provided by the video-conferencing software Zoom. Subsequently, I coded the text for themes and tensions using the software Dedoose, identifying patterns in the text that addressed the research questions (Leedy & Ormrod, 2019). This was an iterative process during which I moved between all of the transcripts as new codes were developed. There were two main rounds of coding after each interview. First, I applied descriptive codes, which is appropriate for evaluating change in the participants (Saldaña, 2016). This was done by carefully reading and re-reading the transcripts, highlighting patterns and themes for textual content (Creswell, 2013; Saldaña, 2016). In the second round of coding, I used axial coding, sorting the descriptive codes into the conceptual framework of learning outcomes (Kraiger et al., 1993). Axial coding also included reorganizing the data by combining synonyms

and developing a structure for the code set. Axial coding is appropriate for studies with multiple data sources, as was the case with this study (Saldaña, 2016).

Theming. Through reflection and analysis of the parent codes in the study's codebook, I developed nine broader themes in response to RQ1. Theming involved careful reflection on the meaning of the participants' words, as well as the learning outcomes they discussed (Saldaña, 2016). For each theme, I selected the participants' stories and quotes that best supported the theme, acknowledging that some participants' experiences would have fit in more than one theme. . I present the findings of the study in Chapter four. The chapter is organized by the major themes that address RQ1, followed by an analysis of the interview data in response to RQ2. I begin each themed subsection with an introduction to set the context, which is followed by the participants' stories retold, and an analysis of the post-program learning outcomes that were identified (Creswell, 2013).

Restorying into Story Fragments. During the final process of analysis, I restoried the data collected from the participants into individual story fragments (Clandinin, 2013), a cohesive narrative for each alumni (Leedy & Ormrod, 2019). Story fragments as used by Clandinin (2013) are excerpts of a participants' lived experiences. In the case of the current study, story fragments allow the reader a glimpse into the participant's lives before, during, and after studying abroad as they related to the outcomes participants experienced as a result of their international sojourns. The retold stories exist in a three-dimensional space: the interaction (personal and social aspects), continuity (aspects related to the past, present, or future), and situation (aspects of place) (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000).

Restorying is an important qualitative research technique as it combines the meaningful details of the various data sources into a comprehensive structure that is presented in a manner

comprehensible to the reader. In narrative inquiry, restorying also allows the researcher to add context, emotion, and underlying assumptions to the participants' experiences (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000; Creswell, 2013). I chose to restory the participants' experiences in the form of story fragments for two reasons. First, this approach allowed me to highlight the diversity of experiences of community college EA participants and to honor the voices of diverse participants. Second, sharing results of the study in the form of story fragments allowed me to place each participant's learning outcomes in the context of their personal, demographic, and academic backgrounds.

For the current study, the process of restorying began with developing an outline of the story fragments. To place each participant's experience in context, I crafted each story fragment to begin with a brief description of their lives prior to studying abroad. This section included their academic journeys, familial considerations, prior travel abroad, and demographic characteristics that may have shaped the participants' experiences abroad. The middle section of each story fragment focused on salient aspects of the participants' EA programs that may have impacted their learning outcomes. This section also recounted moments that participants shared in response to the question "describe a pivotal moment of learning for you during your time abroad" (Appendix B). Each fragment concludes with the participants' trajectories upon return from studying abroad. These concluding phrases include references to participants' educational and professional journeys, and long-term program impact for each alum.

The process of crafting each story fragment was defined by a time of reading small sections of a participant's transcripts, followed by thoughtful contemplation, and repeating this process by further reading and re-reading and contemplating the data. During this process, I searched both transcripts for quotes that related to the research questions, reflected on how best

to highlight relevant details in the narrative, and identified contextual details that shaped each participant's lived experience. Each fragment was crafted to provide a cohesive, chronological, and compact but comprehensive glimpse in each participants' EA learning outcomes.

Member-Checking. I worked collaboratively with the participants at the conclusion of the first draft of the analysis to member-check the meaning and veracity behind the analysis and representation of their words. All participants received a draft section of chapter 4 of the current study via email, encouraging them to review their story fragment and subsequent section on analysis of story fragments (Appendix E). In the email, participants were encouraged to check the draft section for accuracy of representation, interpretation of their direct quotes, as well as identifiability of their story. Fifteen of the participants responded to the member-checking invitation email. Four of the participants indicated needed corrections (such as a missing year or incorrect location) of their story fragment. Three of the participants asked for a change in pseudonym. In general, feedback on earlier drafts of sections of chapter 4 were positive and participants expressed gratitude for the ability to relive and to share their experiences abroad

Trustworthiness

Throughout the process of data collection and analysis, I implemented two strategies to enhance the trustworthiness of the study. First, I member-checked with the participants to ensure the participants agree that I provided a valid assessment of their learning. This took place after restorying. Second, I kept an electronic reflexivity journal in which I recorded my thoughts and perspectives as they related to the participants and their stories. This was an effort to mitigate the divergent perspectives I may have had from my participants and to bring their voices to the forefront.

Limitations

This study was subject to several limitations. The first limitation was the selection bias of the participants. It is plausible that only students who had meaningful experiences abroad would volunteer to participate in a study that required two hours of their uncompensated time. Second, narrative inquiry typically researches a small sample size. In this study, I recount the lived experiences of a total of 27 student participants. Because of this convenience sample, results of this study will not be generalizable to populations at other community colleges or universities. However, the purpose of qualitative research is not necessarily to generalize the results, but rather to provide a voice to the specific participants of the study. Results may be transferrable to other EA participants that are similar in characteristics to the participants whose stories I captured here.

A further limitation is that two of the participants only completed one interview. One of those participants did not appear to have experienced lasting learning outcomes due to his EA program and is classified as an outlier. It is possible that a second interview would have led to a different result. Finally, the study did not yield any Asian, American Indian, or Pacific Islander participants. The exclusion of these populations means that the results should be interpreted with caution as being representative of community college EA.

Conclusion

The purpose of this narrative inquiry was to explore the learning outcomes post-program by alumni from four U.S. community colleges who studied abroad. The research questions for this study examined the learning outcomes reported by the participants, as well as the factors by which the participants' learning took place. The first research question was informed by a conceptual framework for learning outcomes (Kraiger et al., 1993). The second research question

was underpinned by experiential learning theory (Kolb, 1984). Kolb (1984) argues that learning is an adaptive process that takes place when people experience new situations, which is the case when participants study abroad. The results of the study are shared through cohesive stories and analysis of themes.

The primary method of data collection for this study was two rounds of individual semi-structured interviews with community college alumni who studied abroad since 2015. This data was supplemented with information gathered through a screening survey that contains questions regarding the participants' programmatic, academic, and demographic backgrounds. I also took field notes and memos. Trustworthiness of the study was enhanced through member-checking and reflexive journaling. The results of the study are considered in the next chapter.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

Through story fragments (Clandinin, 2013), this chapter details the long-term learning outcomes participants gained, as well as the factors that impacted the creation of these outcomes. Study participants relayed a breadth of learning outcomes they experienced through participation in their EA programs. Some of these outcomes straddle two of the dimensions of the conceptual framework developed by Kraiger et al. (1993) in that they are both cognitive and affective, cognitive and behavioral, or behavioral and affective. Some participants explained that studying abroad shifted their understanding of and attitude toward different cultures and people generally, while others reported a changed understanding of their personal identity. Other themes identified in the participants' narratives include the ability as well as desire to move abroad for further education or work, their development of social capital, their transition to adulthood or university life, and academic and professional connections they made. Participants also described that studying abroad created meaningful memories and inspiration for further international travel. Finally, in terms of factors that impacted their long-term learning outcomes, study participants referenced concrete experiences and observations, reflecting on their time abroad upon return, trial and error, as well as asking questions and living in homestays.

The participants in this study studied abroad between the ages of 17 and 74. Nine of them were teenagers during their term abroad and another nine were considered adult students. Their EA programs ranged in duration from one week to three months in countries in Western Europe, Africa, Asia, and South America. Participants pursued majors in education, humanities, STEM, and social sciences. Two of the participants were community members and one was a dual-enrolled high school student. Participants represented a variety of ethnic backgrounds, including

African American, Latinx, and White. For a detailed breakdown of participant demographic and program information, please see Tables 2, 3 and 4.

Table 2

Participant Background Information: Education

Pseudonym	Education	Major at the community college	University Major
Ocean View Community College			
Anna	associate's degree; transfer, earned bachelor's	Political science & economics	Political science
Christine	transfer, still enrolled		Early Childhood Studies
Cedar Forest Community College			
Ricardo	associate's degree; transfer, earned bachelor's	Liberal Arts and Humanities	Cinema
Paige	associate's degree; transfer, still enrolled	Nursing	
Patrick	transfer, still enrolled	History	History
Griffin	associate's degree; transfer, earned bachelor's	Communication Studies	History
Mattie	community member	Science	
Lucia	associate's degree; transfer, earned bachelor's	History	History
Jaquelin	associate's degree; transfer, still enrolled	Psychology	Psychology and Spanish
Daniel	transfer, still enrolled	Undecided	Political science
Julie	community member	Radiological Technology and English	
Elena	associate's degree; transfer, still enrolled	General Education for transfer / Spanish	Industrial Design
Carlos	transfer, earned bachelor's	Computer Engineering	Computer Engineering
Lila	associate's degree; transfer, earned bachelor's	Natural Sciences	Environmental Studies

Table 2 (continued).

Pseudonym	Education	Major at the community college	University Major
Pine Grove Community College			
Boo	certificate, workforce	Arts	
Luis	transfer, earned bachelor's	Computer information systems	Computer information systems
Sakura	transfer, still enrolled	None	Psychology
Micha	associate's & certificate, workforce	Associates in Fashion Design and Merchandising; Certificate in Costume Design	
Max	associate's degree; transfer, earned bachelor's	Information Technology	Information Technology
Margaret	associate's degree; transfer, earned bachelor's	Sociology	Chicano/a & Latino/a Studies: U.S. & Mexican Regional Immigration Policy and Economy
Leandra	associate's degree; transfer	Associate in Science	Bachelor of Science in Wildlife Conservation
Eva	associate's degree; transfer, earned bachelor's	AA & AGS	Bachelor in Science in Family and Human Development
Helga	associate's degree; transfer, still enrolled	History and Philosophy	Geophysics
Grace	associate's degree; transfer, earned bachelor's	Biology	Global Health
Erin	associate's & certificate; transfer, earned bachelor's	Associates of Art	BA in Sustainability and BS in Environmental Design
Lakeside Community College District			
Sunshine	associate's degree; transfer, still enrolled	African American Studies	Social Work
Bastian	Associate's degree, workforce	Web & Mobile Design	

Table 3

Participant Background Information: Education Abroad Program and Post-Community College Employment

Pseudonym	Study Abroad Location	Term Abroad	Duration of EA Program	First job after graduation
Ocean View Community College				
Anna	Spain	Fall 2016	3 months	Graduate School
Christine	Italy	Spring 2019	3 months	
Cedar Forest Community College				
Ricardo	Spain	Fall 2017	3 months	Production Assistant
Paige	UK	Fall 2016	3 months	
Patrick	UK	Fall 2016	3 months	Still looking
Griffin	Italy	Summer 2015	2 months	Graduate School
Mattie	UK	Summer 2016	5 weeks	
Lucia	UK	Summer 2016	5 weeks	Graduate School
Jaquelin	Italy	Summer 2019	5 weeks	
Daniel	UK	Fall 2018	3 months	
Julie	UK	Summer 2016	5 weeks	
Elena	Spain	Fall 2019	3 months	
Carlos	Costa Rica	Summer 2016	5 weeks	Software Engineer
Lila	Spain	Fall 2017	3 months	research assistant
Pine Grove Community College				
Boo	UK, France	Summer 2015	4 weeks	
Luis	Belgium, Luxembourg, Germany, Netherlands, France	Summer 2015	4 weeks	Programmer
Sakura	UK, France	Summer 2018	4 weeks	
Micha	Ireland/ UK, France	Summer 2018, 2019	4 weeks both times	
Max	UK, France/Mexico	Summer 2019	4 weeks in Europe, 1 week in Mexico	
Margaret	Mexico	Summer 2017	3 weeks	Student Government Advisor at a Community College

Table 3 (continued).

Pseudonym	Study Abroad Location	Term Abroad	Duration of EA Program	First job after graduation
Leandra	Namibia/Mexico	Summer 2015	3 weeks in Africa. 1 week in Mexico	Zoo keeper
Eva	UK, France	Summer 2016	6 weeks	Student Service Analyst
Helga	Ireland	Summer 2018	5 weeks	
Grace	UK, France	Summer 2016	4 weeks	Assistant House manager
Erin	Ireland	Summer 2017	4 weeks	Government Affairs Administrative Assistant
Lakeside Community College District				
Sunshine	Ghana; Belize	Summer 2018; Summer 2019	2 weeks each	
Bastian	China	Summer 2019	2 weeks	Delivery driver

Table 4*Participant Demographic Characteristics and Prior International Travel*

Pseudonym	First Generation	Pell	Use Pell for EA	Gender Identity	Age Abroad	Race/ Ethnicity	Prior Int'l Travel
Ocean View Community College							
Anna	No	No		Woman	19	White	Yes
Christine	No	Unsure		Woman	19-20	Hispanic or Latinx	No
Cedar Forest Community College							
Ricardo	No	Yes	Unsure	Man	20-21	Hispanic or Latinx	Yes
Paige	No	Yes	Yes	Woman	20	White	Yes
Patrick	No	No		Man	19	White	Yes
Griffin	No	No		Man	18	Black	Yes
Mattie	Yes	No		Woman	76	White	Yes
Lucia	No	Yes	Yes	Woman	21	Hispanic or Latinx	Yes
Jaquelin	Yes	Yes	Unsure	Woman	20	Hispanic or Latinx	Yes
Daniel	No	No		Man	20	White	Yes
Julie	No	No		Woman	64	White	Yes
Elena	No	No		Woman	20	White	Yes
Carlos	No	Unsure		Man	19/20	White	Yes
Lila	No	No		Woman	20	White	Yes
Pine Grove Community College							
Boo	Yes	Yes	Yes	Man	35	White	No
Luis	Yes	Yes	Unsure	Man	24	Hispanic or Latinx	Yes
Sakura	No	Unsure		Woman	17	White	No
Micha	No	Yes	No	Woman	25	White	No
Max	No	No		Man	22	White	Yes
Margaret	No	Yes	Unsure	Woman	29	Hispanic or Latinx	Yes
Leandra	No	Unsure		Woman	19	Hispanic or Latinx	Yes
Eva	Yes	Yes	Yes	Woman	24	Hispanic or Latinx	Yes

Table 4 (continued).

Pseudonym	First Generation	Pell	Use Pell for EA	Gender Identity	Age Abroad	Race/ Ethnicity	Prior Int'l Travel
Helga	No	No		Woman	18	White	Yes
Grace	No	No		Woman	19	Black	Yes
Erin	No	No		Woman	20-21	White	Yes
Lakeside Community College District							
Sunshine	Yes	Yes	Unsure	Woman	28	Two or more races	No
Bastian	Yes	Yes	No	Man	34	Black	Yes

Changed Understanding of Host Culture

Several of the participants shared experiences that led to a changed and deeper cognitive understanding of and attitude toward their host culture specifically and empathy toward people more generally. Four of these participants were young women who studied abroad in Italy, Ireland, and Spain. As detailed in the story fragments below, three of the women experienced moments of trauma abroad as two were victims of a crime and the third dealt with the passing of her roommate. As can be seen in Christine's story, however, a shift in cultural understanding can also result from a prolonged and personal engagement with the host culture.

Story Fragment: Christine

Christine studied abroad in Rome, Italy, for three months during the Spring 2019 semester. She was 19 years old during her semester in Rome, which was her first sojourn outside the United States. Christine studied Italian language and general education courses in Italy, which transferred toward her bachelor's degree in early childhood studies. While abroad,

Christine came to think of Rome as her home even though she found Italian culture to be different from her US culture.

Christine experienced Italian culture first-hand through daily navigating the city on public transportation. One day, while riding a crowded tram through Rome, Christine witnessed a little boy getting ill. She expected the other passengers to react with disgust and to get off at the next stop. Instead, they offered napkins to the boy's mother to help clean him and comforted the crying child. Christine watched with interest when at the next stop the mom and boy exited the tram and an occupied taxi pulled over to offer the family wipes. This moment had a lasting impact on Christine who was impressed by the Italians' apparent prioritizing of family and community.

Christine also gained a closer look at Italian culture by befriending a local young man who later became her boyfriend. She had the opportunity to celebrate the Easter holiday with his family and on occasion enjoyed homecooked meals with them. Conversations around the dinner table affirmed Christine's perceptions of Italians after the incident on the tram. She learned that Italians close their shops in the afternoons in an effort to balance work and life, take time to rest, and spend time with their families. These and other experiences helped Christine gain an understanding of people outside of her identity as a US citizen.

