

# Lessons Learned from the British: Stepping Out of the U.S. to Prepare Preservice Teachers

*Claudia J. McVicker*

## **Introduction**

As higher education embraces themes of global citizenship, it is important to investigate educational initiatives that inspire this kind of thinking in future teachers. A global citizen perspective means acknowledging we are all members of a world citizenry that is broader and bigger than our own country. This is a critical belief a teacher must adopt. In this multi-cultural country, teachers encounter children who have immigrated to the U.S. in most schools. They will need to welcome them with culturally responsive classrooms from the stance of a global citizen, one who believes in inclusiveness. Taking future teachers to teach and learn in other countries broadens their worldview so they can acknowledge cultural differences and connect empathetically with their students. Universities need to adequately prepare their graduates with the skills and knowledge needed in a global society (Stoner, et al, 2014). Many U.S. universities have prioritized the development of faculty-led or short-term studies abroad to purposefully foster a global mindset in their students. Offering short-term, experiential study abroad programs can provide opportunities to foster global citizenship when coupled with sound pedagogy.

A teaching philosophy from a global citizenship stance can benefit a preservice teacher in three distinct ways: Cultural Acceptance, Teaching and Learning, and Educator Disposition. Cultural acceptance can be developed in other countries who have unique global viewpoints that influence how they educate their youth. This will prepare teachers to inspire their students to accept and be inclusive of children from a variety of cultural backgrounds. Being embedded in a foreign school system may help teacher education students see teaching and learning with a different lens. They will learn about what kinds of strategies, resources, and policies other countries employ. And last, students who have studied abroad may develop creativity, persistence, resourcefulness, and cultural awareness that students who are educated solely in this country may not develop.

Additionally, studying abroad has a wide appeal to college students. For some it is their first dip in international travel; for others, it is an opportunity to add value to their discipline's coursework. And for most, it is simply an exciting, adventurous thought to spend some extended time in a foreign country becoming integrated in its communities and way of life. In *The Liverpool Project*, the subject of this particular study, it was all of the above.

## ***The Liverpool Project: A Teacher Education Study Abroad in England***

The phrase, 'study abroad' means more than just a trip. It's about student scholars in the field doing independent study, apprenticeships and fieldwork. It includes rigorous academic learning combined with immersion in another culture. *The Liverpool Project* study abroad program, was a

unique, hands-on, cross-cultural experience. It was designed to bring students in direct contact with children and teachers in British schools. Within this framework, qualitative research was a powerful form of data collection in which the student breaks from the image of student as passive learner to student as social constructivist, making meaning via reflective writing.

*The Liverpool Project* was an eight-week study abroad offered to teacher education students for three summers. Short-term study abroad programs of eight weeks or less are particularly popular, with 56.6% of U.S. study abroad students choosing this format over semester or year-long options (Institute of International Education, 2011). Because so many students had never flown overseas or not flown at all, we traveled together. Faculty-led study abroad experiences are just that; the faculty member plans and takes a course to the foreign country and teaches it within the experience while traveling with the students. The course enrollment is a requirement of the students' parent program but is taught while they are abroad with the professor. This is different than typical study abroad experiences where the student creates one or joins a for-profit study abroad program where a variety of students from multiple colleges and universities participate.

**A Teacher Education Study Abroad Model.** What does a teacher education study abroad look like? During a typical study abroad experience, students engage in a variety of classroom-based lectures; tourist excursions may be included to various sites, but many of them are not experiential and often resemble the classroom experiences from their home institution (Aguilar and Gingrich, 2002). *The Liverpool Project* was based near Liverpool, England on a small college campus, Hope University. Students stayed in the dormitories and ate in the campus refectory. They were granted internet and library access as well as enjoyed 24-Hour Security while on campus. After the evening meal, the emergent literacy course was taught Monday through Thursday. During the day, students were placed in local Junior Schools for fieldwork in Year 1-Year 6 classrooms (In the U.S. these are Kindergarten through 5th Grade). So far, they travel together, live and eat together on a campus, take a night class together, and work in schools together. Where does the adventure fit into this experience? The students were granted Fridays-Sundays for independent travel; albeit in groups of three or four. This model proved to be a beneficial experience and our teacher education students came back to the U.S. transformed.

**Logistics.** In preparing to teach a study abroad, it was essential to recruit students early. Most entered the program as freshmen with an eye on the summer of their junior year as the year they would go to Liverpool. They received approximate budget and ideas on how the study abroad would be funded early. Since they were actually enrolling in required coursework and field work credits, they were able to apply for financial aid packages for the tuition and room and board meals at the university campus. Embedded in the budget for the study abroad enrollment costs were some necessary extras. A Britrail train pass for multiple roundtrip excursions in the U. K. As a group we traveled to Chester, England for a day, Edinburgh, Scotland for a day, and a three-day weekend trip to London which included a hop-on-and-off bus tour and "Tube" passes for the Underground (subway), and two nights at a hotel designed for study abroad groups with three beds in a room and included an English breakfast. To cover extra expenditures, particularly air fare students saved up, held fundraisers, and sought funding from their local hometown organizations like Rotary International. Each trip also included meals on these weekend trips that were sponsored (paid for) by the chair of the department, the dean of the college, and a grant by the International Study Abroad office on campus. This budgeting allowed for any student of

any means to participate and have the enriched travel experiences beyond class and working in the schools.

**Theoretical Lens: Transformational Experience**

Transformative learning theory suggests perspective transformation is seeing the world in a different way and occurs as a person encounters a disorienting dilemma and passes through a set of ten phases that solidify the change (Mezirow, 1978; D’Amato & Krasny, 2011). Earlier qualitative research has suggested elements of transformative learning can and do occur in study abroad settings (Hutchison & Rea, 2011; Ogden, 2010; Trilokekar & Kukar, 2011). In his foundational study, Mezirow (1978) identified ten phases to describe perspective transformation: 1) Experiencing a disorienting dilemma; 2) Undergoing self-examination; 3) Conducting a deep assessment of personal role assumptions and alienation created by new roles; 4) Sharing and analyzing personal discontent and similar experiences with others; 5) Exploring options for new ways of thinking; 6) Building competence and self-confidence in new roles; 7) Planning a course of action; 8) Acquiring knowledge and skills for action; 9) Trying new roles and assessing feedback; 10) Reintegrating into society with a new perspective. (Coghlan & Gooch, 2011, pp. 716-717). And finally, an expanded definition of Mezirow's transformative learning includes these characteristics: "Transformative learning refers to the process by which we transform our taken-for-granted frames of reference (meaning perspectives, habits of mind, mind-sets) to make them more inclusive, discriminating, open, emotionally capable of change, and reflective so that they may generate beliefs that will guide to action." (D'Amato & Krasny, 2011, p. 239)

Using the transformative theory for learning, this qualitative investigation (Creswell, 2017) examined the experiences of ninety-six study abroad teacher education student journals. The curriculum for the study abroad was structured around modules targeted to prepare students to learn how children learn to read and write in the U.S. during the course taught to them during the time in Liverpool and how British classrooms enlightened their literacy instruction knowledge.

