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The nature of international cross-cultural experiences as articulated by U. S. secondary teachers

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THE NATURE OF INTERNATIONAL CROSS-CULTURAL EXPERIENCES AS
ARTICULATED BY U.S. SECONDARY TEACHERS

by

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“THE NATURE OF INTERNATIONAL CROSS-CULTURAL EXPERIENCES AS ARTICULATED BY U.S. SECONDARY TEACHERS,” a Doctoral research project prepared by KIRSTEN A. BARNES in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Doctor of Education degree in the Educational Foundations and Leadership Department.

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this microethnographic qualitative study was to explore the nature of international cross-cultural travel experiences as articulated by U.S. secondary teachers, through in-depth personal interviews and personal self-reflections. The purposive sample included eight licensed secondary teachers from a rural high school in the Willamette Valley in Oregon, who had traveled internationally with each having more than 16 years of teaching experience. Through the two interviews and reflective journal entries of each participant, I explored the nature of international cross-cultural travel experiences: (1) how did participants describe their international cross-cultural travel experiences; (2) what did international cross-cultural travel experiences mean to the participant; and (3) what did teachers self-report about how their cross-cultural travel experiences have shaped them as teachers. I used a three-stage strategy of coding with initial, focused, and thematic analyses of the 125 pages of transcripts. I found 37 themes during this time that were repeated or similar in nature to at least two or more of the participants. At the completion of identifying themes, I moved to focused coding, where I collapsed the 37 themes into like categories. In this process, I created a spreadsheet with the 37 themed categories and then collapsed them into 13 categories. The final step involved thematic analyses, a process that looked for similarities, patterns, and uniqueness in both the transcript and the spreadsheet and seven themes emerged. As a result of my research I found eight findings. First, secondary teachers travel out of curiosity. Second, pre-travel arrangements and philosophy of travel directly impact participants’ experiences. Third, international cross-cultural experiences of cultures much different from their own allowed participants a greater understanding of the minority experience. Fourth, international cross-cultural experiences promoted transformational learning as participants examined their perspectives. Fifth, international cross-cultural
experiences encouraged future international travel. Sixth, international cross-cultural experiences fostered reflection on the teachers’ practices. Seventh, international cross-cultural experiences encouraged participants to promote student travel. Finally, international cross-cultural travel energized participants and created opportunities for professional development.
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A final thanks to the eight secondary teachers who participated in this study. I greatly appreciate the time you spent sharing your travel experiences, which makes this project possible.
DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my family, who has supported me every step of the way. I also dedicate this work to the teachers who travel internationally, curious to learn more and willing to share their experience with their students.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT .................................................................................................................. ii

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .......................................................................................... iv

DEDICATION ............................................................................................................ v

TABLE OF CONTENTS .............................................................................................. vi

CHAPTER 1 ............................................................................................................... 1
   Introduction ............................................................................................................. 1
      Statement of the Problem .................................................................................... 3
      Research Questions ............................................................................................ 3
      Definition of Terms ............................................................................................ 4
      Limitations .......................................................................................................... 5
      Delimitations ....................................................................................................... 6
      Summary ............................................................................................................. 6

CHAPTER 2 ............................................................................................................... 8
   Review of the Literature ....................................................................................... 8
      Introduction ......................................................................................................... 8
      Cross-Cultural Experience Yields Transformational Learning ......................... 11
      Global Mindedness Developed Through Cross-Cultural Experience ............. 16
      Cultural Humility ................................................................................................. 20
      Impact of Foreign Travel as Tourist and Traveler ............................................. 22
      Conclusions from the Literature Review ............................................................ 26

CHAPTER 3 ............................................................................................................... 28
   Method .................................................................................................................. 28
      Introduction ......................................................................................................... 28
      Setting .................................................................................................................. 28
      Participants ......................................................................................................... 28
      Role of the Researcher ........................................................................................ 29
      Research Design and Procedures .................................................................... 30
      Data Analysis ...................................................................................................... 32
      Research Ethics .................................................................................................. 33
      Potential Contributions of the Research ............................................................ 33

CHAPTER 4 ............................................................................................................... 37
   Findings .................................................................................................................. 37
      Findings: Initial and Focused Coding .................................................................. 38
      Why Secondary Teachers Travel ....................................................................... 42
         To see things that they have heard or read about .......................................... 42
         To learn more about locations and cultures ............................................... 44
         To understand their family roots and history ............................................. 45
TABLES

TABLE 1. Preview of Participants ..................................................... 37

TABLE 2. Phenomena and Theme Results ............................................ 38

TABLE 3. Themes and Research Sub-questions ..................................... 41