Story Fragment: Erin

In the summer of 2017, Erin participated in a month-long faculty-led study abroad program to Athlone, Ireland. Erin chose Ireland as the location for her education abroad program in part because her maternal great grandparents were Irish immigrants to the United States and the program was a way for to connect with her heritage. During her time in Ireland, Erin lived in

apartments with other students on the program, and she continued working part-time with her job in the United States to help fund the experience.

Toward the end of her education abroad program, Erin's apartment in Athlone was broken into and her laptop, passport, and wallet were stolen. She was forced to cancel all of her credit cards and borrow money from fellow students. Near midnight on the day before Erin was scheduled to depart for Amsterdam, two Irish police officers in plain clothes came to the apartment to return some of her belongings. The officers even offered to search for a missing item at the police station and return it to her that night. The incident was emotional for Erin, but it also gave her a glimpse at the kindness of some of the Irish people. Erin explored historical sights and learned about ancient religions, but her interactions with the Irish people supported by aspects of her program led to insights related to the goodness of people in her host culture.

Upon return from Ireland, Erin completed her associate's and a certificate at the community college and then transferred to university. Inspired in part by her studies in Ireland, Erin chose to pursue dual bachelor's degrees in environmental design and social sustainability. While at university, Erin participated in a second summer education abroad program in 2018, this time studying global health and sustainability in Australia.

Story Fragment: Anna

At age 19, Anna spent the fall 2016 semester in Madrid, Spain, where she completed courses toward her associate degree in political science. Anna had previously traveled to Western Europe with her family but did not know any of the students on her education abroad program until she met them in Spain. In addition to taking a full-time course load, Anna completed an unpaid internship with the nonprofit Democrats Abroad during her time in Madrid. This internship allowed Anna to navigate the city and interact with peers while encouraging them to

register to vote in the 2016 election. Anna lived in an apartment in Madrid with other community college students and was able to experience the nuances of her host culture and to refine the generalizations she had learned prior to studying abroad. She recalls going to the local markets or sitting outside in cafés and encountering Spaniards of all ages. Some of them, upon recognizing her as an American, would practice their English language skills with her and share stories.

Anna also undertook independent travel in Western Europe during her program, including trips to Portugal, Italy, Ireland, and Germany. On the first two of those independent trips, Anna encountered the far ends of the humanity spectrum. While on a tour in Portugal, the director of the company arranging her excursion drugged Anna's drink and later attempted to leave the bar with her without her friends while she was incapacitated. The incident brought on a depression in Anna, as she could not remember the evening's events. She learned to be wary of strangers, doubting her gut reactions when meeting new people. The experience of being the victim of a crime notwithstanding, Anna continued to travel throughout her semester in Spain. On a solo trip to Italy, she encountered a helpful hotel employee that allowed her to rest in the hotel's break room when she was low on funds. Despite meeting a helpful and kind person on her trip to Italy, Anna's general take-away from studying abroad was to be distrusting of people.

After the conclusion of her semester abroad, Anna earned a bachelor's degree at a 4-year institution and is now pursuing graduate studies in political science. She continues to have a desire to travel to different countries, and within the United States. She plans to pursue a career in politics, and firmly believes that her exposure to people from different cultures during her semester abroad can only aid her in her future career.

Story Fragment: Lila

At her community college, Lila pursued an associate's in natural sciences while working part-time. Prior to studying abroad, Lila's life was a standstill; she was unhappy with her circumstances and fed up with living in her hometown. She was looking for a change and hoped to find it in Spain. She applied to study abroad "on a whim" and spent Fall 2017 studying Spanish life and culture, conservation biology, art History, and philosophy in Barcelona, Spain. Previously, Lila had only traveled internationally on vacations to Canada and Mexico.

A few weeks into the fall 2017 semester, Lila's roommate in Barcelona passed away due to an unknown health condition. On the evening of her roommate's passing, a Spanish family who lived in the same apartment building invited Lila and her other flat mates into their apartment and provided them with treats and snacks. In Spanish culture, it is uncommon to open one's home to strangers, but as the family explained, they had seen on US television shows that Americans show hospitality in times of crisis. The actions of this Spanish family changed Lila's outlook on Spanish people, who had until that point generally treated her coldly. Lila dealt with the grief of losing a roommate as best she could, but she ultimately experienced a prolonged depression as a result of the loss. Yet, she persevered and finished her semester abroad. She fondly recalls experiencing the sunset over the beach in Barcelona with her friends on most nights, watching the planes fly into Barcelona International Airport. These evenings were calming to Lila in their reliable recurrence.

Her time in Spain inspired Lila's passion for traveling and learning more about different cultures. She felt at home in Spain, and this sense of belonging causes her to want to return to Spain in the future, as well as to travel to other continents. Lila transferred to a university

immediately upon her return from Spain. Studying abroad in Spain has taught her to enjoy trying new things and following news events from a global perspective.

Analysis of Story Fragments

The women in these four story fragments experienced a shift in their knowledge or perspective of their host culture specifically, or understanding and empathy toward different people in general. Erin shared that she's "far more culturally aware now and understanding that every culture and every individual has some value, valuable knowledge that you're oblivious to." As a result of her education abroad experience, Erin has gained an appreciation of other cultures and diversity. Anna's experience was similar. She explained that studying abroad impacted her by becoming more "open-minded and meeting people and knowing that everyone's different."

Lila's narrative adds an example of a changed understanding of the host culture. She stated that her interactions with the Spanish family on the evening of her roommate's passing, changed my whole outlook [...] on Spanish people because I know everyone who I've met, they were kind of cold and turned off. And I think it was because we were American that they had these ideas about us. But when it really came down to it, people were willing to invite us into our home - strangers. Who barely spoke the same languages and they were willing to try to comfort us in this time.

In terms of a changed understanding of people, Erin explained that the moment the police officers returned her belongings after the robbery was "a really heartwarming moment in terms of humanity, for the goodness of humanity. How generous and helpful people are. That was something specifically that happened there that touched me in terms of what makes a beautiful part about people."

All four participants also emphasized their newfound recognition that there are different ways to do things than may be commonplace in the United States. Affirming this cultural relativism, Christine shared that after studying abroad she “really does feel like [she] gained the sense of what humanity is, rather than just being an American.” Lila explained that she was able to leave the US “bubble” and “see that [her] culture isn't the only culture and there's so much more to life than what you know.” Taking this realization a step further, Anna adopted a Spanish value during her semester abroad. She shared,

I was able to make myself not feel guilty about that, me just taking long breaks within the day then going back and do my homework. [...] it's just a culture in America that we have this work hard, play hard, but a lot of places are moderate, moderately work, moderately play and I think that learning that moderation of work has helped me especially right now when things aren't very structured. [...] If it's been working in Spain for so long, why can't it work with me?”

Anna explains that studying abroad put into perspective how much of the world there is to see outside the United States.

Development or Shift of Personal Identity

Participants in the study also reflected upon the impact of studying abroad on their personal sense of identity. In the story fragments below, five community college alumni who studied abroad share their experiences in this regard. One was a teenager, two were 20 years old, and two studied abroad as adult students. Each of these participants believes that studying abroad either shaped their personal sense of identity, helped them connect with their identity in a new way, or caused them to reflect on their identity differently than they did prior to studying abroad.

Story Fragment: Sakura

Sakura was homeschooled along with her ten siblings. At age 16, she dual-enrolled at the community college to earn her high school diploma. One year later, she participated in a college-level faculty-led summer program to the UK and France for five weeks. Sakura was the first member in her family to travel outside the United States and the first in her immediate family to obtain a passport. Her education abroad program was based in Nottingham, England, with weekend travels to Scotland and Paris. Sakura enrolled in two classes during her summer abroad: pop culture and intercultural communications.

Sakura's classes in Nottingham included lectures by professors from her community college on the cultural differences between British and American people. Never having left the west coast of the United States prior to studying abroad, Sakura was shaped by learning about cultural differences and about how Americans are perceived abroad. Assignments that required her to interview British locals reinforced her learning. One particular lecture presented people from the United States as stubborn and prone to ignore limitations, which instilled in Sakura a new sense of national pride and loyalty to her home country. She also experienced an impactful moment on top of the Eiffel Tower in Paris. While overseeing the city from its highest vantage point, Sakura was struck by feelings of bravery, adventure, independence, and a sense of accomplishment that were previously unknown to her.

Story Fragment: Sunshine

Sunshine studied abroad twice during her time at the community college. Her first education abroad program took place in 2018 in Ghana and lasted for two weeks. In 2019, she spent an additional two weeks abroad, this time studying in Belize. Sunshine is a first generation, Pell-eligible student who had not traveled internationally prior to her faculty-led program in

Accra, Ghana. At 28 years old, she was a nontraditional adult student during her education abroad programs.

Sunshine chose to study in Ghana to learn more about African culture and history, and how it relates to African American culture. Her program in Ghana provided her with exposure to tribal culture, traditional herbal medicine, and indigenous cooking methods. One of the most memorable experiences for her was visiting the dungeons in Cape Coast where her ancestors were held against their will in the dark. The class visited an area where the Ghanaians had their last bath before being forced into the dungeons. The experience was very moving to Sunshine, and she felt gratitude for what her ancestors endured for her to have the life she has today.

Sunshine felt at home in Ghana, and even in Belize. She noticed that people looked like her in Accra, and she felt comfortable wearing her hair natural or wrapped without worrying about being looked at or judged. She felt a connection with the country that allowed her to see herself as a woman of color in a new way. She did not want to leave Ghana to return home to the United States. She earned an associate's in African American studies from her community college and is currently pursuing a bachelor's in social work at an HBCU. She has stayed in touch with several Ghanaians and has organized donations for some of the people she met abroad.

Story Fragment: Jaquelin

Jaquelin was a psychology major at her community college. She is a first-generation college student with Mexican roots. She studied abroad in Sicily and the Bay of Naples, Italy, during summer 2019. Jaquelin received a Pell grant at her community college but self-financed her education abroad program with funds she had saved up from working since high school. She had previously spent three weeks in Mexico, but her education abroad program was her first

foray into Western Europe. Jaquelin's family and cultural upbringing did not encourage independent travel, and her journey to Italy was with strangers.

In Italy, Jaquelin was able to draw connections to her Mexican culture heritage when she discovered that Italians, too, took siestas and hung their laundry on clotheslines. She felt at once at home and not; some of the Italian culture was familiar to her, but she was unable to communicate with most of the Italians due to the language barrier. She recalls interactions with Italians and other tourists who were curious about her because she did not look Italian but who lost interest in talking to her once they learned she was from the United States. Jaquelin quickly used this to her advantage by introducing herself as Mexican and leveraging her cultural identity in a new way.

Jaquelin had a range of meaningful moments on her education abroad program. One includes climbing a volcano in the Aeolian Islands with her class and having a meal while watching the sunset over the ocean. Another involved her with a group of her peers walking to dinner and encountering a group of children playing soccer. One of the teenagers attempted to strike up a conversation with her and placed his arm around her before running back to play. Jaquelin carries her experiences in Italy with her daily. They have become part of her identity, making her a more interesting and well-rounded individual. She has maintained connections with some of the other program participants now that she is at university and she is currently sharing a room with one of them. Jaquelin plans to apply her enhanced cultural sensitivity in her desired profession as a therapist.

Story Fragment: Margaret

Margaret grew up living in Section 8 housing and in shelters. She grew up knowing poverty. After several years in the workforce, she returned to the community college to finish her

education. Influenced by the events in Ferguson, Missouri, in 2014, she decided to begin with an associate degree in hopes to continue to a juris doctorate to one day practice civil rights law.

Margaret is the historian for her family. She has collected oral history, photographs, and documents detailing her Mexican family heritage, but aside from a visit to a border town she had never spent significant amounts of time in Mexico.

In summer 2017, a then 29-year-old Margaret joined nine other students and two faculty members on a three-week sojourn to Mexico City and Guanajuato, Mexico, where she completed an introduction to Chicano studies course and a Mexican history course. In Guanajuato, Margaret lived with a host family. Through this exposure to a Mexican family, Margaret learned that many of her host family's customs and traits were reflected in the traditions of her family in the United States, which reaffirmed her connection to her Mexican identity. On a trip to Coyoacán, Margaret was approached by two mariachi men in a restaurant. One of the men inquired where she was from and when she responded with her home US state, he replied that he could tell she was from Mexico, saying "*Tu sangre llama*" (Your blood speaks.). This startling encounter opened Margaret's eyes to fact that her ancestors' culture influences and shapes her personal sense of identity. Studying abroad in Mexico enhanced Margaret's understanding of her heritage, the beauty of Mexico, and the richness and diversity of its culture. She was reminded of Mexico's colonial past during the program's visit to San Miguel de Allende, a colonial-era city near Guanajuato. The over-the-top use of traditional Mexican attire and commercialization of the city fostered in her a desire to maintain a connection with the authentic Mexico and its rich symbolism, art, and indigenous spirit.

Upon earning her associate degree in sociology, Margaret transferred to university on a full scholarship. Studying abroad in Mexico caused her to change her major and pursue a

bachelor in Chicanx and Latinx studies with a focus on US and Mexican regional immigration policy. She is currently in the process of applying to law schools. In fall 2020, Margaret began plans to memorialize her family heritage and her experience studying in Mexico with a permanent tattoo. She recommends studying abroad and community college education with their potentially life-changing impact to anyone who will listen.

Story Fragment: Ricardo

Ricardo's maternal ancestors stem from the Pipil people in El Salvador and his paternal ancestors hail from Nicaragua. Prior to studying abroad, Ricardo had only traveled internationally to Cabo San Lucas, Mexico. In 2013, Ricardo tweeted "My dad said he would be happy if I got a college degree why did he pick something impossible for me?" Upon graduating from high school, Ricardo majored in liberal arts and humanities at his community college. He was 20 years old when he studied abroad for three months in Barcelona, Spain, during Fall 2017.

Ricardo's semester in Spain was arranged by an education abroad program provider that managed the students' apartments and classroom facilities, and that organized optional excursions for the participants. On one such excursion, a four-day trip to Morocco, Ricardo experienced wrestling with the far ends of the spectrum of his identity as a Latino American. In Chefchaouen, Morocco's blue city, he seemed to blend in with the Moroccan locals. He was confused as well as proud when the locals spoke to him in Arabic and when tourists asked him whether he was from Morocco. At the same time, he had concerns that he was colonizing the people there. In one incident, he asked a local boy if he could take a picture of him and his family. The boy said no, and Ricardo was struck by the sadness in his eyes. Was his presence taking away from the family's home? Was he taking advantage of his status as an American tourist?

Studying abroad in Spain, Ricardo connected with other community college students. He developed a level of independence and self-confidence that helped him emerge from his shy nature. He no longer felt like he was dumb and started believing he could succeed in life. Upon graduating with his associate degree, Ricardo transferred to university to pursue a degree in Cinema. As was his father's hope, Ricardo earned a bachelor's degree. He currently works as a production assistant in the film industry where he uses the social capital and the confidence he gained in Spain to network and connect with new people.

Analysis of Story Fragments

Sakura's and Jaquelin's experiences in Western Europe during developmentally sensitive years helped shape their sense of personal identity. They now use words such as brave, confident, and independent to describe themselves. Sakura says participation in the program impacted her self-image. She explains, "my whole sense of identity is altered, and it grew me up. [...] It was a fast track to maturing almost." She continues, saying,

I didn't know a lot about myself. So, I learned that I'm different from the people - we don't talk the same. We have different temperaments. I learned, I'm not scared to be independent. I learned I'm actually a super adventurous person. I learned that I'm not prejudiced.

Studying abroad was a transforming experience in Sakura's life. It also helped her develop a sense of identity outside of her immediate family.

Jaquelin's narrative mirrors Sakura's experience. She shared, "but going over there, I realized I was very strong and very independent more than I even thought I was [...] I definitely learned that I was braver than I thought." Studying abroad "added a whole different dimension to my persona." Through studying in Italy, Jaquelin recognized that she did not identify as fearful

and timid of the unknown as she had been raised to believe. She was fully capable to travel without familiar support.

Margaret and Jaquelin were able to leverage their Mexican identity in new ways during their studies abroad. Margaret explains that studying abroad allowed her to see her heritage with fresh eyes, saying, “it really helped me connect to my culture and validate my identity in ways that I didn't know needed to be validated.” She adds, “I think it helped solidify my identity that I was disconnected from.” Jaquelin also felt that she was made more aware of her Mexican roots and her heritage and her race in general. She shared,

I'm not fully Mexican. When I go to Mexico, people know I'm not from Mexico. And then when I'm in the US, I'm not American. [...] So you're just a mix of different things and you don't really have a certain place and I can take that back to Italy. My Mexican culture and being Mexican actually helped me over there because people liked that. [...] I felt close to the Italian people and how they lived because of my Mexican culture.