Guiding the study were three questions that drove the journal prompts to elicit reflective thinking and lessons learned in the schools and during group and independent travel. First and foremost, international travel suggests personal transformation. Second, questioning whether being placed for field work in a foreign school system will improve teaching efficacy. A third question included comparing and contrasting the foreign school system, in this case the British system with the familiar United States' educational system. Rather than simply asking students to write reflectively about their experiences, these three types of questions provided the triangulation necessary to analyze the data.

**Table 1.** *Research Questions*

Research Questions	
1.	Will a study abroad experience develop a global citizenship perspective in pre-service teachers?
2.	How will embedding pre-service teacher education students in a foreign school system improve their teaching?
3.	Can comparisons and contrasts of foreign school systems inform pre-service teachers' preparation?

Throughout the fieldwork assignments in schools and at the conclusion of each summer's study abroad, the students were asked to reflect on their experiences in responses to open-ended questions in a journal. These were provided to them at the airport as we departed the U.S. and collected when we returned. The journal data was analyzed guided by the tenets of transformative learning theory, literacy education, and educational pedagogy. Four themes within the data emerged by which the data was coded: (1) Global Awareness; (2) Retrospective Appreciation of U.S. schools based on British Literacy Practices; (3) Teaching Self-Efficacy; and 4) Travel Maturity. These findings provide insights into some ways teacher education students can be authentically introduced to seeing themselves as global citizens. In turn, evidence collected provides for the supposition that faculty-led study abroad programs that are highly experiential and involve critical reflection have the potential to shift students' global perspective. Transformational learning is thereby cultivated and nurtured through a process of reflective thinking, and the generation of new frames of reference (Mezirow, 2000) or new world views.

## Methods

**Data Collection.** This qualitative study investigated the use of journal writing to prompts by ninety-six preservice teachers over three different summer study abroad experiences to consider the Literacy Hour used in British schools on the reading and writing development of elementary school children. Additionally, they were asked to chronicle their traveling experiences and their eight-week immersive experiences in a northern British city, Liverpool, England.

Journal data was collected at the end of each summer's study abroad experience. Reflecting on their study abroad experiences, the students completed an ongoing set of responses in their Liverpool Project journals. A fixed set of open-ended questions were provided in the Liverpool Project journals to elicit reflection with triangulated topics: British Literacy Practices, Teaching Lesson Plans, and Travel. This article reports findings from the handwritten journal reflections from three distinct study abroad summers in Liverpool. These were typed verbatim from copies of the originals. During this process, the responses were separated from each participant's handwriting characteristics to insure anonymity during analysis. The data was initially open-coded and subsequently categorized into emerging themes which were labeled according to their topical content. During this process, there were multiple readings of the journal pages using a data analysis spiral (Creswell, 2017) to systematically classify, identify, and code the major themes.

Keegan (2000) asserts transformation can elicit abstract thinking rather than generating a list of factual information and also a frame of reference for a way of knowing. Thus, analyzing and interpreting journal reflections, the transformative thinking of teacher education candidates was associated with their written description of what they learned from their experiences. The reflections that illumined what teacher candidates made of what happened to them versus what actually did occur also follows transformational theory (Keegan, 2000; Mezirow, 2000). In this construct, it was desired that construction of meaning of their authentic experience in British schools would occur. A content analysis of the qualitative data was reflective of a constructivist epistemology grounding the study instead of a pre-and post-typical design (Charmaz, 2006).

Initially the journals were read and highlighted, searching for possible evidence that addressed the three questions. The analysis was an inductive process by identifying key ideas & concepts; next codes were noted next to highlighted items in the data, then, a graphic organizer was created to sort the coding into categories; finally, large clusters of similar coding were formed capturing main themes. (See Table 2.)

**Table 2.** *Content Analysis of Journals*

Major Codes	Categories	Main Themes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Traveling overseas for first time</li> <li>• Independent travel without family</li> <li>• Expectations for traveling abroad</li> <li>• British culture</li> <li>• Language differences</li> <li>• Technology issues</li> <li>• Shifting perspectives</li> <li>• School differences</li> <li>• School similarities</li> <li>• Predictions</li> <li>• Confirming/Disconfirming differences</li> <li>• Teaching Victories</li> <li>• Teaching Challenges</li> <li>• Independent Travel</li> <li>• Feeling Small</li> <li>• Viewpoints on being American</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teaching Preparation</li> <li>• Observing British Teachers &amp; Students to Learn about teaching school</li> <li>• Group Travel Reflection</li> <li>• Planning &amp; Traveling Independently</li> <li>• The Literacy Hour</li> <li>• Teaching Resources</li> <li>• Preparing to Teach Lessons with limited resources</li> <li>• Cultural Norms in Schools</li> <li>• Comparing &amp; Contrasting Cultural Differences &amp; Experiences</li> </ul>	<p><b>Theme 1:</b> Global Awareness</p> <p><b>Theme 2:</b> Retrospective Appreciation of U.S. schools based on British Literacy Practices</p> <p><b>Theme 3:</b> Teaching Self-Efficacy</p> <p><b>Theme 4:</b> Traveler’s Maturity</p>

**Participants.** While each set of open-ended journal reflections were not separated from the other summers’ data prior to analysis, it was still possible to report the aggregate demographic characteristics of the sample. This simply provides the study with knowledge the participants were from a variety of backgrounds, urban, rural, and suburban. Of the ninety-five participants who completed the open-ended questions in the journals, 80% (n = 76) who participated in the Liverpool Project Summer Study Abroad experiences were female, 20% (n = 20) were male. 48% (n = 49) were from a city or suburb versus n = 47 from small towns or grew up on rural farms. The student participants were from two central U.S. university institutions. The majority were in their final year as seniors (n = 61) or third year as juniors (n = 22), the remainder were a mix of second year sophomores (n = 10), a graduate student (n = 1) and freshmen (n = 2).