TABLE 4. Best and Worst Part about Travel for the Tourist, Traveler, and Servant …74
CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Americans are dusting off their passports and seeing the world in large numbers, with more than 35 million citizens expected to travel internationally in 2013 (Martin, 2012). According to Forbes Magazine, about one-third of the United States population owns a valid passport, a number that is more than double the amount of passports in circulation in 2000 and 15 times greater than the seven million in 1989 (Bender, 2012). In June, July, and August, the busiest travel time, over 19 million Americans traveled internationally and it is during this time that a majority of teachers used their summer vacation to experience places and cultures outside of their normative setting (Office of Travel and Tourism, 2012). This travel may have occurred through recreational, independent adventuring, academic scholarship, teacher-led student tours, content tours, mission and humanitarian trips, and a wide variety of other opportunities.

I was curious how teachers’ international travel experience influences their cross-cultural beliefs, values, and attitudes about people from different backgrounds. This experience proves to be an important aspect of professional development in the United States, especially with the increase of students who are immigrating from all over the world, creating a more diverse student population based on race, ethnicity, religion, and socio-economic status (U.S. Department of Education, 2007). As the student demographic population changes in the American classroom, so does the need to better understand students’ cultural background.

The National Center for Education Statistics (2012) reported that the majority of teachers in the United States are white, middle-class, and female. The perceived problem is that the teaching force does not understand the cultures of many of their students and may not be able to relate or instruct them well. This is coupled with the fact that 84.5% of teachers in the United
States stay in their same school from year to year, but the demographics of their students may change dramatically in the course of five years (National Center for Education Statistics, 2012). The Institute of Education Sciences confirmed this demographic change in 2007 when they found that 20% of public school students were Hispanic and that other ethnicities and multiracial students comprising another 22% of the public school population (U.S. Department of Education). The culture of America’s classrooms is changing.

Culture refers to the set of shared attitudes, values, goals, and practices that characterize a group of people and consists of all the ideas, objects, and ways of doing things (Gay, 2000). Culture is essential for human society to exist. A society’s culture is reflected in its arts, beliefs, customs, inventions, languages, technology, and traditions that are shared by a group of people (Clark, 2009). Lewis and Desai (2011) also identify culture as living and active. This means that culture is fluid and potentially changes or differs from household to household, neighborhood to neighborhood, city to city, and country to country. As a classroom teacher, I find that the culture in the classroom has changed; nationalism grows smaller, and the world takes on a new look as students interconnect with classmates and share their lives cross-culturally. This same experience may exist for teachers to interact with their neighbors and community, but I am curious about what type of professional training or opportunities are available for teachers to help them better understand the needs of minority students. In many cases it’s not traditional training that is teaching teachers about cross-cultural environments, but international travel.

During the last 10 years, I have had the opportunity to travel many times to the United Kingdom, Cambodia, China, and South Korea. As a history teacher, I have delighted in the planning of trips to visit historic landmarks in England, attending Shakespeare plays, visiting
museums, galleries, and locations long considered national treasures. I have also had the opportunity to serve in soup kitchens in East London and Bermondsey, giving me a much different perspective than I had previously experienced in the United Kingdom. In China and Cambodia, I have taught for short stays in public and private schools, staying with colleagues in their homes, in a culture much different from my own. Every opportunity that I have experienced cross-culturally has led me to new sights, sounds, smells, and thoughts that have profoundly shaped me as a secondary teacher. These personal experiences influence my insight, compassion, and care for the students in my classroom at a greater level than before and I began to wonder if other teachers, with similar experiences as my own, found their own teaching influenced by international cross-cultural experience.

This led me to believe that international teacher travel, for the purpose of gaining an awareness and experience outside of normative culture, positively influences a teacher in their professional development and relationships with students, particularly students from backgrounds other than their own.

**Statement of the Problem**

The purpose of this microethnographic qualitative study was to explore the nature of international cross-cultural travel experiences as articulated U.S. secondary teachers, through in-depth personal interviews and personal self-reflections. An objective of the study was to gain insight on the importance and potential for international cross-cultural experiences, outside of normative culture, in enriching the classroom.

**Research Questions**

Using a microethnographic research design, this study sought to answer the following overarching question:
Central question.

What is the nature of international cross-cultural experiences of secondary teachers?

Subquestions.

1. How did the participants describe their international cross-cultural travel experiences?

2. What did the international cross-cultural travel experiences mean to the participant?

3. What did teachers self-report about how their cross-cultural travel experiences have shaped them as teachers?

Definition of Terms

As conceptualizations vary widely on the nature and meaning of culture, cross-culture, cultural competence, cultural humility, and experience, I offer the following definitions as means to guide my research effort.