Jaquelin was able to utilize her experiences as a Mexican American in an advantageous manner abroad. Ricardo, on the other hand, wrestled with his identity as a Latino American in various ways during his program in Spain. His experiences in Morocco allowed him to see himself as both a local and an outsider. Similarly, when in Spain, he felt included when a group of 9-to-10-year-olds in Gerona invited him to join their soccer game, but he felt excluded in Barcelona due to his American-style clothing and his lack of knowledge surrounding the protests for Catalan independence.

Sunshine and Margaret identified with their host culture to a degree that made it feel home-like. Sunshine emphasized that the people in Ghana and Belize looked like her and she felt

like she belonged there. In fact, she explains that she felt more at home there than in the United States, saying,

I feel like I can just wear my hair in different ways or wrap my head and I don't have to explain or have to go through all these extra things just because I am who I am. Here it's a different story. But there, oh, you can wrap. You can leave it out. You can do your hair. You can be different and it's not a problem

Sunshine adds that she felt a spiritual, mental, and emotional connection to Ghana and Belize. Margaret expressed that she felt a deep connection to Mexico as well. Her interaction with the mariachi man in Coyoacán reemphasized her Mexican roots. She explains,

We're from so many different places in our lineage and generations extend farther than we can even comprehend. So sometimes we don't really know where we're from. And that really was an eye-opening experience to me that my blood does run through you know different parts of the world, and not just where I think I'm from.

Studying abroad, whether in the country of your ancestry like for Margaret and Sunshine, or in locations in Western Europe as it was for Sakura, Ricardo, and Jaquelin, can have a profound transformational effect or a new connection on a participant's sense of personal identity, as well as a new sense of home or where home is located.

Choice to Live Abroad

During their studies abroad, participants did not merely learn about themselves and their innate abilities, but they also developed new skills during their EA programs. The story fragments that follow detail the experiences of three community college alumni who participated in summer abroad programs between the ages of 18 and 21. These participants developed cross-cultural adaptation skills, such as navigating a new city, effectively using public transportation,

and intercultural communication. Two of the three studied abroad for a second time during their university studies. Perhaps as a result of skills gained in their community college EA program, the participants developed the desire to spend prolonged terms abroad: two participants are currently in graduate school abroad and the third will begin a two-year long work program abroad in spring 2021. In the case of these participants, the choice to live abroad reflects a combination of the ability and desire to do so.

Story Fragment: Lucia

In 2006, Lucia fell in love with Germany while watching television coverage of the soccer world cup. She dreamed of visiting the country one day. After graduating from high school in her small town, Lucia began her higher education at the community college studying history. As a student who was a Pell recipient, she had to work full-time while she was enrolled in a full-time course load. In summer 2016, Lucia participated in a five-week long faculty-led program to Oxford and London, UK, where she chose to live in a homestay. During the program, she completed a literature and a creative writing course.

While living in Oxford for four weeks, the two women who were Lucia's homestay treated her with kindness and in a supportive manner. They referred to her as "daughter." Lucia was able to join them on outings, from visits to the grocery store to visiting family members in Oxfordshire. The women got Lucia a special treat for her birthday breakfast and shared their personal views on Brexit with her. Living in Oxford allowed Lucia the opportunity to act freely, outside of the strained relationship with and control of her mother. Throughout her summer abroad, Lucia honed personal traits such as confidence and self-motivation and she recognized that she was able to relocate and try new things in a new country and thrive.

Lucia went on to earn a bachelor's in history with an emphasis in Holocaust and genocide studies from a US university. In Fall 2020, she moved to Germany, to begin graduate work in European studies. She is still connected to the women in her Oxford homestay and plans to visit them once the coronavirus pandemic has receded. She is applying for internships with the European Parliament to apply knowledge she acquired during her graduate studies and is making plans to remain in Europe permanently.

Story Fragment: Griffin

Griffin was a high-achieving communication studies major at his community college. He grew up with a European parent and as a young person had already had the opportunity to travel to Western Europe. In summer 2015 at 18 years old, Griffin participated in a five-week long education abroad program in Rome, Italy, through his community college. During the program, he lived in an apartment with his peers and studied Christian art history and anthropology. The program was his first international travel without family members.

While exploring Rome, Griffin experienced the uncomfortable feelings of being an outsider in a new place. Even though he most often navigated the city in the comfort of being with his peers, he faced new values and even anti-American sentiments in a new country. He had not expected these challenging circumstances. One day, while visiting churches in Rome on his own for a class assignment, Griffin stopped in a church that was different from those with the ornate Baroque splendor common in the city. As the sunlight filtered in through the stained-glass windows illuminating the church's wooden paneling, Griffin was filled with feelings of happiness, pride, and humility. In this moment, he discovered that he had the ability to navigate new surroundings on his own and to find happiness in a new country.

Upon earning his associates from the community college, Griffin transferred to university where he earned a bachelor's in history and studied abroad for a second summer, this time in Berlin, Germany. Griffin is currently enrolled in a graduate program in global history at a prestigious university in the same city. Although Griffin does not plan to live abroad indefinitely, he feels that studying abroad through his community college gave him the skills to independently live and study in another country. He has been able to apply skills such as forming a friend group and navigating a foreign city during his life in Berlin.

Story Fragment: Grace

Grace was a biology major at the community college. She had traveled internationally to the Bahamas and Mexico prior to studying abroad, but her education abroad program to the UK and France was her first sojourn to Western Europe. In summer 2016, a 19-year-old Grace joined 19 other students to study abroad for five weeks. Grace completed two humanities courses during her program in Europe, which applied toward her associate degree. The program was housed in a residence hall in Nottingham, England.

Throughout her travels in Europe, Grace learned how to be more independent and self-sufficient without allowing anxiety to take over. In Nottingham, she went to restaurants alone for dinner to be able to try new foods when her peers preferred pizza. She approached strangers in public transportation for class assignments. She dealt with living as a person of color in a homogenously white city and experienced the fetishization of her skin color. A few days after the program's return from France to Nottingham, Grace learned of a terrorist attack in Paris. Someone drove a car into a group of pedestrians. Yet her travels with the community college education abroad program instilled a confidence in Grace that she need not live in fear of traveling because if she did, it would prevent her from accomplishing her goals.

Grace went on to earn her bachelor's degree in global health at a university in her home state. She studied abroad a second time at university, this time in Peru. She graduated in Spring 2020 and began working full-time in a group home. In November of the same year, Grace was accepted to a work program in South Korea as an English language teacher. She moved to Seoul for two years in February 2021. Her summer program in the UK and France allowed Grace to develop a variety of cross-cultural adaptation skills and she is ready to apply these skills in a work-context in Asia.

Analysis of Story Fragments

Lucia, Griffin, and Grace say that studying abroad at the community college helped cultivate skills that prepared them for living or working abroad for a longer duration than that of their three summer programs. Lucia and Griffin chose to pursue graduate studies in Germany. Grace is moving to South Korea in February 2021. Although their first EA programs were short-term programs, all three alumni developed cross-cultural adaptation skills that would come to serve them well in their life abroad after the community college. Their narratives reflect effective navigation of their surroundings, either by public transportation or on foot. Griffin and Grace were able to successfully communicate across language barriers. Lucia learned to live with a local family by forming a close relationship with her homestay.

Both Griffin and Grace described feeling like outsiders in their host country of their EA program. Experiencing anti-American sentiments or standing out as a person of color gave both participants an opportunity to learn “to be comfortable with the uncomfortable” (Griffin). Grace explains that she gained a new outlook on the world, saying,

You get a new perspective. You get more understanding about the world around you.

More cultural awareness. You are put in a situation where it's not your norm. You're a

foreigner. You're an immigrant in a different country. So, you also have that new perspective.

Despite the challenges Grace experienced abroad, she added “it made me want to travel even more. Yeah, it changed my life for the better. Honestly, if I could, [...] I would go even longer.”

Griffin had a similar experience. He shared,

After having that experience of being in a new space in a new culture, I didn't realize that I was a little bit more comfortable to go alone when I went back to Germany and studied abroad in Berlin [...]. And then I felt a lot more comfortable coming back here and actually living here.

For all three participants, studying abroad paved the way for eventually living abroad long-term.

Although Lucia had hoped to live in Germany since her childhood, studying in the UK demonstrated that she had the ability to successfully live abroad. She explained,

At first, I was kind of scared of moving across country and how I'd deal with it. And seeing how much I personally grew in those five weeks in England [...] and just realizing [...] how much happier I felt about myself. I knew that if I went to another country again to do my studies or move, I could continue to grow.

Griffin expressed a similar belief. He shared, “studying abroad has brought me to where I am right now.”

These participants' experiences are an example of how studying abroad as a community college student can have a profound and lasting impact on a student's long-term trajectory. To be sure, studying abroad does not necessarily cause a student's desire to live abroad post-graduation. However, the cross-cultural adaptation skills and cultural knowledge gained during the program may well prepare participants for future studies or work abroad.

Contributions to Social Capital

The concept of social capital encompasses the effective skills and benevolent attitudes of social groups. To have social capital is to possess a valuable tool to be effective in life and at work (Hanifan, 1916; Keeley, 2007). The participants in this study discuss a complex variety of behavioral and affective traits that can contribute toward social capital, such as empathy, compassion, non-judgment, and open-mindedness. The following story fragments reflect the experiences of three young men who studied abroad between the ages of 19 and 24. All three of the participants had previously traveled abroad. Two studied computer or technology-related majors and the third majored in a social science. Two of the participants studied abroad for one semester and the other participated in a short-term program of four weeks.

Story Fragment: Patrick

Patrick took history courses at his community college. He had grown up in an upper middle-class family and his only international travel prior to studying abroad was to a resort in Mexico. Patrick was an admitted introvert and was challenged by connecting to peers on his community college commuter campus. He selected the homestay option during his semester-long education abroad program in London, UK, where he spent the fall 2016 semester.

During his semester abroad, Patrick was one of approximately 140 students from four community colleges. He took courses by professors from those four institutions and an additional course from a British professor. Patrick had a supportive and friendly host family who was both helpful and at the same time hands-off with him. He participated in almost all excursions that were arranged by his program provider and enjoyed independent travels as well. Along with a friend he met on the program, Patrick traveled to Portsmouth to visit the HMS Victory, a warship

from Napoleonic times. Throughout his semester in London, he also witnessed a fair amount of interpersonal drama among the other students in the program.

Despite being introverted, Patrick developed a friend group that he is still connected to four years post-program. The group gets together a few times each year and has an active group text. He also learned to be more outgoing and talkative due to his program, particularly with new acquaintances. Further, he grew in his open-mindedness to cultural differences and learned to consider both sides of a story. Patrick graduated with a bachelor's in history and currently works in the hospitality industry.

Story Fragment: Daniel

Daniel was an undecided student in the transfer program at his community college. In 2015, he had the opportunity to travel to France and the UK for two weeks with his family. Two years later, the family had a difficult year with wildfires and his grandmother's house burning down. These events resulted in a challenging time for his family. In an effort to get a break from all the nerves, Daniel talked to his family about studying abroad and they were supportive. Daniel participated in a three-month long program in London, UK, in Fall 2018.

During his semester in London, Daniel roomed in an apartment with two of the other students on his program, one of whom was a previous classmate of his. Daniel learned to explore the metropolis using public transportation; he found London easy to get around in. He traveled with his roommates to the UK coast, Germany, and generally explored his host city, though he did not experience much meaningful interactions with Londoners. He also stepped out of his comfort zone and connected with many of the other students on the program, despite the challenge this presented to an introverted student such as Daniel. Program participants were more diverse than the student body on his community college campus or his hometown.

After four years at the community college, Daniel transferred to university. He has chosen a major but is as of yet unsure if it is the right fit for him. He is considering the possibility of studying abroad a second time during his undergraduate career.

Story Fragment: Luis

Luis is a Mexican immigrant who was born in the United States and moved to the country with his family at age eight. Outside of travel to Mexico, Luis had not previously traveled abroad. At the community college, Luis studied computer information systems while working various jobs. He was a first-generation college student and received a Pell Grant during his time in higher education. At age 24, Luis participated in a month-long business education abroad program in Liège, Belgium. The program also conducted excursions to four neighboring countries.

During his program in Liège, Luis studied international business and intercultural communications, while living in an apartment with other program participants. With class time and scheduled excursions there was limited time for independent explorations, but Luis did manage to befriend a Belgian local who served as a peer mentor for his program. He fondly recalls exploring Paris with others on the program, meeting a store clerk who had a wall calendar from his US state, and getting lost on the metro during an unscheduled afternoon.

After graduating from his community college, Luis transferred to university and earned a bachelor's in computer information systems. He is currently gainfully employed as a project manager. Luis still thinks of Liège as another home. He has continued to travel internationally, including a vacation in Spain and a work trip to Belarus, and he has plans to continue traveling. He has been able to utilize the social capital he gained in Belgium in the workplace when

interacting with international coworkers. He is still connected with the Belgian student he met abroad on social media.

Analysis of Story Fragments

The preceding story fragments provide examples of how studying abroad can enhance participants' social capital, both in direct and indirect ways. Directly, all of the men in these examples reported having made friends abroad who they were still in contact with to some degree. Daniel shared, "I'm still friends with all the ones that I made friends with there. Luckily, a lot of them were actually from my college, so they live nearby, and we still hang out a lot." The same is true in Patrick's case, even four years after studying abroad. He explains,

I made a group of friends in London and we still talk and we still hang out to this day, even though it's been four years. [...] Last time we hang out was probably about a maybe a month ago. [...] We still talk to each other all the time. We have a group chat that's still very active. It's been four years, but we're still pretty good friends.

Daniel also described having made connections and experiencing close friendships with peers he met abroad. These friendships or connections are the bedrock of social capital and may help the participants lead more meaningful lives.

Another direct benefit to participants' social capital is having common topics to talk about that other people can relate to. In that way, studying abroad can be a conversation starter that connects strangers, whether they meet under personal, academic, or professional circumstances. In the case of Luis, this has happened several times since his program abroad five years prior. He shared,

I've had some conversations with some people that I would have probably never had.

They're like, oh, I was in Paris, or I was in the Netherlands. Or one of my coworkers, he

was like, Oh, I went to Belgium and I did this and then I'm like, oh, I also did the same.

So, if anything, it's a conversation starter.

Luis also reflected upon studying abroad providing him with the ability to be considerate with those around him. He has encountered several occasions in his workplace in which this aspect of his social capital has served him well, saying, “just taking consideration when dealing with people. Just keeping in mind that not everybody interprets what you say the same way and just having that present might tell you how to start the conversation.” Similarly, Patrick described open-mindedness to cultural differences as a major take-away from his program in London, stating, “I think one of the main things was to just be open to the differences of people and the differences of culture was probably the biggest thing.”

Indirectly, study participants also shared that they learned to step out of their introverted comfort zones to connect with others. Patrick describes this as “learning how to be more outgoing, more social.” He elaborated, saying, “Being more talkative and outgoing, especially with strangers. I'd say that's probably the biggest thing [...]. Being more outgoing, being willing to talk to people about anything, especially things that I'm not super super, super comfortable talking about.” Daniel's semester abroad had a similar impact on him as Patrick's did,

I guess it has kind of gotten me to open up a little bit more to people that I don't necessarily know. Once I got back from there I was, even for classes I'd be a little bit more open to talking to people, more getting to know other people that I don't know, instead of just doing my own thing [...] Just putting myself out there a little bit more.

These three participants described skills and attitudes that may have a positive effect on their interactions within social groups. As examples of a direct impact on their social capital, they reported making lasting connections and friendships abroad. They also showed that they

developed skills and attitudes such as open-mindedness and consideration. Finally, studying abroad had an indirect impact on participants' social capital by encouraging them to step out of their introverted comfort zones and to be open to talking more freely to those around them. All of these skills may have great benefit on the participants' personal, academic, and professional lives after studying abroad.

Skills Related to Transition to Adulthood or University-Life

For the majority of participants in this study, EA was their first travel experience without family members. Similarly, most of the participants had not lived independently; their community colleges did not offer on-campus residence halls and the students lived with their families and commuted to campus. This was the case for Max and Carlos. These men participated in summer abroad programs at age 22 and 19, respectively. Studying abroad, whether living in a residence hall in the Nottingham (Max) or living with a host family in San José (Carlos), allowed these participants to develop behavioral outcomes that would help transition them to independent adulthood.

Story Fragment: Max

Max studied information technology at the community college, where he was a high-achieving student. He decided to participate in two education abroad programs during the summer 2019 term. His first program in May of that year was a one-week program in Mexico where he studied marine biology as an elective. Max' second term abroad took place in Nottingham, UK, with overnight stays in Scotland and France.