## Results

Four themes emerged and were identified from the data: (1) Global Awareness; (2) Retrospective Appreciation of U.S. schools based on British Literacy Practices; (3) Teaching Self-Efficacy; and

4) Travel Maturity. Two themes mirror the tenets of transformative thinking (Mezirow, 1991) and of global citizenry (Tarrant, 2010); the remaining two encompass reflective thinking about literacy instruction that is both novel and comparative. In support of these themes, a variety of discussions, vignettes and student quotes are provided.

### **Theme 1: Global Awareness**

Rather a surprise to most, a conscious recognition that Americans are members of a Global Society emerged across the Liverpool Project Journals data. That there are other countries in the world who have good school systems, rich cultural life, and sports that compete on a global level, not just nationally, appeared astonishing to some. Although this concept was not in the study's questions' initial intent, this thinking in students' reflections emerged over and over. "Although universities often promote study abroad through paradigms that emphasize global awareness, national sentiments and identity are still fundamental elements of how Americans see and position themselves in the world, particularly in the post—September 11 context." (Dolby, 2007, p. 141). In the fashion of qualitative research, the emergence of unexpected themes (Creswell, 2017) cannot be ignored in the final analysis. As students negotiated their national identity within their prior experiential backgrounds, urban, suburban, or rural, they began to recognize how interesting and different life in England is from their own. A final assertion, clearly a self-awareness of being a citizen of a world beyond the United States was realized by nearly every participant.

**Foreigners on Arrival Vignette.** Upon arrival in Manchester, England, all passengers must go through a passport check to enter the United Kingdom. Signage read "Foreigners" over one line and "Citizens" on the other. Automatically, students queued up in the "citizens" que. Upon being reminded they needed to change to the "Foreigners'" que, students always seemed either shocked or pensive. In multiple journals, this moment was documented. One student wrote, "I have never, ever in my life thought of myself as a foreigner and now that I am in another country it feels weird to think of myself as one." Experiencing Mezirow's (1978) disorienting dilemma occurred each summer for the students at this moment of entry. Realizing they are in a foreign country was a defining moment and heralded their shifting perspective towards a global citizenship mindset.

**A Football Vignette.** As students immersed themselves in the British schools, they enthusiastically participated in the typical practicum tasks: observing, assisting teachers, teaching reading groups, supporting students in their work, and going out with the kids at recess. The American students immediately noticed the children only played soccer and that they call our understanding of soccer, football. One student questioned this terminology in his journal rather condescendingly: "Everyone knows these are two different games and to call their soccer our football is just dumb." That particular summer, Liverpool was in the European Championships. Immersed in the Woolton Village community by now, our students began to catch the "football" excitement of the children, teachers, and other people they encountered. Everywhere they went were signs, shirts for sale, and the usual hype we would experience in the U.S. surrounding a championship. By the fifth week, we were all "football" fans and knew the difference between the two Liverpool teams, Everton (the Blues) and Liverpool (the reds). On the day of the match, we all went to the local pub and watched it among British fans: children, dogs, men and women.

At the end, we jumped up and down and hugged whoever was nearby. We saw children laughing and elderly men crying. The same student who thought it was "dumb" to call soccer football, wrote: "Tonight, I was in a pub with my American friends and professors and new British friends to see Liverpool play in the championship game. I can't believe how important this moment seemed to everyone! It surprised me that it felt so important to me that they won. I feel a connection to the people here I didn't expect to feel." This student's feelings mirrored most of the students who wrote about this that summer. We walked back to campus together a community of travelers who had become members of the Woolton Village community that night. The next day, we joined the throngs of people lining the streets to see the team ride through the city on the top of a double-decker bus. Immersing students in authentic activities like this during study abroad experiences are transformative.

**A Baseball Vignette.** One of our students asked the kids he was supervising on the playground if they ever played baseball at recess and he wrote in his journal: "I asked the kids in my class if they wanted to play baseball today and they gave me looks, like, no. They didn't want to play it. They didn't even have bats and balls. I always thought every kid knows about baseball. I've been thinking about this tonight. St. Louis is just one tiny place compared to the rest of the world. Baseball seems like it is everybody's sport. But maybe not. Football (soccer) is everybody's sport in Liverpool." What this student was beginning to contemplate is a global membership rather than a local one.

## **Theme 2: Retrospective Appreciation of U.S. schools based on British Literacy Practices**

**Respect for the Efficacy of British Literacy Practices.** Learning about the literacy instruction practices of a foreign country, in this case, Great Britain, was an opportunity to assess the ways children learn and teachers teach in British schools. Early on during each trip to Liverpool, the American students learned literacy matters dearly to the British. It is at the heart of their drive to raise standards in schools. The now infamous Literacy Hour widely used in Great Britain has been implemented for several years. In 2002, they set a challenging national target for literacy, 80% of 11-year-olds are expected to reach Level 4 in their testing, a highly regarded target for that age. The Literacy Hour was first introduced in the context of the National Curriculum's Literacy Strategy. The central idea was to raise the standards of literacy in the schools through more focused literacy instruction and effective classroom management. Following its implementation, Machin & McNally (2003) studied the effect of the Literacy Hour in English primary schools on pupil achievement. This investigation studied over 400 English primary schools over a four-year span. By comparing schools that used the Literacy Hour with schools who did not, they found an increased level of literacy attainment opposed to those schools who were not exposed to Literacy Hour focused teaching. Lastly, Great Britain has found the Literacy Hour to be quite cost effective over other alternatives like lowering class size. These and other current findings are of strong significance when placed into the wider educational debate about what works best in schools for improving pupil performance (DFEE, 1999). What the British have found suggests that public policy aimed at changing the content and structure of teaching can significantly raise student achievement (Machin & McNally, 2003).