**Culture:** Refers to the cumulative deposit of knowledge, experience, beliefs, values, attitudes, meanings, hierarchies, religion, notions of time, roles, spatial relations, concepts of the universe, and material objects and possessions acquired by a group of people in the course of generations through individual and group striving (Bennett 1998; Clark, 2009; Gay, 2000; Hofstede, 1997; Lewis & Desai, 2009).

**Cross-cultural:** Dealing with or offering comparison between two or more different cultures or cultural areas (Cross-cultural, 2012; Arra, 2010).

**Cultural Competence:** A set of congruent behaviors, attitudes, and policies that come together in a system and enables professionals to work effectively in cross-cultural situations (Diller & Moule, 2005, p.12).
Cultural Humility: An acknowledgement of one’s own barriers to true intercultural understanding and the difference between intellectually knowing another culture and being able to truly relate to it; “a process that requires humility to develop and maintain mutually respectful and dynamic partnerships with communities on behalf of individuals” (Tervalon & Murray-Garcia, 1998, p. 118).

Experience: The practical knowledge, skill or practice derived from direct observation of, or participation in, events or activities (Experience, 2011).

Transformational Learning: Re-evaluates past beliefs and experiences, which had previously been understood, as new experiences that alter the individual’s perception (Mezirow, 1997).

Tourist: A person who travels for pleasure, usually sightseeing and staying in hotels (Danzig & Jing, 2007).

Traveler: A person who travels or has traveled to distant places or foreign lands and learns about cultures first-hand (Chesterton, 1922). The traveler is flexible as they experience journey and makes changes along the way (Padgett, 2012).

Servant: A person who travels with the interests, needs, and benefits to others in the forefront of their decision making regarding their travel (Moffat, 2012).

Limitations

This qualitative study used a microethnographic approach to gather data through in-depth personal interviews and participant self-reflections regarding the nature of international cross-cultural experience of secondary teachers. Since interviews took place in a limited amount of time and relied on communication between the classroom teacher and myself, time constrictions and limited responses may have affected the interview. Interviews may also be problematic in
generalizing one participant’s thoughts and feelings onto a larger population as a whole; the results are not generalizable. The potential for upbringing and moral ethics of the participant to influence their feelings about their cross-cultural travel experiences, were also difficult to identify ahead of time. These influences directly affected the way that participants viewed other cultures and the way that they engaged in their out of country experience. The study was further limited by the use of purposive sampling techniques in identifying potential participants. By using purposive sampling the participants were selected according to specific characteristics that were considered important to the study (teaching experience and assignments, travel experience, teachers from the same building). The main limitation of purposive sampling is the impossibility to extrapolate the results to the whole population of secondary teachers.

**Delimitations**

The individuals selected to participate in the study were limited to eight secondary teachers who participated in a two-part personal interview and a self-reflection exercise. The study was further delimited to secondary teachers who have international cross-cultural travel experiences and three or more years of teaching experience. The study was delimited to data gathered by one researcher over an eight-week period. Data was digitally recorded in semi-structured interviews of teachers using guided questions to focus the interview. The identification of participants that I choose to study and their convenient location in the school district that I teach in as opposed to a nationwide search, also had an impact on the results.

**Summary**

Using in-depth personal interviews and self-reflections, I conducted a qualitative microethnographic study to gain a greater understanding of the nature of international cross-cultural travel experiences as articulated by U.S. secondary teachers. As I moved into my
research phase, I believed that international experience would positively influence professional
development and teachers relationships with students, particularly students from backgrounds
other than their own. The literature related to this study is reviewed in Chapter 2, and examines
cross-cultural transformational learning, global mindedness, cultural humility, and the impact of
foreign travel as traveler and tourist.
CHAPTER 2

Review of the Literature

Introduction

During his Presidential campaign in 1960, Senator John F. Kennedy challenged college students to serve their country in the cause of peace by working and living in developing countries. Following his election, and with the help of Congress, President Kennedy saw passage of the Peace Corp Act. Since that time nearly 200,000 Americans have served in 139 countries, volunteering in villages, towns, and cities across the globe (Banerjee, 2009). As Peace Corp educators returned to the United States, discussion began regarding the role their cross-cultural experience played in their teaching practices. Shortly after the death of President Kennedy, the United States Congress passed the Civil Rights Act of 1964 which built upon the Supreme Court’s Brown vs. Board of Education decision of 1954. These laws changed the face of the American classroom forever and demanded that teachers enter a new era of American education. In the early 1970s, cross-cultural experience rose in prominence in teacher education programs across the United States; and since that time, teacher education programs have increased cross-cultural experience requirements.