His education abroad programs were Max' first travels without his family. He was able to explore memorable places, such as the hike to Arthur's Seat in Edinburgh. While abroad, Max also encountered challenges common for first-time travelers. He had to navigate one of the

world's busiest airports in London. In Nottingham, he destroyed the battery in his computer due to voltage differences. Out of necessity, he learned to problem solve to achieve his goals. In the case of his laptop, he self-advocated to be able to use the computers at the local library.

Max returned from studying abroad with the confidence that he could live independently from his parents. While abroad, he learned to take care of his own meals and basic household chores. He was also able to practice communicating with people whose first language is not English and learned to adjust his speech patterns for comprehensibility, a skill he plans to apply in the workplace.

Story Fragment: Carlos

Carlos was in the transfer program at his community college. Had he earned his associate degree, he would have graduated summa cum laude. Carlos had a month-long travel experience in Western Europe prior to studying abroad. He sought an immersive cultural experience and restructured his course schedule to be able to participate in five-week long summer program in Costa Rica. Along with improvements in his Spanish language skills, Carlos was hopeful he would gain a deeper understanding of the Costa Rican culture.

While in Costa Rica, Carlos and two other students lived with a host mom who was an older widow with three grown children. The woman provided the students with meals, but the daily chores of washing the dishes and keeping their rooms neat were their responsibility. This was Carlos' first opportunity to wash dishes by hand. Through the lectures and excursions on his program, Carlos developed a sense of empathy toward others. He also saw himself as an American through the lens of a Costa Rican. One example of this was a moment when Carlos struggled to determine the correct bus fare while others stood in line waiting to board. At the same time, his friends on the program were acting boisterously, and it gave Carlos pause.

Immediately upon return from his summer in Costa Rica, Carlos transferred to university to earn a bachelor's in computer engineering. After graduation, he found full-time employment as a software engineer. His employer has a subsidiary in Costa Rica and on occasion, Carlos has the opportunity to collaborate with his Costa Rican coworkers. For several years, he was in a dating relationship with a peer he met on the education abroad program. Further, he has maintained contact with his host mom in San José. Carlos has been accepted to a Spanish language program in Costa Rica in summer 2021 and plans to reconnect with her during his return to the country.

Analysis of Story Fragments

During their summer programs abroad, Carlos and Max gained valuable skills that they would need as independent adults. Both participants transferred to university after their enrollment at the community college. Carlos explains that had he not studied abroad, in some ways he would have felt like a first-year student again, saying,

at community college, you don't really meet a lot of people that you would go and hang out and get a drink with [...] You just go to class... But with study abroad, you get a little small piece of that college experience where you're around your peers and you're living together, see each other every day. Building bonds and going and doing things outside your comfort zone.

Carlos went on to explain that upon transferring to university he lived in an apartment with roommates for the first time. The skills he acquired in Costa Rica helped him be a better roommate. Max, too, explained that through studying abroad he learned to care for himself in regard to meals and household chores, saying “in the real world, I'm going to eventually one day

[...] leave my parents. Go out and live on my own. So, this study abroad sort of helped you prepare for that a little bit.” Carlos’ narrative reflects similar insights. He shared,

Having that experience already having lived with someone else was very helpful. You learn what it's like to have to be responsible for yourself. [Living with my parents] I honestly didn't really do any chores [...]. So, the first time I had done the dishes was in Costa Rica.

The story fragments of these two participants put into context how studying abroad with the community college can help prepare students live independent lives in adulthood. Not all those who study abroad return fluent in another language (although Carlos made strides in that regard), nor do they necessarily return with a newfound aspect to their personal identity or a revised worldview. However, in many cases, EA is the first time in community college students’ lives of living with peers outside of their family structure and fending for themselves with meals or transportation. Max and Carlos valued this aspect of their international experience.

Academic Connections and Desire for Continual Learning

In addition to life skills that may be useful in independent living after the community college, participants in this study also gained cognitive and affective outcomes that would apply to their academic trajectories. The four story fragments below detail the various shapes this academic inspiration can take. In the first fragment, Bastian’s story is an example of cultural knowledge applied in academic coursework. Hannah’s and Elena’s fragments portray how studying abroad can affectively lead to a student choosing a course of study. Finally, the fourth fragment, Julie’s story, shows that seeing academic courses come to life abroad can lead to the affective outcome of a desire for continual learning.

Story Fragment: Bastian

Bastian was a first-generation, Pell-eligible college student pursuing an associate in web and mobile design. In part due to his excellent academic achievements, Bastian's application to participate in a sponsored program to Lanzhou, China, was accepted. He studied abroad for two weeks in summer 2019. Prior to his education abroad program, Bastian had traveled to the UK and Canada. At age 34, he made his way to Asia for the first time.

While abroad, Bastian experienced what it was like to be a person of color in China. He felt celebrity-like while playing basketball in Lanzhou, and he encountered vulgar racial stereotypes atop the Great Wall. As part of the program, Bastian got to see an actress in the Forbidden City being outfitted in costume and styled fitting the emperor's consort. One night, he was even able to perform a stand-up routine in an Irish bar in Beijing that was popular with expatriates. Throughout his program in China, Bastian acquired cultural knowledge that he would be able to apply in his remaining coursework.

Bastian was inspired by visiting the Forbidden City in Beijing, exploring a Chinese mall, and taking a calligraphy lesson during his program. Upon return to the community college, Bastian used this inspiration to design an advertisement clip for the 2022 Beijing Olympic Games in one of his design classes. The clip is now viewable on his e-portfolio. He is an advocate for young people of color to study abroad and shares his experiences in hopes to encourage others to take advantage of international opportunities at the community college.

Story Fragment: Elena

Elena enrolled in a community college out of state. She moved from Kansas to the West Coast to earn an associate's in Spanish and transfer education. A high-achieving student at her community college, Elena participated in a semester-long education abroad program in

Barcelona, Spain, in fall 2019. At age 20, in her third year at the community college, she studied abroad with a good friend from home who was enrolled at university. The two rented a house while abroad. Elena had previously traveled to Anguilla.

Elena's semester abroad was an additional term in her higher education. She enrolled in the available courses but did not need them for credits toward her associate degrees. During her semester in Spain, Elena was able to make two friends with whom she has stayed in touch beyond the community college. Elena and her peers embraced the Spanish unhurried lifestyle and enjoyed leisurely lunches in cafés. She also traveled independently to Greece and with a program-sponsored trip to Morocco. Throughout her experiences abroad, Elena was inspired to pursue a degree and career in design.

Upon completing her degrees at the community college, Elena transferred to university to pursue a bachelor's in industrial design. She is still enrolled. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Elena was forced to move home to Kansas where she feels very much out of place after her experience in Spain. Her perspectives on domestic politics, international events, as well as diversity are different from those of her coworkers in her Kansas town. She hopes to conduct more international travel once it is again safe to do so.

Story Fragment: Helga

Helga had personal experience with grandparents who had immigrated from Germany. Prior to her education abroad program, she had also had the chance to travel to four different countries on brief trips. She was a history and philosophy major at the community college. In summer 2018, at the end of her first year at the college and at age 18, Helga studied abroad in Athlone, Ireland, on a five-week long faculty-led summer program. She enrolled in the courses Irish storytelling and folklore as well as Irish religion and history.

While in Ireland, Helga lived in an apartment building with 26 other program participants. She learned about local folklore such as faerie trees and was able to practice storytelling in a local pub. Throughout her program, Helga developed an awareness for cultural differences and how she may come across as the stereotypical loud American. She also had the opportunity to explore the Irish landscape, including on a trip to English Moher and during a river cruise on a Viking-type boat. As the boat floated down the river, Helga surveyed the lush fields of the surrounding land with its swans and cattle and marveled at the different landscapes of the country.

The summer following her education abroad program in Ireland, Helga lived abroad in England for two months, renting an apartment. Both experiences shaped her desire to travel to every continent and to work in a field that will permit her to continue to travel. Once she transferred to university, Helga changed her major to geophysics. She is interested in pursuing a career in environmental work, particularly environmental sustainability. In part to due to her community college education abroad program, Helga is now less apprehensive about trying new things without a set schedule.

Story Fragment: Julie

Julie had life experience before she studied abroad. She had six grown children and had hosted several exchange students over the years. Julie had worked in the healthcare field for many years and decided to pursue higher education later in life. She started at the community college and graduated from university in 2010 with a bachelor in English literature and a minor in history. At age 64, a few years after retiring, she was the second-eldest community member who participated in the five-week program to Oxford and London, UK, in summer 2016.

The literature program abroad consisted of two classes, introduction to the novel and beginning writing. Julie read Jane Austen, Virginia Woolf, and Charles Dickens during her time in England and had the opportunity to explore the locales where the authors lived and spent their time writing. Moments such as seeing Jane Austen's desk with her glasses or seeing the graveyard in the opening scene of *Great Expectations* were emotional for Julie. She toured the homes of other literary giants, such as Shakespeare, but also found time to try the Eaton mess, a traditional strawberry dessert, and eavesdrop on a group of British knitters in a pub discussing the merits of Brexit.

Upon returning from studying abroad, Julie has kept reading, including a series of books set in England. She places great value on staying engaged academically by taking continuing education classes at her local community college. She has considered studying abroad again with another community college group.

Analysis of Story Fragments

Some of the participants in this study gained lasting cognitive outcomes due to studying abroad on short-term, faculty-led programs. In the months and years after their programs, some participants were able to apply these cognitive outcomes, such as cultural knowledge, directly to their academic studies, as evidenced by Bastian's experience. Bastian explained, "just see what you can grasp in that very short time and make a note of it. And then if you can apply it to your studies, bring it back." In his experience, he was able to take hands-on learning such as calligraphy and directly apply it in a class project at his US community college. He went on to say,

while we were there in Beijing, we saw the stadium that they were constructing for the 2022 Winter Olympics. I remember when I came back, in my class, we had to design a

logo for a sports event. [...] I got inspired from [things I learned on my study abroad program]. And so, when I came back, I made that for class and just added it to my portfolio.

In the case of participants like Helga, participants transformed the knowledge gained abroad into the affective outcome of pursuing a different major. Helga learned about the geology of Ireland through the program's excursions, and that knowledge stoked an interest in a different field of study. She shared, "I got really interested in geology and stuff like that. And the aspects of land and I got really interested in environmental work, like environmental engineering and environmental sustainability."

Changing her major was also inspired by studying abroad more generally. Having successfully lived abroad for one month had the affective outcome of a desire to work abroad in the future. Helga explained that studying abroad

made me want to change my major because I wanted to have a major that would allow me the opportunity to be able to travel and to be able to possibly relocate permanently for work if I wanted to [...] By going to geophysics I could go to Asia or I could go to Africa. And I think it having had the study abroad [I have the] longing to be able to travel and go out and see all the aspects of the world.

Studying abroad had a similar impact on Elena's academic goals. She felt inspired by the art and architecture she witnessed abroad to pursue a degree and a career in the design field. She shared,

Being there really solidified that I did want to go into a design career and that's okay.

That's what I wanted to do. And then I also think that all the traveling was just so influential in seeing all the different things and all the different architecture and the art

and the colors and the fashion, all the people. I think that really influences you as a designer also.

Finally, for some participants, the cognitive outcomes obtained abroad led to the affective desire of continual academic engagement and continual learning. This was particularly evident in Julie's narrative. She explains that learning about literature in the place where it was written was an emotional experience for her, saying,

I get emotional. Yeah, I get this chill through my spine and then I get this excitement [...] Things all are connected and so having read this book, years and years ago, then going there and seeing it makes it real. And going to Jane Austen's and seeing her stuff [...] it made me want to cry.

These emotional experiences have made Julie want to continue to learn. She shared, "I think it's so wonderful. And it makes me want to just learn as much as I can. I don't want to ever not be interested. [...] I want to stay engaged." Julie has continued to read voraciously and has continued to take classes at her local community college. Further, she shared that having studied abroad "keeps me wanting to go. I would love to do another study abroad program."

Professional Connections and Work Skills

Studying abroad can also provide participants with the professional connections they need to be successful in the workplace. These connections are cognitive outcomes, such as technical knowledge, skill-based outcomes such as interpersonal communication, and affective outcomes, like the desire to pursue a new career path. Technical knowledge, as reflected in the following study fragments, consists of knowledge of fabrics and designs as in the case of Micha or field-specific knowledge, such as wildlife behavioral characteristics as in the case of Leandra. Professional connections can also include the interpersonal skill to relate to people from diverse

backgrounds, as shown in Eva's story. In all three cases, studying abroad left the participants with the desire to pursue a new or more nuanced career path. The women in these story fragments participated in short-term, faculty-led programs and each of them returned with practical knowledge, skills, and attitude that they can apply in the job world.

Story Fragment: Micha

Micha grew up in a town with a population of 300. She was one of five students in her elementary school cohort. Micha studied abroad twice with her community college. In 2018, she participated in a summer program to Ireland and in 2019, she studied abroad in a summer program to the UK and France. Both programs were a month in length. Prior to studying abroad, Micha had never traveled outside the United States and she obtained her first passport for her first education abroad program. She was a Pell-eligible student and worked and applied for scholarships to be able to finance her education abroad programs.

While abroad, Micha lived in apartment-style accommodations in Ireland and in a homestay in England. At 25, she was one of the older participants on both her programs and embodied the role of "den mother" on her Ireland program. She experienced the edges of her comfort zone when her patience was tested by other students' behaviors and by not having her usual routine during her terms abroad. She preferred to stay in her apartment during her time in Ireland, foregoing the exploration of the nightlife in town. During her program in the UK and France, she left her accommodations more frequently, spending time with the faculty program leaders who provided her with information about local culture and history. Micha gained new perspectives and more judgment-free views of people from cultures different from her own.

Micha completed an associate in fashion design and merchandising along with a certificate in costume design after studying abroad. Once she completed her education, she went

into the workforce as an administrative assistant, working with community college students. Micha's goal is to pursue a career in the theatre industry, creating historically accurate costumes. She gained inspiration for costume-making while experiencing the rich culture and history of England and Ireland.

Story Fragment: Leandra

Leandra studied abroad twice while she was enrolled at the community college. In summer 2015, she first participated in a week-long marine biology program in Puerto Penasco, Mexico, and subsequently in a three-week long digital photography and environmental biology program in Namibia. She was 19 years old during her programs, which were her first international travels without family members.

Studying abroad helped Leandra grow up quickly, as she had daily responsibilities for the group, and was at times able to explore her surroundings without supervision of the program leaders. During her program in Africa, Leandra had the opportunity to visit the Himba tribe. She recounts her class gathering with members of the tribe around a fire in their camp, sharing water and stories through a translator. Witnessing Namibians walking long distances barefoot or with tire rubber on their feet for protection from the ground was a humbling experience for Leandra. As a sign of solidarity, she gave up wearing shoes for the remainder of her program. The program facilitated access to interact with big cats in the Cheetah Conservation Fund and to observe and photograph wildlife in its natural habitat.

After studying abroad, Leandra transferred to university and earned a Bachelor of Science in wildlife conservation. She is now employed as a zookeeper, where she draws on her wildlife observation skills on a daily basis. At her jobsite, Leandra met a coworker who had previously worked at the Cheetah Conservation Fund she visited in Namibia, giving her the

social capital to make meaningful connections in the workplace. As a result of her times abroad, Leandra is now more eco-conscious and minimalist.

Story Fragment: Eva

Eva was a first-generation adult student at the community college and used her Pell grant to study abroad in the UK and France. She had previously traveled to Mexico on multiple occasions, but her faculty-led summer program in 2016 marked her first sojourn to Western Europe. Prior to studying abroad, Eva completed a financial literacy course to help her budget for her international experience, and she applied for several scholarships. At the time, she was living with her parents and she was undecided about which major to pursue once she transferred to university.

During her program in Nottingham, Eva completed a psychology and a photography class. She was able to apply the course content throughout her program, by interacting with the locals for class assignments and by photographing her surroundings. While visiting the catacombs in Paris, she experienced a moment of certainty about the next steps on her life journey. The experience inspired her to continue to pursue higher education and to work at a college or university upon graduation. Then, on the train returning from Paris to Nottingham, Eva met two English women with whom she has maintained a friendship in the four years since her return stateside. The three struck up a conversation, chatted about each other's cultures as well as linguistic differences.

Eva went on to earn two associate degrees before transferring to university where she majored in family and human development. She currently works as a student services analyst at a community college, where she draws from her personal experiences as a community college and study abroad student. She also applies the knowledge of diverse perspectives she gained during

her experience abroad when interacting with students daily. Eva has recently been accepted to pursue graduate studies in higher education. Studying abroad has shown Eva that more is possible for her to achieve than she expected.