Our pre-service teachers used their knowledge of the literacy practices in the U.S. to write in their journals. As they became embedded in British schools, they wrote anecdotally to inform

the study of the commonalities and differences between the British & U.S. schools. Over two decades ago, whole language theorists (Clay, 1966; Goodman, 1989) challenged assumptions educators held about early reading instruction. This research based on early theorists' view of literacy as complex interactive and interpretive processes that determine the development by the social and cultural context of the child (Bruner, 1967; Vygotsky, 1978) forms the basis for studying what might be the power of the success of the common British Literacy Hour in comparison to the multiple approaches used throughout the U.S.

Armed with this information, our students entered their classrooms with an eye to discover what they might about how this was implemented. What they found surprised us all. The teachers followed an instructional model for an hour. The model begins with an introduction of the objective that refers to how it fits into what they have been learning, a direct mini-lesson of sorts follows. Next, students have a period of time, the largest period, for independent practice or some guided practice on the skill, and then the plenary session occurs at the end. At this moment, they were asked to "Write the lesson." This meant they were to open up their composition journals and write what they had learned. Following the writing, students shared what they had learned by reading it aloud.

**Differences in Classroom Resources.** Having been in a setting back on campus where their practicum experience was in a campus elementary "Lab School," which was heavy laden with materials, books, workbooks, a copier, and full of decorations, i.e. a typical American classroom, they were astonished at the sparseness of the British classrooms and their limited resources. Yet, they were in awe of the teaching they observed and surprised at the advanced literacy levels in the students; far advanced of students in the U.S. at the same grade levels. One student wrote in her journal, "I used to look around the classrooms I was in and be so impressed with all the "stuff" the teacher had laying around. Now, I am even more impressed with how these teachers teach and how smart the kids are here. They read with such expression and I can't believe how well they write without help!" Many of our students "thought" they were viewing classrooms full of gifted children and made comments about it in their journals, "No, kidding, I think I am in the gifted room! My kids are writing chapter books! Not just little stories, chapter books with characters that have dialogue with quotation marks. These are third graders!" Lesson learned, British children have to write what they have learned which means they have re-processed the learning.

### **Theme 3: Teaching Self-Efficacy**

Again, most of the journal entries about British instructional practices included how our pre-service students were considering and questioning literacy beliefs they have formed from personal experience and course work. As one student wrote, "I am rethinking what it means to teach kids to read. I know my professors have been telling us to teach reading and writing at the same time but I just couldn't take that in. It just didn't seem possible to teach kids writing when they haven't mastered reading. But here, kids in my Year 1 that would really be Kindergarten at home are writing whole sentences in their lesson books." Another student penned, "I am in a Year 4 classroom and I can NOT believe how these kids can write. They write with complete sentences, spell correctly and on top of that, they have really perfect handwriting." What students realized from this setting each summer is the importance of the recursive nature of

reading and writing. Immersed in a classroom of British students, they observed first-hand what children are capable of if they are required to write instead of fill in worksheets or workbooks.

Rising to Escrow's phases (1978) "Planning a course of action" and "Acquiring knowledge and skills for action," over half of the students reflected and revisited how they plan to teach in the future. "I am completely changing how I plan to teach kids to read when I graduate. I am going to share this with my teacher when I student teach and see if I can use reading journals for the kids so I can do the Plenary session at the end of my lessons. If not, I am going to do it as the closure section on my lesson plans." This particular practicum work was a catalyst for reflecting their own efficacy as teachers for over ninety percent of the participants.

**Becoming Resourceful Teachers.** Difference in levels of resources was a second trend woven throughout the British school's reflection data. The students noticed immediately there was no copier and no workbooks available to them. During our evening class, this was discussed by and among the students who appeared shocked and concerned they would not have these available for planning their lessons. They were told to spend some time observing the British teachers and to ask questions about how they go about teaching. A preservice teacher wrote:

At first I was really worried. I have been depending on worksheets and workbooks to plan my lessons. After I began to watch my teacher, I figured it out. She is teaching basically the same things I have been, but she has the kids do the writing. Today, she wrote some sentences on the white board and the kids had to write down the sentence in their journals and fill in the missing word that was the correct verb tense. Next, she asked them to compose three sentences with a missing verb. The kids traded journals and filled in the missing verb in their friend's journal. They traded back and made sure their partner wrote the correct one. The teacher and I walked around and made sure the students were getting them correct. At the end of the Literacy Hour, the teacher asked them to "write their lesson" or when do you use present, past, and future tense and give examples. After they did this, she asked students to share out. If anyone gave a wrong answer, the teacher re-explained it. Who knew you could teach this way without a worksheet or workbook?!"

Descriptions like this appeared repeatedly in their journals and as time went on, they became more and more adept at planning lessons and creating their own resources. Having to do so led to a stance of confidence and resourcefulness as teachers. Hadis (2005) asks the question, "Why are the study abroad students considered more resourceful and thus, better students when they return from study abroad with practical, authentic learning experiences in a foreign country?" Multiple reflections that reported teaching self-efficacy and reliance on personal creativity to plan and teach lessons answers this question.

Time after time, students reflected how they had to rely on their creativity, knowledge about how kids learn to spell and write, and children's literature for teaching their reading and writing lessons:

Okay, I was just paralyzed when my teacher told me to plan a lesson for the class to study the spellings of /igh/ for reading and writing. I started thinking about how we do it in

first grade at Lab School and began to think about the worksheet my teacher used once with a ghost that had a speech bubble that said, "I'm a fright." The worksheet had pictures of things that are spelled with the /igh/ like night, light, bright, flight, fight, etc. So, I decided to plan a lesson comparing these words to words that sound the same in the middle but are spelled with a different long i spelling. My teacher liked the lesson so much she is having me plan a phonics lesson for every day I am there next week. I feel so excited about how I was able to do this with nothing at all!

#### **Theme 4: Traveler's Maturity**

Sojourning abroad is sometimes regarded as a once-in-a-lifetime experience. Spending extended time in one country when students know people and participate in its day-to-day life countered that thinking. Via social media connections with the participants, many have returned to England and other places they traveled with their peers on their three-day weekends while in Liverpool. Independence, a trait of maturity, developed in the students as they planned their weekends in groups of two or three. They organized their travel plans with plane tickets, hotel stays, tours, or just exploring a city in the U.K. and across Europe. Travel in other countries within the context of the study abroad afforded the students to take responsibility for their own travel decisions without the oversight of parents. Over 60% of the comments about personal travel was identified and coded as traveling maturity. For most, the study abroad will be a first sojourn without family. It was important to us as a university to teach students how to navigate and conduct themselves in a foreign country. We bought them BritRail passes for the U.K. With a gradual release of responsibility and independence, we provided them with a local Liverpool City Center group activity, a day trip to Edinburgh, Scotland, and a weekend group trip to London before releasing them to travel on their own without the professors.