By the mid-1970s, researchers found teacher education programs to be fragmented and broken, a condition that challenged universities to fashion a more dynamic approach to education (Howsam, Corrigan, Denemark, & Nash, 1976; Scoffham & Barnes, 2009; Taylor, 1974). This challenge triggered the development of new programs designed to create global teachers who would impact the world. The research stressed that cross-cultural experiences guided personal development, cultural understanding, and the development of global perspectives within the field of education (Cushner & Mahon, 2002; Middleton, 2002; Nieto & Booth, 2010). Today, many
states are debating the implementation of cross-cultural competencies for future teacher licensure because it is essential that teachers emerge better prepared for the ever-changing classroom. In Oregon, Division 18 of the Oregon Administrative Rule (OAR) 584 focuses on licensure and related rules for school administrators, counselors, psychologists, and teachers, and states that the educational leader will “integrate principles of cultural competency and equitable practice and promote the success of every student by sustaining a positive school culture and instructional program conducive to student learning and staff professional growth” (Oregon State Archives, 2012). Cultural competency is mentioned 21 times in the OAR 584-018 but Oregon teacher and administrative programs offer few hands-on cross-cultural experiences for understanding culture competency; licensure programs tend to require essays, seminars, and workshops on diversity, social justice, and perspective (Carr, Aguilera, Shelton, Howser, Flad, & Cathers, 2009). In another study, Nieto and Booth (2010) conducted a quantitative study using a convenience sample of ESL students taking classes with ESL and non-ESL instructors and found that “cultural competence is particularly essential for teachers whose profession requires that they incorporate knowledge and dispositions necessary to relate to students from other cultures” (p. 409). Nieto and Booth (2010) concluded that cultural competence is a key in making international students feel welcomed and comfortable while studying in the United States and influenced both the teachers and the students.

Through interviews, reflective journals, and correspondences between researchers and participants, it became evident that cross-cultural experience affected participants. Mahon and Cushner (2002) studied 50 teachers who had participated in an overseas student teaching experience asking questions designed to elicit how the experience helped or hindered the student personally and professionally, both in the host country and upon their return to the United States.
They concluded that overseas experience facilitates “increased cultural awareness and improved self-efficacy, as well as professional development in terms of global mindedness” for preservice teachers” (Mahon & Cushner, 2002, p. 44). Ference and Bell’s (2004) immersion study of 25 white, middle class preservice educators who graduated from high schools that enrolled at least 80% white students, placed preservice teachers in Spanish speaking homes for 13 days. The immersion included socializing in multiple settings within the culture, and provided opportunities for students to become familiar with the socioeconomic factors that affect school and learning diversity (Ference & Bell, 2004). The participants shared feelings from the experience that ranged from paranoia that people may have been speaking about them, to their role as outsiders in a group, to having greater awareness of stereotypes placed on individuals, and the need for more visual and kinesthetic methods to be used in diverse classrooms (Ference & Bell, 2004). Scoffham and Barnes (2009) took 11 students on a study tour of India with four staff from their university accompanying them on an 18-day tour. During their time in India, they conducted a qualitative study involving open-ended questionnaires, self-reporting of emotion, video diaries, informal conversation and follow up interviews. Like Ference and Bell (2004), Scoffham and Barnes (2009) conducted several team-building exercises before departing for India in hope that the dynamics of the group would not impede the cross-cultural experience. They also planned several group Indian meals to help students understand the practicality of Indian cuisine, but were careful not to give them ideas of what to expect. For the students, their main task in India was to teach and interact with children in a developing country, but for the research team they looked to find the learning opportunities from the experience. The researchers concluded that the experience led to transformational learning and that the powerful experiences in tandem with cultural disturbances, led to “deep cognitive, social, emotional,
existential and empowerment learning that would lead to long-term impact on professional practice” (Scoffham & Barnes, 2009, p. 268).

The purpose of this review of literature is to examine the international cross-cultural experiences that benefited teachers beyond their teaching assignment and helped them develop a deeper understanding of cross-cultural and foreign travel experience, transformational learning, global mindedness, cultural humility, and impact of foreign travel as travelers and tourist.

**Cross-Cultural Experience Yields Transformational Learning**

Transformational learning re-evaluates past beliefs and experiences which had previously been understood as new experiences that alter the individual’s perception (Mezirow, 1997). In many cases this new understanding causes individuals to experience “aha moments” that may bring clarity, recognition, or resolution in an instant. Bennett (1998) defined culture as the “learned and shared patterns of beliefs, behaviors, and values of groups of interacting people” (p. 3). Students participating in an immersion program would have a greater opportunity for cross-cultural learning (Cushner & Mahon, 2002). Many researchers have studied and conducted qualitative studies on the immersion of preservice teachers into cross-cultural experiences, these experiences are much different from the traditions and comforts of their homeland (Addleman, Brazo, & Cevallos, 2011; Almarza, 2005; Scoffham & Barnes, 2009; Ference & Bell, 2009). In all of the studies, the students were predominantly white, middle class, and female and placed students into places outside of their normative cultures. The studies were also designed to offer opportunities for preservice teachers to experience other cultures outside of the traditional learning environment that interacted with textbooks.