Analysis of Story Fragments

Through studying abroad, the women in these story fragments gained cognitive outcomes they could directly apply in the workplace. In Eva's and Micha's case, participants learn to relate to the students they now work with. Knowledge of different cultures and a patient attitude are helpful take-aways from their EA program. Eva shared,

I'm working with different types of people and I'm not just working with one community or one culture. I'm working with different cultures. So, I've learned to really connect and make sure I pay attention to that person individually [...] So making sure you pay attention to the other person's perspective before mine. Because I think we live in such an individualized world where we don't even consider other people anymore. And so, I learned to do that.

Micha's experience was similar. She felt herself being stretched in a new country with peers she did not know. She can now apply what she learned through those challenges in her current work. She explained,

I apply it almost every single day at work. Dealing with young students, you have to have a level of patience that you did not have before. [...] So those people skills that I learned studying abroad are applied almost every single day, as I remind myself to take a breath, to remember what it was like for me to be in a new environment and to help walk them through the process.

Micha also gained technical knowledge for a future career in historical costume design through her EA program in the UK. She spent her free time with the faculty program leaders learning additional details about the country's history and explored fabrics in a fabric store. She elaborated on finetuning the focus of her desired career, saying,

I have definitely shifted my focus as far as being just a general costume designer I really want to just find my niche in that historical aspect. I love finding out all the information about it and just diving into the research aspect of it that I didn't necessarily have before. [...] For me, going abroad and seeing the history brought to life has really deepened that desire for me really bringing that historical aspect back to the United States.

Leandra experienced a similar refinement of her career goals. Prior to studying abroad, Leandra had planned to work as a veterinary technician with domestic animals. After her program in Namibia, she shifted her interest to working with wildlife instead. Leandra applies the knowledge she gained through observing wildlife abroad at her current job as a zookeeper. She elaborated how studying abroad enhanced her knowledge, saying,

Just studying animals in their natural habitat. Knowing different behaviors and being able to read body language on animals would be really important and to be able to work in a group for long periods of time, living together. [...] Being able to read animals, and especially knowing their wild habitat helps me as well. Because then I'm able to enrich them better and give them a better life.

The above story fragments are examples of how studying abroad can provide participants with specific cognitive outcomes they can apply in the workplace. Participants such as Eva and Micha learned how to relate and work with students at their colleges. They had the opportunity to practice interacting with diverse others while abroad, as well as honing their skills of patience

and understanding. Other participants gained field-specific knowledge, such as wildlife behavioral characteristics in Leandra's case. Although their EA program duration was one month or less, these participants gained specific practical knowledge that they can apply in the workforce.

Other Outcomes

Not all who study abroad with the community college or with a university experience a life-changing transformation. Some participants, whether they are degree-seeking students or community members simply have a nice experience that leaves them with fond memories or the desire to travel to more. The following story fragments detail the experiences of three such participants. Cassie, a nursing major who studied abroad at age 20 and Mattie, a community member who studied abroad at age 76 indicated that their experience abroad resulted in good memories. The narratives of the two women reflect meaningful moments that took place abroad, but they do not recount a self-perceived impact in terms of skill development, or affective or cognitive changes. Similarly, Boo's education abroad program served as a mile-marker of his higher education. The key factor for him was to prove he could accomplish studying abroad, and he has since widely traveled internationally.

Story Fragment: Paige

Paige worked her way through college. She began her higher education at the community college studying nursing. Prior to studying abroad, she spent seven weeks in the Dominican Republic on a volunteer program during which she lived with a family. Paige studied abroad for the fall 2016 semester in London, UK. She lived in a homestay with a close friend from her community college. At the same time, her US boyfriend stayed in separate accommodations in London for the duration of her time abroad.

During her semester in London, Paige experienced the day-to-day life with the locals. She enjoyed reading the paper in the mornings, before walking to the nearest tube stop to commute to school. She was able to experience the British perspective of the 2016 US presidential election by watching the news and speaking to British people during her time abroad. Paige fondly recalls several moments of exploring London, including the childlike fun of cycling through Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park with her roommate and boyfriend, laughing on their bikes. Along with her boyfriend, she also had the opportunity to independently travel to other Western European countries during her stay. Toward the end of her time in London, Paige enjoyed seeing the city's Christmas decoration, something she had looked forward to.

Paige is in the process of completing her bachelor's in nursing. She enjoys reflecting on her time in London and looks forward to sharing stories of her experiences abroad with her grandchildren one day. Upon graduation, she is considering signing up to work as a travel nurse within the United States. She and her boyfriend have plans to return to London to visit her host family and to explore other destinations in Europe one day.

Story Fragment: Mattie

Mattie was a grandmother of eight when she chose to study abroad with the community college. Decades prior, she had earned an associate degree in science; she was a first-generation college student. Prior to studying abroad with the community college, she had spent three years living in Eritrea and had travelled on vacation to France, Canada, and Mexico. Years later, she enrolled in a British literature education abroad program as a community member. The college's five-week summer program in Oxford and London, UK, was perfectly suited for Mattie's love of books.

During her program in England, Mattie chose to rent a condominium with another program participant who was her friend. During the program, Mattie and the other students took two literature courses with their community college professor on Oxford University's campus. Mattie also visited sites of literary importance, both with her program and independently. She explored Jane Austen's home in Cotswold, seeing the pizza-sized desk upon which the author wrote most of her works. She was moved to tears in Shakespeare's home in Stratford-upon-Avon where she was permitted to touch one of the original fireplaces in the home. She became emotional a second time while exploring Poet's Corner in London's Westminster Abbey. Seeing literary works and their writers come to life left a profound impression in Mattie's mind. One day she decided to skip class and visit the British Library where she was able to view Beethoven's original sheet music and Florence Nightingale's handwriting. This was particularly meaningful to Mattie as she was a retired healthcare worker.

Upon her return from studying abroad, Mattie continued to read voraciously. She firmly believes in the importance of international travel for young people and has encouraged her grandchildren to study abroad. She values her experiences in Oxford and London and is glad to have had the exposure.

Story Fragment: Boo

Boo studied abroad at age 35. He had been a single father since age 17 and had experienced long-term homelessness. At the community college, Boo met a mentor who supported him through a mathematics course and who encouraged him to seek out information about studying abroad, a concept he had not previously heard of. Boo was a first-generation college student who had never left the United States. Boo learned of his community college's education abroad options, and he met the program's faculty leaders at an information session.

The faculty encouraged him not to worry about the program cost, but to pursue this opportunity. Boo used his Pell grant to study abroad and received a federal scholarship. In summer 2015, he participated in a month-long faculty-led education abroad program to the United Kingdom and France.

While sitting on a park bench in Paris, Boo met an elderly woman and the two had lunch together. The woman told Boo that he had the right idea traveling while he was still young. She was barely able to walk, and her tour group had stationed her on the bench while they explored the city. Until then, Boo had considered himself to be twice as old as the other students on his program, but he then recognized that he still had many years left to explore the world. Navigating the UK and France on foot, Boo realized that he was out of shape and since studying abroad he has been on a health journey. In addition, Boo has traveled to 30 countries after his initial study abroad. These travels have opened his eyes to new perspectives about the less fortunate, and he has developed patience and empathy in the process.

Analysis of Story Fragments

Paige and Mattie fondly recall their studies abroad, one mid-length and one short-term. Both participants had previous international experiences, a seven-week volunteer program for Paige and three years living in Eritrea for Mattie. While studying abroad, both traveled and lived with close friends. Paige and Mattie highly value their EA program and the opportunities for exploration it provided for them. Mattie explains the intrinsic value of study abroad for her, saying,

It was the literature class. And Oxford, I thought, was beautiful, with lots of history and...just happy to have been a part of it. You know, Rhodes Scholars go there. [...] and

now when I hear somebody was Rhodes scholar, it means more. I'm just, glad to have been exposed to that.

Mattie, Paige, and Boo did not self-reflect on learning new skills or attitudes abroad that they have been able to apply in their current lives. However, the participants reflected on the memories (Mattie and Paige) and new opportunities (Boo) studying abroad created for them. Mattie and Paige could discuss a variety of specific moments during their program that were meaningful to them. Some moments made them smile, others made them feel emotional. All of them created wonderful memories in the two participants. Mattie stated that “every day was just wonderful. Just wonderful memories.” Similarly, Paige shared,

I think in the end, it was just such a great memory. It's just one of those things that I'll think about that when I'm 80 years old, when I'll tell my grandkids, oh, back when I was 20, I went and went around London for three months.

Paige also explained that studying abroad marked a point of time in her current life.

It's really just a time in my life [...] it's like, oh, that's before I studied abroad or, oh, that happened after I studied abroad. It's just a chunk of time in life that has so many memories within it and so many great experiences with it.

For Boo, studying abroad was evidence that international travel was possible for someone who has experienced adversity. He indicated that his age likely precluded him from having transformative experiences regarding other cultures, as he had previously been exposed to diverse others. Instead, he explained, “What studying abroad actually taught me [...] was one simple thing. It showed me that travel internationally was possible for somebody like myself.”

These participants' particular experiences demonstrate that studying abroad does not necessarily result in measurable learning outcomes. Mattie, Paige, and Boo did not report the

development of new skills, knowledge, or attitudes, or other impacts they could apply long-term in their professional, academic, or personal lives. In their case, however the educational sojourn did produce significant memories that were meaningful to them, and, in Boo's case, inspired them to conduct further international travels.

Factors Contributing to Developing Learning Outcomes

Study participants reflected on a variety of factors that contributed to their long-term learning outcomes related to studying abroad. Many of the factors detailed by the participants align with components of Kolb's (1984) experiential learning cycle. Participants shared that they learned by having concrete experiences: both interacting with locals in their host society and by observing them. Two participants explained specifically reflecting on or discussing their experiences abroad after returning home, which connects to reflective observation. Participants also described learning through trial and error, which ties to Kolb's (1984) active experimentation. Other factors that impacted participants' learning were asking questions and living in homestays.

Concrete Experience and Observation

When asked to describe how their learning took place, the majority of participants pointed to specific experiences and interactions with locals, which relates to the first step in Kolb's (1984) experiential learning cycle. Some of these experiences were actively sought out by participants. This was true for participants on both short-term and mid-length programs. Helga explained that she gained new cultural perspectives by "having made friends with a couple of the locals and being able to go out and experience how the locals within the town [lived] made me rearrange my way of thinking." Anna describes that experiencing daily activities contributed to her learning. She shared,

definitely submerging yourself in it. What if I was just at my apartment the whole entire time, like some people in the program a lot were? I don't feel like I would have gotten that experience. It was all the little things like going to the grocery store [...that's] when you learn the most.

Leaving the apartment was key for Micha as well who on her program in Ireland had chosen to remain indoors. On her program in the UK, however, she intentionally stepped out to engage with her host culture's surrounding. Her interactions with the locals were more impactful on her learning than lectures. She added,

It was going out and experiencing people when you're in a pub or restaurant [...] And when you did talk with shop owners or with different people at the grocery store, it was interesting just to hear how they viewed life in those interactions.

In addition to personal interactions, participants also learned from observing their surroundings. Anna explains that she gained a new perspective on Spanish culture from observing life around her, saying,

We did a lot of people watching. Spain has a lot of open squares with little cafes and a bunch of kids and parents in the middle of. Everyone's there gathering and so we were able to sit at the cafes and just talk and watch people.

Through observation, Anna was able to learn the nuances of Spanish culture. This experiential learning had a lasting impact on her by changing her understanding of Spanish culture and her perspective of herself as a US citizen.

Jaquelin's experience was similar. She gained a shifted concept of Italian culture and her relationship to it through observation as well. She shared, "Observe, learn and try to make up the

pieces of the puzzle that I don't know. That has to do a lot with being culturally competent, or at least trying to be.”

In addition to seeking out experiences and interactions, several participants also described their learning as being a matter of force. Upon having missed a flight back to Spain on a visit to Germany, Lila had to employ newfound leadership skills to procure housing for the unexpected additional night. She shared, “I think that being forced into that situation, I needed to solve the issue” and she did so successfully. Sakura and Elena, too, referenced being forced into situations that allowed them to grow. Elena explained, “it definitely forced me to fully become an independent adult on my own. Not really forced me, but it definitely informed me that I was capable of being a self-sufficient adult.” Carlos experienced this push outside of his comfort zone when boarding the bus in San Jose. He recalled,

It was just the first moment I felt I was so out of my element. When you're forced to speak with someone who doesn't speak your language in order to get something that you need, or to get by you really have to step out of your comfort zone.

Stepping outside of the United States and her comfortable community caused Anna to develop lasting life skills. She shared,

even more so than going to [community college], I was forced to become so much more independent because it was a new country, and I didn't have anyone I could rely on. And because of that, I was able to develop my own personalities in different ways that I feel like I couldn't if I was back in the States, knowing that I had so much comfortability everywhere.

These participants experienced their learning as something that happened by force, not necessarily by choice. They were forced into experiences and engagement with the other that led

to long-term learning outcomes. This forced learning impacted participants' skills, knowledge, and attitudes months and years post-program.

Reflective Observation

Very few participants described reflection as a factor that contributed to their long-term learning outcomes, but those who did indicated that this reflection often took place upon their return to the United States. This post-program reflection ties to the second step in the experiential learning cycle (Kolb, 1984), reflective observation. Participants described having conversations with others on their EA programs even years after the events took place. Carlos elaborates on the reflective processing of his experiences regarding feeling a sense of belonging with Costa Rica. He said, "once you get home and you start to, over time, think about – a certain reliving the memories of being there – and you realize the people that you were with, all those connections and experiences even outside the host family."

Ricardo had a similar experience reflecting on cultural relativism and how he fits within his host and home cultures. After returning stateside, Ricardo regarded his Americanness from a different perspective. He explained,

I think coming back and seeing, after the cultural exposure, just coming back and seeing it, it just seemed weird. [...] What makes us special? I feel like not much. And a lot of Americans they feel very patriotic, which is fine. However, that doesn't mean you can't include other people.

In other words, participants shared that some of their learning took place via rereading journals or reliving memories with other program participants once students had returned home. Some of this learning may be ongoing.

Active Experimentation

Several of the community college alumni in this study shared examples of learning by “trial and error.” This connects with the fourth step in Kolb’s (1984) experiential learning cycle, active experimentation. Lila compared this way of learning to being tossed into the deep end of the pool. She shared,

You make mistakes and you end up spending a hundred dollars on a taxi instead of getting on the metro for \$2 and you learn that and you don't make that mistake again. But yeah, just kind of being thrown into the water and seeing if you can swim. Especially in a foreign country.

Similarly, Sakura described interacting with the locals across language barriers gave her lasting communication skills post-program. She elaborated that she learned by

just trial and error. You're thrown out into a big sea and now that I'm back in a little pond, it's easier. I feel like there was a lot more figuring out and quick! I need to relate to people. I need to learn how to communicate with people with language barriers and big things like this and then because I had such a drastic challenge, then I think the smaller challenges now are easier.

Active experimentation while abroad gave participants an opportunity to practice new skills such as leadership, language learning, or communication.

Asking Questions

In addition to learning related to the steps in Kolb’s (1984) cycle of experiential learning, participants in this study also learned by asking questions. Anna explained that she felt her learning was based on her innate curiosity. Elena’s experience was similar. She shared, “I can't

understand it until I understand why it works that way.” Jaquelin’s cultural learning was based on her asking questions of the locals. She shared,

just like ask questions if I need to talk to people ask them, what should I know?

Definitely going out there and talking to people, especially the people who live there, about their culture and what to expect and what I should be doing.

Asking questions is an active way to interact with the locals, and takes concrete experience, which can be passive, to a heightened level. Study participants who were intellectually curious learned by asking questions abroad.

Homestays

Finally, participants who lived in a homestay often attributed their learning to this program feature. Whether having participated in a short-term or mid-length program, several of the alumni referenced their homestay as an aspect of their EA experience that contributed to their long-term learning outcomes. Paige described her experiences saying,

having our homestay made a big difference. Being able to talk to our host mom [...] that made it more of a daily routine of what someone living there would have [...]. I felt like we were actually living like a British person would be.

In a similar way, Carlos attributed learning life-skills such as keeping an apartment neat to living with a host family in Costa Rica. He shared,

Living with people you're not able to communicate with very well as is really difficult.

And so you learn to just be extra respectful and predict what they might want you to do.

She wants me to make my bed, not have a messy room, things like that. You become extra respectful to make sure that there's less conflict.

For Lucia, her homestay allowed her to experiment with living outside of her mother's sphere of influence, and to develop a sense of home in another country. She explains,

I just felt like, Oh, I can be the person who I want to be and not be criticized and it struck me that my homestay was super supportive and they never really critiqued me and they encouraged me to try new things and be outgoing.

She added that she felt more connected to Oxford than London (where she stayed in a hotel) because of her homestay. She shared, "the homestay that's definitely something that will probably stay with me for a long time."