**A Liverpool City Center Vignette.** Upon arrival in Manchester, our Hope University liaison met us with large vans to transport us to Woolton Village, right outside of City Center Liverpool. To assist with jet lag, we required the students to drop off their luggage in their dorm rooms, shower, and meet in the refectory for lunch ready to go on an adventure. We handed out bus passes for the summer. All of us rode the local busses to get around to schools and the city. We all stepped outside and jumped on a double-decker bus. Some squealed with the delight of children to be riding on the second level. To acclimate them with the City Center that would be their home for the next eight to ten weeks, each group of four were handed a city map and a list of places to locate, some useful like the drugstore, Boots, and others were landmarks like Albert Dock, the Beatles museum, and "The Cave" where the Beatles used to play. They were to document these spots with a digital photo and meet at the Limestone Train Station where we boarded another double-decker bus back to campus. The ride back was noisy and full of talk about everything they had experienced. A typical journal entry from the first day read, "We have only been here one day and I feel like I have been here a week. I know how to catch a bus and what to see and where to go in Liverpool City Center! Everything is so different here. I thought it wouldn't be because they speak English like we do. People we talked to have cool accents and are helpful. Everything is in pounds so we have to figure out what to give when we pay. It's a lot busier than I thought it would be too. Another thing, there are lots of school kids on the local buses. A girl told us that is how they go to school and every school has a different uniform. She is in high school and had on a purple blazer. Thanks to this scavenger hunt I feel like I know

what to do to get around Liverpool. Our bus stopped at Penny Lane and across the street we saw a sign that said "St. Pepper's. We are all stoked to be where the Beatles began and are already planning an evening trip to "The Cave." A purposeful exploratory assignment can help study abroad students begin to feel at ease in their new surroundings as well as stave off paranoid, anxiousness brought on by jet lag and the realization of being in a foreign country for the first time.

**Edinburgh Day Trip Vignette.** A second "travel training" planned was a group day trip on the train to Edinburgh, Scotland. It has a great blend of past and present-day sights and sounds for Americans to experience. Students were given hop-on-and-hop-off bus tour passes and asked to walk up the Royal Mile as part of their course requirement. The bus pass included entry to the castle and students were advised to go up to the top of the castle and see the view of the city. In our study abroad planning budget, we added costs like the bus tours and entry into important or historic sites. This ensured our students experienced the highpoints of that location and heard descriptions of what they were seeing. Each summer, the students responded to these "required" tours positively:

During one of our Sunday night prep classes, our professor began to tell us how we would do a little group traveling. They spoke about bus tours and sites we would be required to do. We talked among ourselves and didn't like the idea at all. But now we are here and just got back from an amazing day in Scotland, I get it. When we got off the train in city center, we heard bagpipes. It excited me to hear real ones and see a guy playing them. Right there a double decker bus pulled up and we all got on and sat on top. It was like a convertible, no top. It was a nice day and it started up and the bus driver started talking and told us about what we were driving by. Some places, he stopped to let us see it more and take pictures. If you saw something you wanted to explore, you could get off and get on the next bus. It became so interesting we stayed on till we got back to the train station. The bus driver told us to walk up the Royal Mile to the castle and how to take a left and start walking on the cobblestone street. He gave us some advice and it helped us all; to stop in one of the many shops along the way and buy a sandwich, crisps, and drink before entering the castle. We did that and when we got to the top of the castle and could see out over the city, we hung out and ate our lunches. You can see the whole city in front of you, the port and River Leith, and almost to the North Sea. Pretty cool, they told us there had been a castle on this "rock" since the 12th Century. I can't wrap my head around how old it is. It's pretty rustic and the rooms are not fancy at all.

On the train ride back to Liverpool, the students were overheard talking and were observed writing furiously in their journals. They were seated in groups of four facing each other with a table in the center. This kind of seating proved to be conducive to collaborative discussion and sharing their travel responses with each other. One student remarked to no one and everyone in general, "There is no way we are going to have a better day than this for the rest of the summer." Little did she know, London looms.

**A London Vignette.** A group three-day weekend trip to London was planned. During our Thursday night class session, they were provided directions to meet at Lime Street Train Station in City Center Liverpool at 5:30 a.m. or be left behind. On arrival in London and check-in at the

Royal National Hotel, famous for housing large groups of travel abroad students, our students were given hop-on-and-off bus passes and a list of places to see during the weekend. In Edinburgh, we had entered and viewed the Scottish Museum and students were so amazed and surprised to see the real art of the masters. In London, they were advised to enter and walk through the British Museum. They were also required to stay in groups of three or more, and to be back in the hotel lobby no later than nine p.m. "That's it?" they asked. "Yes. Use your day to discover London and all it has to offer." They took their bags to their rooms and ventured out.

For three days, they explored London and in the evenings after nine, sat out in the hotel's courtyard eating and sharing time with other university students staying at the hotel. We took the latest train back to Liverpool on Sunday night. It was such an exciting weekend and everyone had enjoyed the freedom to explore and see everything from Buckingham Palace and changing of the guard, Big Ben, Westminster Abbey, and ridden the London Eye, the "Tube", and boated down the Thames. Tennis and soccer/football fans took the train over to see Wimbledon or out to see Wembley Stadium. This could have been a letdown to go back to the dorm rooms and working in schools; yet it wasn't. One student's journal entry captured the collective sentiment following the London weekend. She collapsed into her seat on the train and gasped, "I'm ready to go home!" I looked at her and said, "Oh, no, we are here six more weeks!" She replied, "I mean Liverpool!" Her journal entry for that night read:

We just spent a weekend in one of the world's largest, most exciting cities! There are so many people everywhere in London and I think we saw some of the world's most incredible sights in the world. Buckingham Palace, Westminster Abbey, and Big Ben. I think I have gone deeper down into the earth I have ever been because the second and third day we just used our maps and the "Tube" to get around fast. These were the most exciting days we have had so far, but I am ready to go home to Liverpool.