Almarza (2005) looked to integrate theory with practice moving away from the traditional classroom format to teach cross-cultural and multicultural idea by assigning
preservice teachers to visit homes of a student who were English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) students within their school district for twelve weeks. Almarza’s two-year study included 240 female preservice elementary and middle school teachers, regarding their preparedness to teach diverse learners, by analyzing daily self-reflections. A large majority of the students expressed that they were “quite confident that they were ready to translate (multicultural) knowledge to the classroom” (Almarza, 2005, p. 532). In the post-experience interviews, however, the majority of the teachers reported that they suffered from culture shock and expressed remorse that they were not able to assist their assigned child to the standard they expected. In their final reflections, the participants noted personal growth in understanding of students from diverse cultures with a majority of the students citing that they learned about their own identity and culture and the importance of authentic field experience (Almarza, 2005).

Ference and Bell’s (2009) immersion of students in Spanish speaking homes for 13 days within the United States went another step further than Almarza (2005) because the students lived cross-culturally for the duration of their experience. Many of the participants in Ference and Bell’s (2009) ethnographic study acknowledged that they had no experience with Latino culture before becoming members of their assigned households and that they learned about the culture through “the family relationships, physical proximity, dining etiquette, time, leisure activities, and student roles” (p. 347). Many of the participants came to a greater awareness of the anxiety of immigrants and found themselves faced with cultural preconceptions and misconceptions about Latinos. One of the major misconceptions that the students faced was fear and uncertainty in living in another culture; many of the participants reported they had not realized the amount of mistaken beliefs that they held regarding Latino culture and felt that the
experience would help them develop relationships with their students’ families as a result of the immersion (Ference & Bell, 2009, p. 348).

Scoffham and Barnes (2009) and Mahon and Cushner (2002) studied participants involved in international cross-cultural experiences. While Scoffham and Barnes (2009) took their participants to India as a cohort that experienced the culture together, Mahon and Cushner’s (2002) participants stayed in host homes individually in their overseas sites in Australia, New Zealand, and Ireland. Both studies found that the cross-cultural experience created a significant impact on the preservice teachers. Scoffham and Barnes (2009) involved their participants in mapping the experience as it happened, interviewing individuals shortly after they experienced “aha moments.” Because they were traveling together as a group, the India participants decompressed daily and discussed the happening of the experience in an open format.

Participants in Mahon and Cushner’s (2002) study were left to examine their experience on their own. Most of their participants expressed that the greatest impact was concerned their “beliefs about self and others” through their increased cultural awareness (p. 49). As a result of their own experience, many of Mahon and Cushner’s participants questioned their own stereotypes of others and aspect of their culture; something that most participants had never examined before.

Teachers who participated in a cross-cultural experience returned more aware of the diversity of the world and also gained a new perception of who they were as educators (Almarza, 2005; Scoffham & Barnes, 2009). As teachers confronted different situations, they had to act and make choices relying solely on themselves. For many, the overseas teaching experience was the first time they had to be self-reliant when they were forced to act for their own good and in some cases their own survival (Cushner & Mahon, 2002). Classroom teachers faced personal anxieties, which tested their own limitations and created space for personal empowerment.
Individuals also reported that the cross-cultural experience improved their ability to work with others, creating greater self-confidence, adaptability, resourcefulness, and persistence (Middleton, 2002; Scoffham & Barnes, 2009). By placing teachers in positions that made them walk in unfamiliar shoes, individuals challenged their personal beliefs about the world and its people; developing an empathy and trust for those around them. Student journals revealed key influences to their self-discovery to include lack of foreign language fluency, personal disconnectedness, and personal contact with locals (Cushner & Mahon, 2002; Mahon & Cushner, 2002).