Conclusion

Participants in this study gained a variety of long-term learning outcomes. First, community college alumni described that studying abroad altered their knowledge and understanding of other cultures, as well as empathy toward diverse people more generally. Other participants reported connecting with their personal identity in a new way. Participants' narratives also included the development of skills necessary to move abroad for further education or work, the development of social capital, transition to adulthood or university life, as well as academic and professional connections. For some participants, albeit few, studying abroad did not lead to the development of lasting skills, knowledge, or affect, but rather that of meaningful memories and inspiration for more international travel. The community college alumni in this study attributed their learning to a variety of factors, some of which relate to Kolb's (1984) experiential learning cycle. Study participants shared examples of concrete experiences and observations, reflecting on their time abroad upon return, trial and error, as well as asking questions and living in homestays.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

In the span of the last decade, the number of community colleges that reported sending students abroad has increased threefold, from 88 to 297 institutions (IIE, 2019; Raby, 2019). Community colleges enroll first- and second-year college students who represent a variety of demographic backgrounds, socio-economic statuses, and life experiences that are often underrepresented in higher education generally as well as education abroad (EA) specifically. These diverse nontraditional backgrounds notwithstanding, community college students want to and do study abroad (Raby, 2018; 2020), yet the voices of community college alumni are underrepresented in the academic literature on EA outcomes. The goal of the current study was to broaden the understanding of EA at community colleges, thereby providing practical applications on the topic of EA and advancing the knowledge of community college practitioners and leaders. The study also contributes to the literature on the lived experiences of community college EA participants by examining the long-term learning outcomes of community college alumni who studied abroad.

Summary of the Current Study

In the EA outcomes literature, relatively few studies take a multi-pronged approach to explore the cognitive, affective, and behavioral learning outcomes participants gain. Still fewer studies explore the outcomes of community college alumni who studied abroad. The present study has shown, however, that the EA experience of community college students can be transformative (Hunter, 2008), have a long-term impact, and merit comprehensive exploration. The study adds to the literature on EA outcomes by focusing on multiple learning outcomes that

may be more representative of the participants' experiences, thereby drawing out more detail than quantitative studies might (Redwine et al., 2018; Varela, 2017; Williams, 2005; 2009).

Purpose Statement and Research Questions

The purpose of this narrative inquiry was to explore the long-term learning outcomes gained by U.S. community college alumni who participated in an education abroad program. In the context of the present study, learning outcomes were either cognitive, behavioral, or affective (Kraiger et al., 1993; Varela, 2017), as well as additional uncategorized outcomes, such as the participants' identity development (Varela, 2017). The research questions guiding this study were:

1. How do U.S. community college alumni who studied abroad describe post-program learning outcomes?
2. To what factors do U.S. community college alumni who studied abroad attribute any learning outcomes they described?

Methodology

This narrative inquiry explored the lived experiences of 27 community college alumni who studied abroad between Fall 2015 and Fall 2019. In two rounds of in-depth, individual semi-structured interviews I explored the participants' learning outcomes and their meaning for the participants today, years after their sojourns abroad. Participants were drawn from alumni of an Intermountain Region and two Westcoast community colleges, and a Westcoast community college district, which were among the leading associate's institutions in sending students abroad (IIE, 2020a). Participants had graduated within the past five years and participated in both short-term, faculty-led and mid-length, faculty-in-residence (semester-long) programs.

The primary method of data collection for the present study was two rounds of individual semi-structured interviews that were conducted via videoconferencing. Each interview lasted an average of 40-60 minutes, with two to four weeks between interviews. Of the 27 participants, 25 participants were interviewed twice, which helped establish a more prolonged engagement (Hays & Singh, 2012). The interview protocols (Appendix A and B) were comprised of open-ended questions, which were followed by clarifying questions and probes as the interviews unfolded. The secondary method of data collection was a survey completed by participants prior to the first interview. The survey included questions regarding EA program information, participant demographics, and participant background information. I also took field notes and memos during and after each interview and during analysis.

I transcribed interviews verbatim and then coded the text in two rounds using Dedoose, identifying themes in the text that responded to the research questions (Leedy & Ormrod, 2019). In the first round of coding, I applied descriptive codes to the transcripts (Creswell, 2013; Saldaña, 2016). In the second round of coding, I applied axial codes, sorting the codes into the three dimensions of learning where possible (Kraiger et al., 1993; Saldaña, 2016). I coded round one interviews prior to conducting round two interviews, and used the codebook resulting from the first round as a basis for the second interview protocol. During the process of analysis, I restoried the participants' narratives to retell their experiences in a cohesive, chronological story (Leedy & Ormrod, 2019). I also worked collaboratively with the participants by member-checking the accurate representation of their lived experiences.

Summary of Major Findings and Revised Conceptual Framework

The present study was conceptually based on the three dimensions of learning developed by Kraiger et al. (1993) (Figure 1, Chapter II). This framework presupposes that learning

outcomes can be neatly placed into one of three categories: affective, or regarding attitudes, behavioral, or skill-based, and cognitive, or knowledge-based. As reviewed in Chapter II, some EA learning outcomes fit in a single dimension, such as language learning for the cognitive dimension, or intercultural development in the affective dimension. Half of the learning outcomes identified in the current study, however, are situated at the intersection of two dimensions, thereby blurring the lines of Kraiger et al.'s (1993) framework. For example, three study participants chose to work or pursue graduate school abroad after their community college EA programs. In the choice to move abroad, their narratives reflect both the ability or skills (behavioral) and the desire to live overseas (affective). Another example is the finding regarding professional connections. These job-related connections consist of technical knowledge related to the workplace (cognitive) and work-related skills (behavioral) combined with the desire to pursue a new or more nuanced professional direction (affective). Further, two of the current study's outcomes exist outside the three dimensions of learning, thereby being neither affective, behavioral, or cognitive. I propose a revised conceptual framework adapted from Kraiger et al.'s (1993) three dimensions of learning specific to EA learning outcomes in Figure 7.

It is important to note that the exact sizes of the circles in the revised conceptual framework presented in Figure 7 will vary for each study depending on the number of outcomes in each circle. The framework is a fluid representation of the participants' outcomes. In other words, the size of each circle and that of the overlapping areas will change to be representative of their actual relationship to each other based on the number of outcomes in each, therefore varying for each EA program or for each participant. Not all participants will have all of the outcomes identified in this particular study. Some may have all, some only one and future studies may uncover additional outcomes yet.

Figure 7

Revised Conceptual Framework of Education Abroad Learning Outcomes

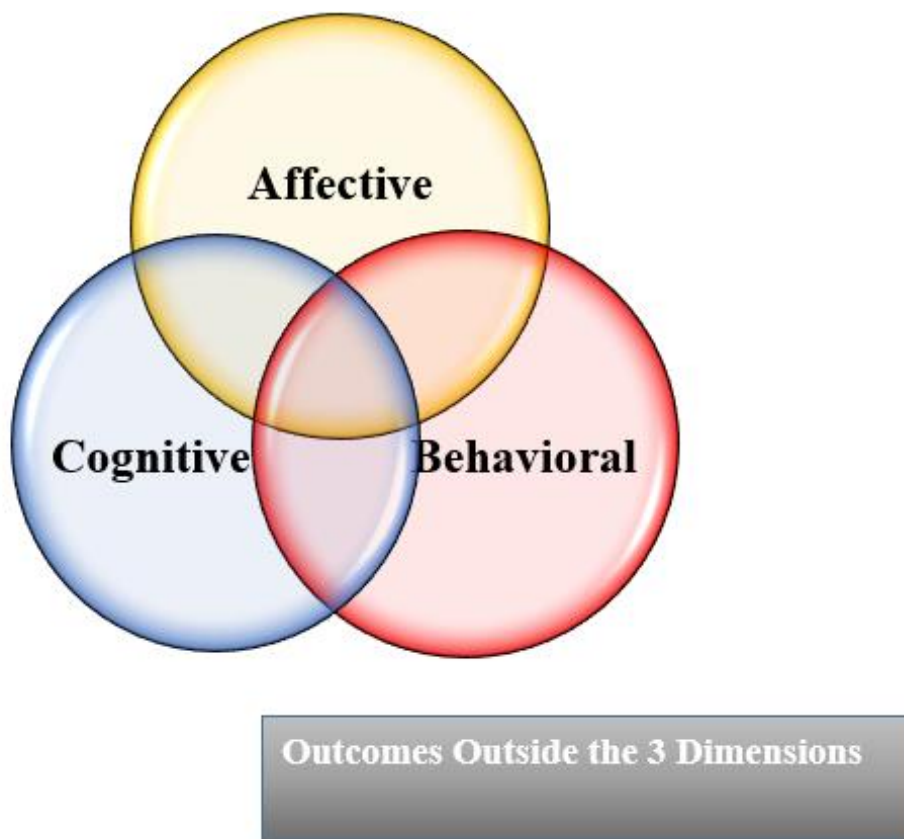


Figure 8 and Table 5 show the revised framework applied to the learning outcomes identified in the current study. Here, the circles sizes differ based on the number of outcomes in each dimension or dimensional overlap. I present the eight themes discovered in the present study sequentially, following the Venn diagram in Figure 8 clockwise. Theme one is the participants' choice to move abroad for graduate school or work. This finding is located at the intersection of the affective and the behavioral dimensions. Both the ability and desire to move abroad compose this theme. There were participants in the present study who desired to work abroad or desired to continue traveling internationally, but three participants followed through

with this affective outcome. It is the desire coupled with cross-cultural adaptation skills that create the choice to live abroad.

Figure 8

Revised Conceptual Framework of Education Abroad Learning Outcomes Applied to the Current Study

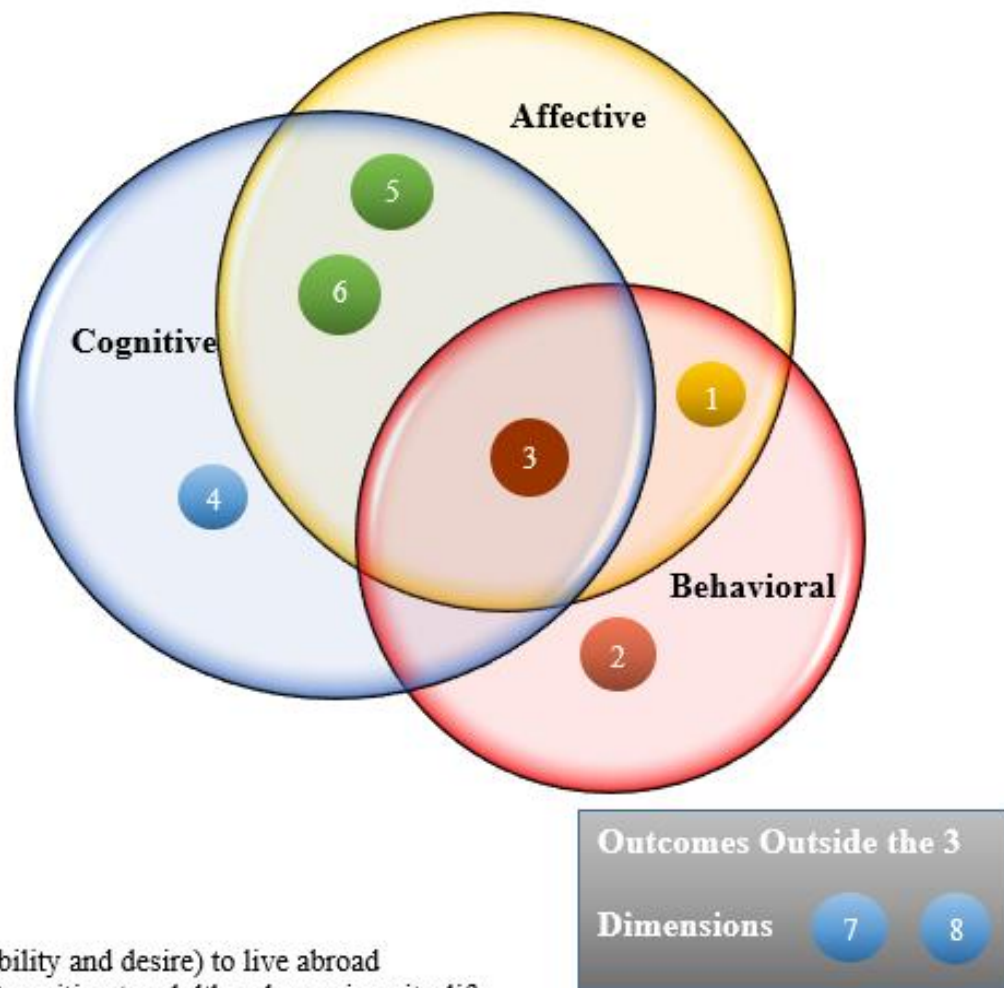


Table 5*Findings and Dimensions*

Dimension(s)	Finding
Affective/Behavioral	1. Choice (ability and desire) to live abroad
Behavioral	2. Skills re: transition to adulthood or university-life
Affective/Behavioral/Cognitive	3. Professional Connections (skills, knowledge, and attitudes re: work)
Cognitive	4. Fond Memories
Affective/Cognitive	5. Academic Connections (knowledge and attitudes re: academics)
Affective/Cognitive	6. Changed Understanding of other cultures or people
Outside dimensions	7. Development/Shift in Personal Identity
Outside dimensions	8. Contributions to Social Capital

Theme two is a behavioral outcome and consists of the participant's skills to support the transition to independent adulthood and university-life. Traditional-age community college students often commute to campus and do not live independently from their families while they are enrolled. Results of the present study indicate that studying abroad can provide a first foray into independent living for many community college students. Through studying abroad, participants acquire skills related to maintaining a household as well as skills to support independent living, such as budgeting.

The current study's third theme, professional connections, is situated at the center of the diagram, at the intersection of the affective, behavioral, and cognitive dimensions. This theme consists of skills, knowledge, and attitudes regarding a job or career, both present and future. An example of a professional connection is reflected in Leandra's narrative. She acquired field-specific knowledge and skills in relation to animal behavior on her program to Namibia, which

created in her the desire to work with wild as opposed to domestic animals. These professional connections promoted the drive to pursue a different major upon transferring to university, to complete an internship working with wildlife at a zoo, and ultimately her pursuit of a zookeeping position post-graduation.

A fourth finding of the present study is the cognitive learning outcome of fond memories. At first glance, memory-making may appear to be a non-outcome, but these cognitive impacts were important for participants. The ability for an octogenarian community member like Mattie to share fun stories with her family and friends was a worthwhile outcome for that participant. In the case of Paige, who studied abroad with her boyfriend, these memories can serve as a cohesive element of her intimate relationship. Even though EA professionals may not strive for their students to make fond memories alone, new knowledge gained in the form of memories may be a meaningful learning outcome for EA participants.

There are two findings that are located at the intersection of the cognitive and affective dimensions. Theme five, academic connections, consists of knowledge and attitudes regarding academic coursework or continual learning. An example of this finding is the combination of acquiring new knowledge that leads to the pursuit of a new major, as was the case for Helga. Another example for academic connections is Julie's experience where new knowledge related to literature sparked or reaffirmed a desire for continual learning. The sixth finding is a changed understanding of the participants' host culture as well as more empathy, compassion, and identification with people throughout the world. This concept is also both cognitive and affective in nature. This theme is categorized by the participants learning about their host culture, which directly leads to a new perception of that culture as well as their relationship with members of that culture.

Finally, two themes appear to be located outside of the three dimensions of learning altogether. Theme seven, development or shift in the participants' personal identity, is an outcome not directly related to any of the dimensions. Participants in this theme believe that studying abroad either shaped their sense of personal identity, helped them to connect with their identity in a different manner, or caused them to reflect on their identity differently than before studying abroad. An example of theme seven is Margaret's experience of having her Mexican heritage reaffirmed.

The eighth theme is contributions to participants' social capital. The concept of social capital as a valuable tool to be effective in life and at work was first introduced approximately a century ago. Hanifan (1916) defined social capital as the "tangible substances [that] count for most in the daily lives of a people: namely, goodwill, fellowship, mutual sympathy and social intercourse among a group of individuals and families who make up a social unit" (p. 130). More recently, the OECD added to this definition, saying social capital consisted of "the links, shared values and understandings in society that enable individuals and groups to trust each other and so work together" (Keeley, 2007, p. 102). In other words, social capital are the resources in a network of social relationships that vary in composition, density, size, and strength (Glass & Gesing, 2018). An example of this theme in the present study is the creation of new friendships and relationships through studying abroad, as well as the common experiences and empathy toward diverse others.

Findings Related to the Literature

First and foremost, findings in the current study support Raby's (2018, 2020) assertion that community college students of nontraditional age, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status want to and do study abroad. The participants in the current study represented varied age groups,

socio-economic backgrounds, ethnicities, and student statuses. Two of the participants shared stories about previously living in shelters or being homeless. Many of the alumni had worked part-time or full-time while enrolled at the community college and three of them had children. Nevertheless, as students they found ways to raise funds through scholarships or federal financial aid and persisted in their goal to study abroad. Similarly, study participants who were persons of color often described leveraging their ethnicity while abroad. Latinx participants shared they had experienced adversity and feeling like an outsider in their K12 years, and they were able to leverage those experiences during their interactions with host locals abroad or in the cultural adaptation process. Participants also gained learning outcomes that align with the existing literature on EA learning outcomes.