The longer we immersed ourselves in Woolton Village, Woolton Junior School, Hope University's campus, and Liverpool at large, they became familiar to the students and had a feeling of "home." At our next class meeting, Monday night, after discussing what they have learned so far about traveling in new places, students were told they were released to travel anywhere they cared to in Europe for their three-day weekends. Most were up on the computers until midnight planning the next weekend's trip.

**Solo Trips Vignettes.** Freedom to travel independently definitely inspired traveler's maturity in the students. Every weekend, students reported where they were traveling and what they would be doing. These mini-trips inspired a lot of enthusiasm for traveling around the U.K. and farther afield in Europe. One summer, the first independent trip they planned was to Dublin. They all went and stayed in the same hotel. Some found it reassuring to stay together while others just wanted to enjoy the company of a place they all wanted to go. But after that, each weekend there were multiple cities and countries they traveled for a variety of reasons. These ranged from Paris, Rome, Amsterdam, Berlin, Venice, and Madrid. And the reasons varied from places they had studied like Berlin and the Holocaust to religious reasons like seeing Rome and the Vatican, to popular sites like the Eiffel tower. Students also planned trips to attend concerts and performances in Manchester and London while others went to see sporting events, rugby,

football, and even tennis matches at Wimbledon. Their journal responses were full of purposeful choices and confident travel decision-making for all of these experiences:

**Venice and Murano Glass Vignette.** One student wrote:

This week, I talked my group into going to Venice with me. We decided each week one of us got to pick where to go. My grandmother had a piece of Murano glass she brought back from her cruise and she told me all about the island where they make this kind of glass. I wanted to see it because she loved to tell me about the day they stopped in Venice and she took a ferry tour to the factory. We loved Venice! We rode a gondola through the canals, took a water taxi on the Grand Canal, ate real Italian pizza, and had a gelato while we wandered the streets along the canals. It is such an interesting place, with buildings like no other place anywhere. It was hot and we started to notice, everything is stone with no grass or trees. When we bought our ferry tickets we met some people who had on swimsuits. They said one of the ferry stops had a popular beach where people go to swim. The next day when we got ready to go on the ferry to the Murano factory, we wore our swimsuits under our sundresses in case we could figure the beach stop out. The ferry guy told us which stop to get off for the beach. The factory was amazing. We saw and listened to a glass blower make a piece of glass. He had been doing it all of his life as his family had been for lots of generations. The island was small with a very small population. Way back, the original factory in Venice caught fire and burned the whole city so the glass factory was rebuilt on this island. I never thought about how people might live in a spot like this; very small and nothing much to do except go to work and make glass or work at the glass factory in some way. I bought a small piece of glass to take home. Like my grandma, I will have something to remember Venice and the island where they made it. Haha. When I get to thinking I am bored or have nothing to do on a weekend, I might think about this place and how where I live is not this boring.

**Porto, Portugal Vignette.** Having been in cool, rainy northern England for a few weeks, one group researched and found a place with a beach in Portugal. They had discovered EasyJet has weekend getaway pricing for roundtrip flights and Porto, Portugal was a particularly inexpensive one. Although England's weather was discussed in one of our Sunday night planning sessions, students were feeling like it was summer and they weren't swimming and sunning as usual. Six students decided to go on this trip and took off to spend the weekend at the beach. One journal response from this trip mirrored the rest:

We went to Porto thinking it was going to be a beach resort. Well, it was a beach but it was not what we were expecting. We stayed in an inexpensive hotel in Porto in a not very good part of the city and took a bus to the beach each day. The beach was brown sand and rocky in places. The first day we had to leave the beach early because we got thirsty and hungry. There was nowhere to buy anything. I guess we were expecting it to be more like Florida where there are places along the beach to eat and drink. We also got really sunburned because we left home in mid-May and had not been out in the sun at all until now. By the third day, we were ready to go home to Liverpool. At least we saw the Atlantic Ocean and relaxed on a beach.

**Summer Solstice Vignette.** At the beginning of our nightly classes back on campus, we always began by debriefing the day and sharing stories about British classrooms. One student said, "My class is studying the Druids and the summer solstice coming up. Maybe we should think about getting down there next week." This led to an animated discussion of how to get there, that it was a "happening" we shouldn't miss, and a request to go as a group. The students planned the excursion and it was all they could talk about for days. We met at Limestreet Station at 3:00 and boarded the train for Salisbury. They had researched it was still nine miles to Stonehenge and reserved two roundtrip vans to get us out there. Of course, there were hundreds of people there but we managed to stay together and found a spot to experience the summer solstice in person. For one moment in time, we were not Americans, we were among peoples of the earth, marking the first day of summer like the ancient Druids. A typical journal prompted response: "What did you experience, what thoughts did it give you beyond telling what you did or saw, and how does it make you feel about yourself situated in a foreign country?" One student wrote:

Since I heard my teacher talking about the Summer Solstice and the ancient Druids and Stonehenge, I really wanted to go there. Once we talked about it in class, everybody wanted to go. We went and I mean it, it was a happening and a moment we will never have again as a group. Once we found a place to stand at Stonehenge, we were just in awe. I could feel it and see it on everybody's faces. I put my arms across the shoulders of my two friends on either side of me just to feel connected, I guess. That place is magical and massive and it made me feel small. I looked down the row and everybody in our group was connected the same way; all of us, even our professor. We stood there a long time like that. Nobody was talking and just taking it all in. I think it was the most important thing of the whole summer to be here and we actually didn't know we were going to do this. We rode back home to Liverpool on the train and it was still light out all the way. Even back in the states where not much mention of Stonehenge happens, I think on the Summer Solstice date every June, I am going to remember this night and that place and the moment I stood with my friends and got the chills.

Each summer, an inadvertent, spontaneous moment like this happened. Study abroad affords students the opportunity to consider a spontaneous bit of travel because an opportunity presents itself like Stonehenge and the Summer Solstice. Other moments like this one were the Liverpool Football Club's championship, Gold Cup Ascot, happening to be in London on Wimbledon Championship weekend, and or concerts in Hyde Park in London, a simple train trip away from Liverpool. The students began to relish the spontaneous travel in a country where you don't have to have a reservation way ahead to go places on the trains; travel maturity at its best.