Walters et al. (2009) examined recent literature regarding cross-cultural experiences and found teachers’ self-efficacy grew more in international settings, reporting an increased sense of higher confidence that removed fears that had previously blocked individuals from trying new things. Pence and Macgillivray (2008) explored the impact of cross-cultural experience of 15 preservice teachers from the United States when they taught a four-week unit in a private American school in Rome, Italy. Like Scoffham and Barnes (2009), teachers in the Pence and Macgillivray (2008) qualitative study worked together as a cohort and were able to discuss the reality of the situation with their colleagues as they experienced a new culture. The preservice teachers were also able to freely communicate with their students because English was the spoken language of the school. Participants reported through their reflective journals and questionnaires that the field experience “challenged their preconceptions of culturally different others, how schools and classrooms should be structured, their personal and professional beliefs, and, ultimately, helped them grow as individuals and future teachers” (Pence & Macgillivray, 2007, p. 14). Teachers in both studies reported an increased ability to both adapt and work with others in difficult situations (Cushner & Mahon, 2002; Pence & Macgillivray, 2008).
International cross-cultural experiences required individuals to stretch beyond their traditional comfort zone when away from their support systems. Walters et al. (2009) found that international teaching placements offered teachers authentic opportunities to evaluate their own understanding of the world. This genuine interaction created globally-minded teachers who developed fresh ideas and open minds that they brought home to their native education programs and classrooms. Middleton (2002) performed a mixed methods study using a quantitative survey included a Lickert Scale regarding beliefs about diversity before attending a class and experiencing international travel and then followed up with a qualitative self-reflection and oral discussion. In her findings, Middleton (2002) identified that increased cultural knowledge led to greater courage for teachers to voice their own personal and professional development, and themes emerged throughout the research suggesting that teachers relied more on their own values and beliefs when it came time to make decisions.

Working with diverse student populations in international cross-cultural settings, teachers increased their understanding and commitment to multicultural teaching practices (Almarza, 2005; Middleton, 2002; Scoffham & Barnes, 2009). The research proved international experience to be a pivotal moment in their teacher training, strengthening their teaching philosophies, beliefs, and practices (McKenzie & Fitzsimmons, 2010). Teachers surveyed upon their return reported that cross-cultural experience created change in their attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors, significantly affecting professional beliefs regarding diversity education. Mahon and Cushner (2002) found that many individuals understood the need to address students’ personal experiences in the learning process after their cross-cultural experience. Teachers also came away with a deeper understanding of the time and effort required for students who live in a
second culture, building on their own experience and transferring the knowledge to their teaching practices (Almarza, 2005).

Being immersed in a new culture, teachers encountered novel experiences that promoted self-reflection, an important factor in both professional and personal development (Smith, 2009). As teachers reflected on their experience through personal journals, research shows major shifts in the lives of the participants and the way that they thought and learned in the future (Scoffham & Barnes, 2009). Many of the participants reflected the importance of visuals and kinesthetic methods in their classrooms, especially those in ESOL classrooms. Reflection also included a desire to make lessons exciting, meaningful, and challenging for students of diverse backgrounds, motivating teachers to go outside their regular lesson plan development patterns (Ference & Bell, 2004). Survey evidence strongly supports that teachers’ increased awareness of inequity and injustices embedded into school systems and the need for advocacy in diverse educational situations (Almarza, 2005).

Global Mindedness Developed through Cross-Cultural Experience

Global mindedness is an awareness of the world around us, both afar and locally (Pence & Macgillivray, 2008). This awareness may not occur when the participants are experiencing their cross-cultural encounter, but may occur after they have returned to normative culture and have evaluated the meaning of their experience. Merryfield (2000) suggests that most teachers have not been prepared to teach globally. In her interviews of 80 teacher educators, Merryfield (2000) discovered the importance of intercultural development of the students and the importance of impactful, experiential learning.

The National Center for Education Statistics (2012) reports that the majority of teachers in the United States are white, middle-class, females who have little experience outside of their
normative culture. Cushner and Mahon (2002) acknowledged that a majority of the teaching force in most countries of the world represent the majority culture, yet the world classroom continues to see increased numbers in minority cultures. The perceived problem is that the teaching force does not understand the culture of many of their students and may not be able to relate or instruct them well. As student diversity continues to increase, teachers must be prepared for a more complex, interdependent world that teachers themselves are not familiar with. Ference and Bell (2004) found that a majority of teachers in the United States are not global travelers; many have never traveled outside of their country. Today’s classroom; however, requires teachers to teach students with different cultures, languages, abilities, and many other characteristics (Keengwe, 2010). Educators must increase their knowledge about the world so that they are better prepared to work with the growing, diverse population in their classroom (Nieto & Booth, 2010). Reflection by participants in cross-cultural teaching experiences reported that the overseas teaching opened up their lives to different worldviews and helped them understand the cultural difference of their students (Nieto & Booth, 2010).