Language Learning

In the present study, six students lived in non-English speaking countries and completed a language course. In spite of soliciting answers regarding skills acquired abroad, participants in the current study did not report long-term impact on language learning abroad. However, language learning was a focus of only one of the programs represented in this study. Only one of the participants, Carlos, completed a language program specifically, on which he lived with a host family. This participant reported some improvement in his language ability, but he attributed much of this learning to the class he took while abroad. Previous university studies (Allen & Herron, 2003; Davidson, 2010; Vande Berg et al., 2009) as well as a community college study (Brenner, 2016) reported pre- to post-program language improvement, but it appears this improvement may not necessarily be long-term. Findings of this study also indicate that long-term language learning may require intentionality in program design, and does not simply occur by studying in a non-English-speaking country.

Knowledge in General

Findings of the present study confirm those of Redwine et al. (2018) concerning university participants gaining new knowledge in general while studying abroad. In addition to discipline-specific knowledge, Redwine et al. (2018) found that EA can lead to enhanced independent decision-making. These results align with the concept of skills regarding the transition to independent adulthood and university life uncovered by the current study. Participants in the present study who reflected on gaining these skills indicated that they were still meaningful to them years post-program.

Cultural Learning and Intercultural Development

In previous research, learning outcomes regarding cultural learning and intercultural development have been reported separately. For example, Czerwionka et al. (2015) and Watson et al. (2013) studied the acquisition of cultural knowledge for university students on language programs. Results of the present study indicate that community college students also gained cultural knowledge through studying abroad, such as the understanding for host-society values and customs, on non-language programs. Similarly, findings of the present study support community college research on intercultural development through participation in EA programs (Emert & Pearson, 2007; Paras et al., 2019; Wood, 2019) by providing evidence of affective development of the participants toward their host cultures.

Interestingly, however, multiple participants in the current study shared that their changed understanding of other cultures that was directly tied to cognitive learning regarding the host culture. For example, Lila learned about the values of Spaniards on the night of her roommate's passing, which impacted her attitude toward Spaniards overall. This finding supports

the importance of researching cultural knowledge and intercultural development jointly, as both are important and can in some cases not be separated.

Long-Term Impact of Cross-Cultural Adaptation

The present study also adds to previous qualitative inquiry on the topic of cross-cultural adaptation. Previous research with university students had shown that students gained socio-cultural adaptation skills such as navigation of their surroundings on EA programs, regardless of program length (Sandel, 2014). These skills can contribute to confidence building in the participants, as well as a greater sense of well-being. The present study was able to explore the long-term impact of cross-cultural adaptation skills in the case of community college faculty-led program participants. Three of the study participants chose to seek out opportunities to apply their cross-cultural adaptation skills with a decision to move abroad for further education or work. Results of the current study indicate long-term learning outcomes of EA participation can result in the affective-behavioral impact of choosing further prolonged international exposure in some participants.

Academic and Professional Connections

The findings of the present study support Paige et al.'s (2009) findings regarding university-level EA participants attributing educational design and career choice to their experience abroad. These academic and professional connections need not always be international in nature. In some cases, participants in the present study chose a different major or career based on skills or knowledge gained abroad, such as Leandra's desire to work with wildlife. Seven participants in the current study shared that studying abroad resulted in the pursuit of a new major, desire to continue learning, or refinement of career goals. Similar to Hubbard's (2019) findings with university students, participants in the present study also

reported a wide variety of transferrable skills, such as interpersonal communication, having difficult conversations, or working in diverse teams. Participants were able to point to specific behavioral and cognitive outcomes that still have value for them in the workplace.

Race and Identity Development

The current study's findings build upon Wick et al.'s (2019) and Willis' (2012) work on EA enhancing identities of participants who are persons of color, for university and community college students, respectively. While Wick et al.'s (2019) work focused on heritage-seeking EA participants, the findings of the present study align with those of Willis' (2012) research that indicates that students of color can make significant gains in identity development, regardless of their EA destination. For some of the bicultural participants in the present study, such as Margaret or Jaquelin, studying abroad provided an opportunity to leverage pre-existing cultural capital. Just as was the case for the Black women in Willis' (2012) study, Margaret's identity development occurred for a Latina in Mexico, and in Jaquelin's case for a Latina in Italy. As a result, both participants experienced a shift in their sense of personal identity, feeling validation of familial ties, and a sense of empowerment to embrace their heritage.

Relatedly, study participants who were not students of color also discovered new facets of their identity, such as a sense of adventure, bravery, or independence. To a lesser degree, these participants developed a revised understanding of themselves as an American and gained an appreciation that other culture have different norms and values. Again, these identity shifts appeared to be unrelated to the location of the host culture. This confirms Raby et al.'s (2021) findings that studying abroad for community college students can impact the participants sense of self and independence.

Social Capital

Findings in the present study expand upon recent work that explores the concept of community college and university EA participants using existing social capital while studying abroad (Raby et al., 2021). Research on the concept of social capital is more common with degree-seeking international students (Glass & Gesing, 2018; Rienties et al., 2015). Research on EA participants enhancing their social capital as a result of studying abroad is as yet underexplored. The current study's findings regarding social capital are twofold. One, the results suggest that students who study abroad can make long-term gains in building new social networks such as friendships (Patrick, Daniel, Eva, and Elena) and intimate relationships (Carlos, Christine). Further, participants can add to the resources that contribute to social capital, such as empathy, common values, and common experiences.

Homelessness

Recent work related to nontraditional students participating in EA makes the case that nontraditional students who aspire to study abroad, such as students of color, first-generation students, and students of low socioeconomic status, are not constrained by the perceived barriers of their statuses (Raby et al., 2021; Wick et al., 2019). This research recognizes that nontraditional students may be able to leverage existing cultural capital and grit that may be an asset to pursuing EA opportunities (Raby et al., 2021; Wick et al., 2019). The findings of the current study expand upon previous literature by including previously homeless students in nontraditional student status.

Research indicates that of the students enrolled at U.S. community colleges, about half are housing insecure and approximately 13 percent are homeless. Further, about one third of community college students are food or housing insecure despite working and receiving financial

aid while enrolled (Goldrick-Rab et al., 2017). In the current study, at least two participants reported prior homelessness or living in shelters, though it is uncertain whether either of them had insecure housing while enrolled at the community college. The two participants, Boo and Margaret, were both Pell recipients and working adult students prior to studying abroad. Additionally, Boo was a first-generation college student. These characteristics of alumni who successfully studied abroad have two important implications. First, they affirm the important mission of the community college to provide access to anyone who can benefit from attending (Shannon & Smith, 2006). Both participants have obtained full-time employment and Margaret is applying to law schools. Second, the participants' prior experience with homelessness also lends credence to the idea that students with nontraditional backgrounds can leverage social capital gained through dealing with adversity in pursuit of EA.

Emerging Research on the Community College

Finally, findings of the present study insect with emerging research on the community college, such as the effectiveness of guided pathway programs or the employability skills. Guided pathways to college completion reflect the community college sector's relatively new focus on student success outcomes, rather than merely providing access to higher education (McClenney, 2019). In response to low completion rates, misaligned workforce preparation, and ineffective transitions between high school, the community college, and the university (AACC, 2012), more than 250 U.S. community colleges had begun implementing guided pathway programs by mid-2018 (McClenney, 2019).

College success outcomes related to participation in EA mirror those that the guided pathway model strives to achieve. Research on institutional engagement and academic achievement for EA participants supported the idea that EA participation had a positive impact

on early, midstream, and terminal outcomes, such as retention and transfers to university (Raby et al., 2014; Rhodes et al., 2016). Findings of the current study echo those outcomes. Of the 27 participants in the present study, 24 were in pursuit of a college education (this excludes the two community members and the dually enrolled high school student). Of these 24 higher education-seeking participants, 20 earned an associate degree from their community college, and 21 transferred to university and either earned a bachelor's degree or are currently enrolled. Three of the participants are currently pursuing graduate studies. Although the guided pathway model does not consider high-impact practices such as EA (Kuh, 2008), it is possible that the sustained interaction with college faculty and EA advisors may support students in their academic achievement.

Another component of the comprehensive mission of the community college is workforce development. This mission has evolved with the changing nature of workforce competencies (Jacobs & Worth, 2019), but there is evidence that participation in EA can support student development of the intercultural workforce competencies needed in today's job market (NACE 2019; Raby 2008; 2020). The community college's role in workforce development is paramount, particularly as the United States recovers from the COVID-19 pandemic (Autor et al., 2020). Although there are employability skills frameworks that omit intercultural fluency as a desired skill for graduates (Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education, n.d.), given the realities of today's global workforce, community colleges play an important role in preparing students for diverse careers (NACE 2019; Raby 2008; 2020). Findings of the present study indicate that EA participants gain relevant skills that aid them in working with diverse others, such as patience, understanding, and intercultural awareness.

Implications

The present study has implications for higher education practitioners and leaders, both at the community colleges and at four-year HEIs. It confirms previous research that studying abroad can result in multiple learning outcomes for students (Raby et al., 2020; Williams 2005; 2009), particularly for community college students. These outcomes can have a lasting impact on participants, such as social networks, transferrable skills, a reaffirmed sense of personal identity, or the decision to move abroad. This section includes implications and recommendations for community college and higher education practitioners, as well as community college leaders and policymakers.

For Higher Education Practitioners

Generally, findings of the current study support the implication for higher education practitioners that studying abroad can have academic value beyond students' academic credits earned. This is particularly true for community college students as well as students of nontraditional backgrounds or socio-economic status. Thus, for community colleges with strong existing EA programs, higher education practitioners, such as advisors and faculty members should continue to encourage their students to study abroad. This encouragement should be included in the admissions and advising processes at the institution so that as many students as possible receive the information to make an educated decision about participating in EA programs.

The findings of the current study support Wick et al.'s (2019) call for assets-based preparation of EA participants. EA administrators and faculty leaders of EA programs should consider the importance of preparing nontraditional students for how to leverage their cultural capital, bi-cultural experiences, and grit (Raby et al., 2021). This content can be included in

information sessions for EA programs, during advising meetings, and during pre-departure orientation. People of historically underserved populations, including those with dependents or work responsibilities, the previously homeless, or first-generation students could benefit from mentorship regarding studying abroad opportunities. Community college administrators can help these students to address challenges and support them in their goal to participate in EA. In fact, results of the present study support the importance of helping nontraditional students realize and articulate ways to leverage their nontraditional-ness as it may aid them in adapting to the host culture and to maximize their learning outcomes.

The present study also demonstrates the importance of EA alumni to actively process their EA experience to be able to articulate valuable outcomes. Some participants expressed a reluctance to talk about what they gained from their EA program with others who were unable to study abroad, although other participants shared that doing so helped them connect with coworkers or even strangers. When past EA participants can learn to articulate the skills, knowledge, and affective outcomes they gained through their international experience it may in fact be advantageous in their personal, academic, or professional lives. My prolonged engagement with the participants helped them to describe outcomes of value to them one to five years after their experience abroad. In most cases, the participants more clearly articulated outcomes or even reported additional outcomes in the second interview. This supports Hubbard's (2019) findings that a structured opportunity to reflect on outcomes gained through studying abroad can enhance the participants' ability to more effectively communicate what they learned. EA practitioners should provide opportunities for returned program participants to discuss their learning outcomes with a career counselor or peer to help students articulate outcomes gained by studying abroad to future employers and others in their network.

In a programmatic sense, EA practitioners may also want to consider ways to structure EA programs so the identity development that occurs in participants takes place within one of the three dimensions of learning (Kraiger et al., 1993), rather than outside the dimensions. Personal identity development in the participants of the current study appeared to be internalized, but EA practitioners, such as faculty-leaders and advisors, may consider intentionally structuring programs to support outward representation of this internal change. For instance, students may benefit from reflective journaling or guided discussions that connect newfound aspects of their personal identities with intercultural development. Programmatic aspects may support the intersection of a changed understanding of oneself in relation to the host culture with revised attitudes toward that culture. This development could lead to placing identity development in the affective dimension, rather than outside the dimensions of learning (Kraiger et al., 1993).

Results of the current study also demonstrate the need for EA practitioners to continue to serve as advocates to make institutional funds available, both for their students and for EA program development. Several study participants were scholarship recipients, and they relied on college staff to advocate on their behalf with their institution to offer scholarship funds. In a similar vein, EA administrators and faculty interested in leading programs should advocate for funds to expand program development to make more of these international educational opportunities available to students. Administrators and faculty must serve as leaders on their campuses to secure financial support for EA programs to help with program development and to help lower the cost to students.

For community colleges with limited EA program options, findings of the current study underscore the importance of HEIs offering a variety of EA programs to meet the needs of a diverse student body. The current study represented a variety of participants from different fields

of study and with different interests and goals. The majority of participants used the academic credits they earned while studying abroad and applied them toward an associate degree or toward transfer to university. Consequently, both semester-long and short-term programs should offer credits in a variety of disciplines or in various general education categories, so students have EA program choices that fit their academic goals.

Further, campus administrators should seek to understand their students' interests in terms of program locations, but to encourage students to consider all available options. At least three of the study participants chose their EA programs based on their ethnic or national heritage, but students of color also reported important long-term outcomes in non-heritage program locations. In this way, findings of the current study support Willis' (2012) work on EA outcomes for students of color and echo Hartman et al.'s (2020) call for program development to move away from the "typical student" toward more inclusive program designs. Regardless of program location, this design should be underpinned by a critical understanding of the intersection of EA and host community justice concerns (Hartman et al., 2020).

For Higher Education Leaders and Policymakers

The current research also has implications for higher education leaders and policymakers, such as department chairs, deans, and senior academic leadership, both at community colleges and four-year HEIs. The long-term impact of EA on learning outcomes as suggested by Paige et al. (2009), Raby et al. (2021), and now the current study makes the case for HEI leaders to continue to or to expand support for EA programs on their campuses. Studying abroad can have long-term value in terms of skill and identity building, acquisition of practical knowledge, and affective development of participants, as well as outcomes that happen at the intersection of

those dimensions. These outcomes are valuable to our students and should be valuable to campus leaders and policymakers.

For community colleges with strong internationalization agendas, leaders could consider leveraging their EA programs to differentiate their institution in the process of recruiting of new students. The current higher education landscape is characterized by a movement toward tuition-free community colleges and online learning due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The resulting cost savings and leveling of the post-secondary education experience may lead to many more students considering the community college as a point of entry into higher education. As potential students consider their choices for HEIs, community colleges with EA programs may have an advantage over their more costly four-year counterparts. Offering EA programs may also help community colleges attract and retain higher quality students, as well as add to prestige of the institution.

For community colleges without robust EA programs, leaders could consider including international education in the institution's strategic plans. This would support a budget allocation, and work toward expanding these programs to make them available to more students. Further, campus leaders must work to create cross-campus buy-in for international opportunities. One of the participants of the present study was encouraged to study abroad by a mathematics mentor. This is an example of cross-campus collaboration to promote EA programs to students who may never seek out advising in the EA office. Campus leadership must create opportunities for staff in key offices, such as admissions, student services, advising, or tutoring, to learn about the EA programs offered at the institution and to equip the practitioners in these offices with the necessary information to share the benefits of EA participation.

Finally, some of the participants in the current study referenced receiving financial support from their community colleges that helped them achieve their goal of studying abroad. The multiple outcomes gained by these participants and the value that they attribute to studying abroad may encourage community college foundations to work toward raising funds for EA programming, such as sponsoring faculty travel or student scholarships. The present study provides narratives to help make the case for the importance of EA to potential donors as well as interview protocols to procure these narratives from future students. Campus leaders in pursuit of developing EA programs may consider supporting an endowment for international programs in their strategic plans or in conversations with potential donors.

Recommendations for Further Research

For higher education generally, the present study could be expanded upon by further research regarding EA and trauma or EA participants, whether community college or university students, being a victim of a crime. It appears that crimes, such as pickpocketing or sexual harassment may be more common than previous research indicates. Three participants in the current study shared trauma narratives that were intertwined with their international experiences and could thus not be teased out. Further research could explore the impact of trauma or crime and perhaps make comprehensive recommendations for practitioners for how best to support students who experience this abroad.

Future research on community college students may add findings for populations the present study was unable to include, such as the experiences of Asian or Native American students or students with known physical or learning disabilities. Additionally, the community college is often the point of entry for first-generation college students. Further research could focus on an exploration of this unique population. Community college researchers could also

explore factors that would decrease barriers for these populations in EA participation. Similarly, the current study only included one alum who participated in a language program. Results of studies on language learning may differ when conducted with intensive language program participants.