**A Paris Vignette.** At the end of each summer's study abroad, students had a week to spend traveling and we reconvened in Liverpool to say good bye to the children and teachers in the schools and to thank our university liaison and staff. Traveling home to the U.S. meant a train trip to London, transfer to the Chunnel traveling under the English Channel to Paris where we spent a day at the Louvre and Musee d'Orsay, a visit to the Eiffel Tower and a day at the Palace de Versailles, after which we flew home from France. Even following everything they had experienced over the last several weeks, there was a high level of expectation and excitement surrounding these last three days.

By now, students didn't question the day in the museums. They knew, they would be viewing art that is only the world traveler's privilege to see in person. They had also learned, there is a world history they didn't know well. Several referred to this lack of world history knowledge in the journal responses written while in Paris:

I have always wanted to go to Paris and see the Eiffel Tower. It is just one of those pretty sites girls want to see. I had no idea why it was there or what it was built for. It was also bigger than I thought it would be. I'll never forget the first time I caught sight of it. We got in last night after midnight and saw nothing on the way to our hotel on a side street by the River Seine. In the morning, we were walking down to the river from our hotel on to catch the bus. I looked up and it was peeking over the top of the trees. When we got closer, we saw more of it and when we turned a corner, there it was! It was across the river from us so we could see it all. We just stopped and stared and then took a lot of pictures. It was a different color than I expected and the metal was a lot more detailed than I ever knew it was with lots of curly metal designs. My group was so excited we went over the bridge and got in line to go up in it. We could see all over Paris from the top and the tour guy told us a lot of interesting stuff about why it was built and how long it took. It would be fun to know more. In the U.S., it is just a pretty thing to decorate stuff with and coming here, it seemed like just a tourist thing to do, not a national monument that means more to the French people.

This was a thematic thread woven throughout the journals as they were analyzed and coded. A realization that other countries have a history of their own apart from the U.S. Global thinkers seriously consider this and the student abroad participants developed this mindset after ten weeks abroad.

Other students composed journal entries that connected what they were seeing in Paris to prior experiences both in the school classrooms they were embedded and the museums and historical sites they had experienced:

I was actually really excited to visit the Louvre and the Musee d'Orsay today. I never thought I would say that about a museum. I have already visited the British National museum, the Scottish National museum, and one in the Amsterdam. I can't believe I have seen the famous art I have seen and now I can say I have stood in front of the Mona Lisa, probably the most famous one of all. When we had an Art History professor talk to us at one of our Sunday night planning classes last spring, I remember her saying we would see the world's masterpieces. At the time, I don't think I understood what that would mean to me. I even think I had the thought this might be boring to have to go to so many museums. Now I know our professors wanted to expose us to something special and it has been for me. I think it has been for all of us and made us aware of what we have been seeing. We were talking last night on the train, when we go somewhere the professors have planned for us, we all get this excited, jittery feeling about it because we know it will be something special they know we need to see or experience. All during the trip they have also taught us to pay attention to the details of what is around us. They took us to the Liverpool Cathedral of the Anglican Church and made us do a scavenger hunt of the animals "hidden" in its architecture, inside and out. I can't believe what I

would have missed if they hadn't made us do that! Everywhere I have gone, I look closer. When we went to the Palace of Versailles, wow! The details and art I saw in the walls and on the ceilings! And as we learned about the Hall of Mirrors where the Treaty of Versailles was signed, I can't believe I was standing in the spot, in the very room where such an important thing happened. I am beginning to wish I had taken World History I and II as electives. My advisor tried to get me to and said teachers should know about the world. I didn't see it like that. I just thought I would be teaching American kids and wouldn't need to teach anything about the world. If only I had known this would become so interesting to me and how there is more out there than just the United States. The day at Versailles was our last day but it seemed like the first again. Everything so interesting and new and different. On the other hand, as our last experience, I was a much more attentive listener and observer because of everything I have seen and done. I am not from a family who is wealthy and travels internationally. But now, I have decided this will not be my first and last. I have to come back someday to see everything again and more.

Acknowledging they are global citizens and were developing travel maturity became a realization for each student in one way or another during all three summers of *The Liverpool Project*. "A trait of maturity, independence entails not merely to do as one pleases, but to take responsibility for one's actions rather than relying on other adults to make decisions for oneself." (Hadis, 2005, p. 62)

### **When England becomes the Classroom for Preparing Future Teachers**

Clearly, there are multiple positive benefits when England becomes the classroom for preparing future teachers. Recent research stresses universities are focusing on inspiring students toward a global citizenry, yet translating this into practice is unrealized. One way many universities are attempting to instill this in students is to encourage and offer immersive study abroad programs.

However, immersion in culture is not, on its own, an assurance of an understanding or desire to consider oneself a global citizen (Franziska, et al, 2014; Petzold and Peter, 2015). While *the Liverpool Project* study abroad was transformative for some students, there were students who did not have rich, intuitive reflections. This suggests a more purposeful approach to the pre-planning phase needs to be taught before the summer study abroad is needed. This should include philosophy, information, and discussions about global citizenry. One of the purposes of *The Liverpool Project* study abroad for each summer was for students to translate their study abroad experience into an expansion of personal perspective and development toward a global awareness.

Other purposes were to learn about a different school system and increase confidence as a teacher. In brief, lessons learned from the British teachers and classrooms are important to note and by all accounts, still impact the participants as they teach in their own classrooms. These are a compilation of the "lessons learned" from the journal data when students were asked what they learned about British Literacy instruction and teaching efficacy:

### **Ten Lessons Learned from the British.**

- 1) Have students write everything; all day. The more students write, the more they can be expected to write. Provide real topics for students to write about. Expect students to listen to and learn the history of our country and ask them to write about it.
- 2) The Literacy Hour Framework. It matters to have a framework model to follow. Kids will know what to expect from the routines and procedures you use and it will help you plan and assess instruction.
- 3) Reading and writing are recursive. When kids write and read aloud their writing is the time they read with the best fluent expression.
- 4) Reading and study in other content areas like history or science. This gives kids the vocabulary to be good writers and topics to write about that matter.
- 5) Sometimes less is more. Copies of worksheets and workbooks are not the teacher; be the teacher.
- 6) Have kids write chapter books. An ongoing project with characters keeps up the motivation to write.
- 7) Make time to allow kids to read for fun and no other reason.
- 8) Be open to how education happens in other countries!
- 9) The Golden Nugget: At the end of lessons, make time for the Literacy Hour's Plenary Session. Have students write what they learned and have them share out loud. Praise correct information and provide time for correcting misnomers. The gift of time for learning is a theme that appeared before us in British schools.
- 10) Appreciate and look forward to state assessments. As a Liverpool teacher gushed on test day, "Oh, we are so excited. This is the day we get to find out who has learned what!" We can take a page from this glass half full view of assessment, can't we?