Before embarking in cross-cultural training, teachers often expressed lack of confidence in their ability to work with children from diverse backgrounds (Keengwe, 2000; Walters et al., 2009). This lack of readiness may account for the amount of licensed teachers who are unwilling to teach in urban schools that tend to be more ethnically diverse than suburban or rural districts (McAllister & Irvine, 2000). After cross-cultural experiences, participants report an increased global view, reducing their ethnocentrism and the use of negative stereotypes (Cushner, 2007; Cushner & Mahon, 2002). Teachers who participated in self-reflection throughout their cross-cultural experience also reported a broader understanding of their classroom role, heightening their ability to interact with and teach diverse students (Cushner & Mahon, 2002). Surveys
completed by teacher education professors showed that teachers who participated in cross-cultural experiences were more globalminded than their stay-at-home counterparts and were more likely to be involved in international activities in the future (Pence & Macgillivray, 2008; Ward & Ward, 2003). Wehling (2008) conducted a cross-cultural study of preservice teachers through service learning requirements on larger college campuses. While the participants did not travel internationally, they reported that the cross-cultural experience led them to have more diverse friendships and colleagues, and were more interested in global cultures and issues (Wehling, 2008). Exit interviews from the studies also showed that teachers returned to their normative culture believing they had a greater ability to teach diverse students (Walters et al., 2009; Wehling, 2008).

Ethnocentrism is the idea or belief, either consciously or subconsciously, “that one's ethnic or cultural group is centrally important, and that all other groups are measured in relation to one's own” (Cushner & Mahon, 2002, p. 45). This mindset, while not necessarily engrained into students, shifts in perspective during teachers’ cross-cultural experience both in how they view their host country and its relation to the United States, as well as their own beliefs about diversity (Mahon & Cushner, 2002). Teachers’ personal reflections frequently included evaluation of their own cultural beliefs and changes caused by personal experience in their new culture. Active engagement in diverse cultures expanded individuals’ worldview, oftentimes creating more flexible and compassionate teachers (Pence & Macgillivray, 2008). In another study, Jarchow et al. (1996) investigated how international student teaching experience influenced the teachers’ awareness of other cultures by examining the reflective journal of four U.S. student teachers. The student teachers reported an increase of their awareness of other cultures and diminished ethnocentrism, and that they valued differences more because of their
international experience (Jarchow et al., 1996). An international experience was also found to open doors for teachers to better understand the diversity that exists amongst students and their colleagues (McAllister & Irvine, 2000).

A critical part to the cross-cultural experience was learning that comes from having to adapt to a new culture in a foreign land. This experience was often challenging and emotional as teachers broke down their prejudices of cultures different from their own (Pence & Macgillivray, 2008). Individuals who stepped outside of their own ethnocentric world and participated wholeheartedly in their cross-cultural experience tended to be more flexible upon their return home (Ference & Bell, 2004). Teachers were stretched by the experiences of trying new languages, foods, housing, and living conditions with many finding the experience to be exhilarating, while some were overwhelmed by the drastic differences in culture. Teachers immersed in these new settings found different expectations compared to families in American cultures (Nieto & Booth, 2010). Participants in cross-cultural experiences acknowledged that they felt more aware of people from different cultures upon their return home (Keengwe, 2010). A common theme to emerge in the research is the teacher’s openness to different perspectives upon returning home. Many individuals self-reported a new vision or lens of understanding different cultures and a deeper awareness of the world around them (Pence & Macgillivray, 2008).

Teachers who participated in international cross-cultural experience reported major attitude shifts in regard to multicultural education programs and a commitment to the reduction of prejudice, discrimination, and discrepancies in their schools and classrooms (Middleton, 2002). Pence and Macgillivray (2008) found that all of the participants in their study had some type of preconception of the school, students, or country that was based on a broad stereotype before arriving in Italy and were surprised not to find strict, private Catholic schools filled with
upper class individuals. As a result of their cross-cultural experience, individuals began to question the stereotypes of their own culture which had previously gone unexamined. Teachers saw their cultural experiences through new eyes, creating major shifts in their own thinking and behaviors (Walters et al., 2009). This experience led to develop a global minded perspective that brought a deeper understanding of the world and enabled participants to work with and learn from people different from themselves.

**Cultural Humility**

In the last decade, cultural humility has been rooted in the medical field. Specifically, this concept requires health care professionals to be better listeners and more open and flexible as they develop awareness of the people around them. Outside of the medical community, cultural humility asks individuals to acknowledge their own barriers to true intercultural understanding and differentiate between intellectually knowing another culture and being able to truly relate to it (Soep & Chavez, 2010). As individuals examine, self-evaluate, and become more aware of their own culture, they make decisions regarding their beliefs. A person who practices cultural humility understands that his/her culture is not the only or best one, realizing that the world is made up many cultures and people that work together. This means that as individuals differentiate between the cultures around them, they learn new things from people who are different than themselves.