Another area of possible exploration is the impact of the EA experience on the participants' future selection of HEIs or fields of study. For instance, in the present study, Sunshine's experience in Ghana may have changed or affirmed her desire to transfer to an HBCU. Margaret may in part have chosen to transfer to her university due to the availability of a degree related to Latinx and Mexican studies. This impact of the EA experience on students of color's educational trajectory bears further inquiry. Further, additional studies with community college alumni could explore research questions that focus on outcomes in addition to learning outcomes, such as community engagement, or financial contributions to the community college post-graduation.

Additional studies on EA learning outcomes, whether for community college or university students, may apply the revised conceptual framework presented in Figure 7. Future research may be able to add additional outcomes or confirm the intersectionality of outcomes possible with studying abroad. Generally, the present study supports Williams' (2005, 2009) call for qualitative research on this topic. Further examination with this breadth of inquiry, whether with community colleges or 4-year institutions, would add to the existing literature that in large part has previously focused on a single learning outcome. Qualitative studies can add narratives that may be valuable resources for HEI administrators and leaders.

Concluding Remarks

Education abroad has value. It has value to individual students, traditional and non-traditional alike, albeit perhaps differently. EA at community colleges provides opportunities for students from all walks of life to have an academic experience that may inspire them to work abroad, to obtain graduate degrees, and to reach for personal achievements they had previously only dreamed about. EA has value for community college students and community college leaders should create or expand these opportunities for their students.

Education abroad also has value for society-at-large. Study participants spoke of reduced fear of travel, increased empathy for diverse others, and for enhanced appreciation of the implications of global interconnectedness. As our world continues to draw ever closer in the years to come, the learning outcomes acquired by students studying abroad can help support the intercultural networks, relationships, and partnerships in fields of economics, foreign policy, technology, and business. In fact, community college alumni who studied abroad may well become leaders in these fields and thus lead conversations on a global scale that may impact international development, human rights, or peace.

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APPENDIX A

Community College Education Abroad Study

Interview Protocol 1

Thank you for taking the time to participate in interviews about your experience studying abroad. The interviews will be video recorded with your permission, but in transcription, analysis, and write-up your responses will be anonymized and your institution de-identified. I encourage you to choose a pseudonym for yourself! The purpose of this study is to explore the post-program learning outcomes of participation in education abroad programs at a U.S. community college. I invite you to walk me through your education abroad experience and post experience.

1. Tell me a little bit about the logistics of your program. How long were you abroad, how many students from your college were with you, where did you live? Follow-up: what course(s) did you take? Did you use the credit for credential/degree; transfer; other?
2. Figuratively, where were you in life when you participated in this study abroad program?
3. What are some of the things you learned through studying abroad, particularly outside the classroom?
4. How do you think you were able to learn these things?
5. How do you apply this knowledge in your current university/job/life?
6. Pretend we're in a job interview and the tell me about a skill you developed while abroad. When and how did you demonstrate skills you acquired abroad that will have value in the workplace.
7. How did you acquire these skills?
8. In what ways are these skills meaningful for you today?
9. What changes do you perceive in yourself in terms of cultural awareness or global citizenship after having studied abroad? Have others noticed a change in you?
10. How do you think this change occurred? (or, if no change, Why do you feel no change occurred?)
11. How has this increased cultural awareness remained relevant for you today?
12. In light of your experience abroad, tell me about times when you might think about the implications of global interconnectedness (global relations of culture, trade, politics)?
13. What things that you learned abroad influenced your life after the community college (university major, further language study/travel, job responsibilities).
14. Sometimes students claim that studying abroad changed their lives. Do you believe your life is different because of studying abroad? How?
15. What additional comments to you have about post-program learning outcomes as they relate to your study abroad experience?

Thank you for your time and insightful responses. I will be in touch with a time to schedule a second interview.

APPENDIX B

Interview Protocol 2

Thank you for your insights in our last interview. I have some follow-up questions based on our conversation and the those I had with other study participants. Thank you for taking the time for us to further explore your study abroad experience and its impact on your life.

(Questions in bold are definitive, unbolded questions will be asked time permitting)

1. **Is there anything you'd like to add about our last conversation? Anything come to mind that you wish you had thought of at that time?**
2. **Describe the sense of belonging/connection you may feel to your host country.**
3. **Now that you've spent time studying in another country, how might the concept of "home" have a new meaning? That you want to change things at home (for better or worse), that you feel like you have a home abroad?**
4. What values (if any) have you adopted from your host culture?
5. **How has studying abroad shaped your sense of personal identity?**
6. **How has study abroad changed your global and/or local perspectives?**
7. One of the participants expressed that studying abroad can widen your understanding of humanity. How did it do so for you?
8. **What impact has study abroad made on your personal, professional, and/or academic lives.**
9. **How has studying abroad perhaps opened up doors for you once you returned? What connections has it made for you?**
10. How have you used your experience to your advantage (in the workforce or your personal life)?
11. **Describe a pivotal moment of learning for you during your time abroad. What were the things that impacted you the most?**
12. **What is the real value of study abroad for you?**

Thank you again for your time in participating in this study. I appreciate your candid thoughts and perspectives. I will be in touch with a draft of your narrative for member-checking in a few weeks.

APPENDIX C

Screening Survey

Start of Block: Main Survey

Q2 What is your first and last name?

Q3 If you would like to participate in this study (which includes completion of this survey and two interviews at 45 to 60 minutes each), what is the best email address at which to contact you?

Q24 What is the name of your community college?

Q4 Are you still enrolled at your community college?

☐ Yes

☐ No

Q27 Did you earn a credential from your community college?

☐

I earned an associate's degree.

☐

I earned a certificate

☐

No, I did not.

☐

Other

Q25 What was your major at the community college?

Q26 What was your GPA when you graduated from/left the community college?

Q7 What was the location of your study abroad program? (city, country)

Q23 If your study abroad program had a name, what was the name of your program?

Q28 Where did you go after you graduated from/left the community college?

- ☐ I went into the workforce.
- ☐ I transferred to a 4-year college/university.
- ☐ Neither. I was enrolled in my study abroad program as a community member.
- ☐ Other

Display This Question:

If Where did you go after you graduated from/left the community college? = I went into the workforce.

Q29 If you went into the workforce, what was your first job after leaving the community college?

Display This Question:

If Where did you go after you graduated from/left the community college? = I transferred to a 4-year college/university.

Q30 If you transferred, what was your major at university?

Display This Question:

If Where did you go after you graduated from/left the community college? = I transferred to a 4-year college/university.

Q31 If you transferred, did you graduate from university?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ I am still enrolled.
-

Display This Question:

If If you transferred, did you graduate from university? = Yes

Q32 What was your first job after graduation?

Q5 Prior to your study abroad program had you ever traveled outside of the U.S.?

☐ Yes

☐ No

Display This Question:

If Prior to your study abroad program had you ever traveled outside of the U.S.? = Yes

Q6 Prior to your study abroad program, where did you travel outside of the U.S. and for how long?

Q8 During which term did you study abroad?

☐ Fall

☐ Spring

☐ Summer

☐ Spring Break

☐ Fall Break

☐ Winter Break

Q9 During which year did you study abroad?

- ☐ 2015
- ☐ 2016
- ☐ 2017
- ☐ 2018
- ☐ 2019
- ☐ Other

Q10 Were you the first person in your immediate family to enroll in college?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Q11 Did you receive a Pell Grant while enrolled in college?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Unsure

Display This Question:

If Did you receive a Pell Grant while enrolled in college? = Yes

Q33 Did you use your Pell Grant to study abroad?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Unsure

Q12 What is your gender identity (select all that apply)?

- ☐ Man
- ☐ Woman
- ☐ Another gender identity
- ☐ I prefer not to respond

Q22 How old were you while you were studying abroad? (in years)

Q13 Please select the race/ethnicity that best describes you.

- ☐ Hispanic or Latinx, of any race
- ☐ American Indian or Alaska Native, not Hispanic or Latinx
- ☐ Arab/Middle Eastern, not Hispanic or Latinx
- ☐ Asian, not Hispanic or Latinx
- ☐ Black, not Hispanic or Latinx
- ☐ Pacific Islander, not Hispanic or Latinx
- ☐ White, not Hispanic or Latinx
- ☐ Two or more races, not Hispanic or Latinx
- ☐ Other (Please specify) _____

End of Block: Main Survey

APPENDIX D

Informed Consent Form

INFORMED CONSENT DOCUMENT

OLD DOMINION UNIVERSITY

PROJECT TITLE: Study Abroad Learning Outcomes at U.S. Community Colleges .

INTRODUCTION The purposes of this form are to give you information that may affect your decision whether to say YES or NO to participation in this research, and to record the consent of those who say YES. The title of this research project is Study Abroad Learning Outcomes at Community Colleges. Data for the study will be collected via a screening survey and two interviews related to your study abroad experience conducted through video-conferencing. .

RESEARCHERS

Responsible Principal Investigator: Dr. Mitchell Williams, Associate Professor, Darden College of Education and Professional Studies, Educational Foundations and Leadership

Investigator: Heidi Fischer, PhD Candidate, Darden College of Education and Professional Studies, Educational Foundations and Leadership

DESCRIPTION OF RESEARCH STUDY Several studies have been conducted looking into the subject of learning outcomes of participation in study abroad programs. None of them have explained the long-term impact of those programs in community college students. If you decide to participate, then you will join a study involving research of the long-term learning outcomes experienced by U.S. community college students who studied abroad. If you say YES, then your participation will last for no more than three hours through video-conferencing (Zoom). Approximately 30 study abroad alumni will be participating in this study.

EXCLUSIONARY CRITERIA You should have completed a study abroad program while enrolled at a U.S. community college. You should not be less than 18 years of age, as that would keep you from participating in this study.

RISKS AND BENEFITS RISKS: If you decide to participate in this study, then you may face a risk of encountering unpleasant memories of your time abroad. The researchers will try to reduce these risks by providing a safe space during interviews and by listening with

unconditional positive regard. And, as with any research, there is some possibility that you may be subject to risks that have not yet been identified.

BENEFITS: The main benefit to you for participating in this study is the opportunity to process the long-term impact your study abroad program had for you. In addition, you may benefit from articulating learning outcomes from your program, a valuable skill for future job interviews.

COSTS AND PAYMENTS The researchers are unable to give you any payment for participating in this study.

NEW INFORMATION If the researchers find new information during this study that would reasonably change your decision about participating, then they will give it to you.

CONFIDENTIALITY The researchers will take reasonable steps to keep private information, such as the screening survey confidential. The researcher will remove identifiers from all identifiable private information collected. Data will be stored for up to five years in a locked, private office, or alternative protected space, of the researchers. In addition, electronic data will be stored on a password-protected computer to which only the researchers have access. After five years, digital audio files will be destroyed. Only researchers approved as PIs or co-PIs on this study will have access to the data. Identifiers will be removed and the de-identified information used for future research without additional informed consent from the participant. The results of this study may be used in reports, presentations, and publications; but the researcher will not identify you. Of course, your records may be subpoenaed by court order or inspected by government bodies with oversight authority.

WITHDRAWAL PRIVILEGE It is OK for you to say NO. Even if you say YES now, you are free to say NO later, and walk away or withdraw from the study -- at any time. Your decision will not affect your relationship with Old Dominion University, or otherwise cause a loss of benefits to which you might otherwise be entitled.

COMPENSATION FOR ILLNESS AND INJURY If you say YES, then your consent in this document does not waive any of your legal rights. However, in the event of harm arising from this study, neither Old Dominion University nor the researchers are able to give you any money, insurance coverage, free medical care, or any other compensation for such injury. In the event that you suffer injury as a result of participation in any research project, you may contact Dr. Mitchell Williams, the principal investigator for this study, at (757) 683-4344 or mrwillia@odu.edu, Laura Chezan, the current chair of the Darden College of Education and Professional Studies Human Subjects Review Committee at 757-683-7055 or lchezan@odu.edu, and current IRB chair at Old Dominion University, or the Old Dominion University Office of Research at 757-683-3460 who will be glad to review the matter with you.

VOLUNTARY CONSENT By signing this form, you are saying several things. You are saying that you have read this form or have had it read to you, that you are satisfied that you understand this form, the research study, and its risks and benefits. The researchers should have

answered any questions you may have had about the research. If you have any questions later on, then the researchers should be able to answer them:

Dr. Mitchell Williams, (757) 683-4344

Heidi Fischer, (336) 740-0981

If at any time you feel pressured to participate, or if you have any questions about your rights or this form, then you should call Dr. Laura Chezian, the current IRB chair, at 757-683-7055, or the Old Dominion University Office of Research, at 757-683-3460. And importantly, by selecting "I CONSENT" below, you are telling the researcher YES, that you agree to participate in this study. The researcher should give you a copy of this form for your records.

- ☐ I CONSENT to participate in this research.
- ☐ I do NOT consent to participate in this research.

APPENDIX E

Email Communication to Participants for Member-Checking

Subject: story draft

Hello [first name],

I am writing today with a draft of your story fragment. Attached is an excerpt from my results chapter that includes your story. Your pseudonym is [pseudonym] – let me know if you'd like to change it.

I would appreciate your taking the time to read through the attachment (read the intro and then skip to the section titled "[section]" on page X) and providing any feedback/edits you think might be helpful. Here are some thoughts as you read:

- Check for accuracy – did I represent your time abroad and its impact on your life in the way you would describe it?
- In the analysis section, check your quotes – am I interpreting them in the way you meant them?
- Check for identifiability – if you feel there are any portions of your story fragment or your direct quotes that would identify you and you would like identifying details changed, please let me know.

Please make comments/suggest edits using the Tracking feature in MS Word under the Review tab.

I look forward to hearing your thoughts. Let me know if you have any questions about this process.

Warm regards,

Heidi

--

Heidi Fischer

PhD Candidate, Higher Education

Graduate Research Assistant

Department of Educational Foundations and Leadership

Old Dominion University

NAFSA Region VIII Chair-Elect

VITA
HEIDI FISCHER

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Graduate Research Assistant & Future Faculty Fellow
Old Dominion University, Norfolk, VA, Aug. 2018 – 2021

International Programs Center Staff
University of North Carolina at Greensboro, Greensboro, NC, Sept. 2017 – Aug. 2019

Director of Study Abroad & International Initiatives
High Point University, High Point, NC, Feb. 2012 – Sept. 2017

Assistant Director of Academic Advising & Coordinator for International Student Services
The University of North Carolina at Greensboro, Greensboro, NC, Aug. 2005 – Feb. 2012

SELECTED PUBLICATIONS

- Smithers, L., Fischer, H., & Stafford, L. (In press). Ordinary engagements: The everyday creation of a high-impact practice. *Journal of College Student Development*.
- Cruz, N., Raby, R. L., Glass, C. R., & Fischer, H. (2020). Catalysts of change: Entrepreneurial problem-solving for unscripted futures. *Association of International Education Administrators*. [https://aiea.memberclicks.net/assets/docs/Occasional Papers/09.2020_Cruz_Raby_Glass_Fischer_final.pdf](https://aiea.memberclicks.net/assets/docs/Occasional%20Papers/09.2020_Cruz_Raby_Glass_Fischer_final.pdf)
- Fischer, H., & Whatley, M. (2020). COVID-19 impact research brief: International Students at community colleges. *NAFSA: Association of International Educators*.
- Fischer, H. (2019). Striving for outcomes: A community college study abroad case study. In Schendel, R. and de Wit, H. (eds), *Innovative and Inclusive Internationalization: Proceedings of the WES-CIHE Summer Institute June 19-21, 2019, Boston College*. *CIHE Perspectives No. 14*. Center for International Higher Education, Boston College.

SELECTED PRESENTATIONS AT ACADEMIC CONFERENCES

- Fischer, H., Raby, R. L., Glass, C. R., & Cruz, N. (2021). *Senior International Officers as change agents: Entrepreneurial problem-solving at higher education institutions in the United States*. CIES Annual Conference (virtual), April 25-May 2, 2021.
- Fischer, H. (2021, April). *A longitudinal inquiry into community college education abroad learning outcomes*. AERA Annual Meeting (virtual), April 8-12, 2021.
- Fischer, H. (2021). *How does it matter? Exploring the impact of education abroad on community college alumni*. Council for the Study of Community College Conference (virtual), April 15-17, 2021.
- Cossey, K., & Fischer, H. (2021). *Tempered radicals at community colleges: An exploration of virtual exchange program implementation during COVID-19*. Council for the Study of Community College Conference (virtual), April 15-17, 2021.
- Fischer, H. (2019, June). *Striving for outcomes: A community college study abroad case study*. WES-CIHE Summer Institute, Boston, MA.
- Fischer, H., & Soulsby, L. (2019, May). *Advocate to restore democracy through DACA and the DREAM Act*. National NAFSA Conference, Washington, DC.