## **Conclusion**

This study provides American Teacher Education programs with insights into ways future teacher candidates can experience short-term, faculty-led study abroad programs created with authentic school placements. According to Daloz, Keen, Keen, and Parks (1996), "for many, these kinds of study abroad may be analogous to a pilgrimage, in which students are venturing overseas on an extended journey, without their immediate family and often for the first time. The transformational learning associated with such travel occurs as a result of the opportunity for reflection and elaboration. A caution, a good pilgrimage leads to discovery and transformation, but it isn't complete until you have returned home and told your story. Home is where someone hears and cares about the story, helps you sort out what you have seen, heard, and done (p. 38)."

Following these study abroad trips, most entered immediately into student teaching and they did tell their stories; perhaps to their families and friends, but worthier of note for teacher educators, they told them during student teaching at their schools. It was what we learned from their cooperating teachers in our Professional Development Schools because they realized the field work our students completed in Liverpool transformed them into "different" student teachers. They described their student teachers with words like flexible, humble, open-minded, creative, independent, self-starting, and most of all, resourceful. All dispositions and a maturing we cannot teach on campus in courses. Clearly, these transformed student teachers became more independently resourceful and open to new ideas and experiences; all triggered by their study abroad.

Transformational learning can occur as a result of short-term study abroad programs. Pairing academic course work with the dimension of a study abroad provides education students with content they need to learn as they are embedded in schools in another country. It is not sufficient to just travel to another country with hope of experiencing another culture. It will not happen without a human connection, purposefully planned coursework, and field experiences. These are important ingredients in fostering the global awareness (Tarrant & Lyons, 2012) and citizenship teacher education programs desire for their students.

## References

- Aguilar, A. L., & Gingerich, O. (2002). Experiential pedagogy for study abroad: Educating for global citizenship. *Frontiers: The Interdisciplinary Journal of Study Abroad*, 8, 41–82.
- Bruner, J. (1967). *Studies in cognitive growth: A collaboration at the center for cognitive growth*. New York: Wiley.
- Charmaz, K. (2006). *Constructing grounded theory: Practical guide through qualitative analysis*. London: Sage.
- Clay, M. (1966). *Emergent reading behaviour*. University of Auckland: New Zealand.
- Coghlan, A., & Gooch, M. (2011). Applying a transformative learning framework to volunteer tourism. *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, 19(3), 713-728.
- Creswell, J. 2009. *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches*, Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Daloz, L., Keen, C., Keen, J., & Parks, S. (1996). *Common fire: Leading lives of commitment in a complex world*. Boston, MA: Beacon Press.
- D'Amato, L., & Krasny, M. (2011). Outdoor adventure education: Applying transformative learning theory to understanding instrumental learning and personal growth in environmental education. *The Journal of Environmental Education*, 42(4), 237-254.
- DFEE. (1999). *The National curriculum: Handbook for primary teachers in England*. London, England.
- Dolby, N. (2007). Reflections on nation: American undergraduates and education abroad. *Journal of Studies in International Education*, 11, 141–156.
- Goodman, K. (1989). Whole-Language Research: Foundations and Development. *The Elementary School Journal*, 90(2), 207-221.en
- Hadis, B. F. (2005). Why are they better students when they come back? Determinants of academic focusing gains in the study abroad experience. *Frontiers: the Interdisciplinary Journal to Study Abroad*, 11, 57–70.
- Hutchison, A., & Rea, T. (2011). Transformative learning and identity formation on the ‘smiling coast’ of West Africa. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 27(3), 552-559.
- Petzold, K. & Peter, T. (2015). The social norm to study abroad: determinants and effects. *Higher Education*, 69: 885. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10734-014-9811-4>
- Institute of International Education. (2011). Open doors 2011 fast facts. Retrieved December 19, 2011, from <http://www.iie.org/en/Research-and-Publications/Open-Doors>
- Kegan, R. (2000). What ‘form’ transforms? A constructive-developmental approach to

- transformational learning. In J. Mezirow (Ed.), *Learning as transformation: Critical perspectives on a theory in progress* (pp. 35–69). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Lilley, K., Barker, M., & Harris, N. (2015) Educating global citizens: a good ‘idea’ or an organisational practice? *Higher Education Research & Development*, 34:5, 957- 971.
- Machin, S. & McNally, S. (2003). *The literacy hour*. London: Center for Economics and Education.
- Mezirow, J. (1978). *Education for perspective transformation: Women’s re-entry programs in community colleges*. New York, NY: Teacher’s College, Columbia University.
- Mezirow, J. (1991). *Transformative dimensions in adult learning*. San Francisco: CA Jossey-Bass.
- Mezirow, J. (2000). *Learning as transformation: Critical perspectives on a theory in progress* (1st ed.). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Ogden, A. (2010). *Education abroad and the making of global citizens: Assessing learning outcomes of course-embedded, faculty-led international programming*. (Doctoral Dissertation). Retrieved from the Pennsylvania State University archives.
- Smith, C. & Whitely, H. (2000). Developing literacy through the literacy hour: A survey of teachers’ experiences. *Reading*, 34, 34-38.
- Stoner, K. R., Tarrant, M. A., Perry, L., Stoner, L., Wearing, S. & Lyons, K. (2014) Global Citizenship as a Learning Outcome of Educational Travel. *Journal of Teaching in Travel & Tourism*, 14:2, 149-163.
- Trilokekar, R., & Kukar, P. (2011). Disorienting experiences during study abroad: Reflections of pre-service teacher candidates. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 27(7), 1141-1150.
- Trede, F., Bowles, W. & Bridges, D. (2013) Developing intercultural competence and global citizenship through international experiences: academics’ perceptions. *Intercultural Education*, 24:5, 442-455.
- Vygotsky, L. (1978). *Mind in society*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

*Claudia J. McVicker (mcvickerc@william.jewell.edu), Associate Professor of Literacy Education, is a teacher and researcher at William Jewell College in Liberty, MO.*