Tervalon and Murray-Garcia (1998) explored the idea of cultural humility as they looked to increase culture, racial, and ethnic diversity among medical educators so that they could “train physicians who will skillfully and respectfully negotiate the implications” of diverse clinical practices (p. 117). According to the study, a central idea in examining cultural humility is the participant’s ability to check the power imbalances that exist while conversing with their
patients. For this to occur, it requires “humility to develop and maintain mutually respectful and dynamic partnerships with communities on behalf of individual patients and communities” (Tervalon & Murray-Garcia, 1998, p. 118). In some cases, cultural humility is used to help individuals identify a false sense of security that may have led to cultural stereotypes. In the field of education this may be seen in the perception that individuals may have regarding truancy, work and personal ethics, family dynamics, and learning.

A popular American aphorism that goes against the idea of cultural humility is “the squeaky wheel gets the grease.” While we might not like this idea, there is some common-sense to it—the individual who speaks up can get what he/she wants. This says a great deal about Western culture because it is not usual to have individuals ask others directly for what they want or go out on their own to find their answer. The Chinese have another saying, “the bird that flies first gets the bullet.” While both the American and Chinese aphorisms are describing a similar concept, the results are much different; one person ends up happy, while the other ends up as dinner. Kneebone (2007) points out that common understanding that may have guided an individual for his/her entire life may be totally inappropriate in a new culture. Since an individual’s behavior and attitude are formed by his/her background, personality, education and experience, it becomes very important for individuals who travel out of their culture to have greater cross-cultural awareness (Kneebone, 2007). Teachers must also remember that the students they work with may have invisible cultural norms that affect the way students problem-solve, create, and express themselves (Webb, 1983). Cultural humility incorporates a life-long commitment to self-evaluation and critique as individuals look to develop mutually beneficial partnerships and relationships with those around them (Tervalon & Murray-Garcia, 1998). By practicing cultural humility, individuals are more likely to be aware of the environment around
them and are more likely to catch cultural references and non-verbal cues (personal body space, eye contact, facial expression, and gestures) that are often overlooked.

**Impact of Foreign Travel as Travelers and Tourists**

As teachers experience international travel, there are many options that will determine their encounter with other cultures. In some cases, it is possible to leave the United States and travel to a foreign country and never leave the comforts of America. Today, individuals can stay for a price, in American-style hotels in almost every country in the world. Tour operators have designed experiences that will pick up the tourists at the airport and tour them through many countries and not allow them to become uncomfortable. In the same country, another option exists that allows the traveler to arrive with their backpack and proceed to explore the countryside. This may be by renting a car and having planned stops, or by purchasing a rail pass that allows the individual to get on and off the train at any destination. Both experiences allow the individual to have a cross-cultural experience, but neither affords the individual the same experience. This means that each travel experience is unique and offers a different experience for each traveler.

Foreign travel provides an opportunity for individuals to experience different cultures and way of life. It is often through this travel experience that participants’ eyes are opened to the world around them, opening opportunities for them to have greater global understanding. Wilson (1984) surveyed teachers who shared a travel experience and reported that their international experience became part of the curriculum when they discussed global perspectives. Similarly, Joneschild (2004) reported that he learned more about cultural and natural resources through the experience of being in Tanzania than any formal preparatory research. Joneschild’s
(2004) participants returned more aware of their global citizenship and more focused on sharing a greater global perspective with their classroom after returning from Tanzania.

Danzig and Jing (2007) explored the effects of foreign travel in a qualitative study of 57 students in an educational administration doctoral program in Arizona and their travel to England. Students participated in a three-credit course with themed reading concerning the rise of European-Western global dominance and the influence on education. The students then traveled to London for two-weeks, attended lectures and panel discussions and visited area schools. During their time off, students spent time doing assorted tourist-type events including trips to Oxford, Windsor Castle, Stonehenge, museums and other local excursions. Upon their return from London, the students reported “a greater sense of culture, outside of language” (Danzig & Jing, 2007, p. 83). Students also reported that their multicultural and international awareness had increased as a result of their travel and that they valued the experience of going into the community and seeing the art and architecture as they related to the history of England. Many participants found that being “an outsider (an American in a foreign country) enabled participants with little or no experience outside the United States to better understand what it feels like to be an outsider” (Danzig & Jing, 2007, p. 84). This experience also gave rise to participant reflection on their understanding of other cultures and the “meaning of respect and tolerance of other cultures” (Danzig & Jing, 2007, p. 84).

The Office of Travel and Tourism reported that 11% of international travelers from the United States identified their reason for travel to be educational or related themselves as being a student (U.S. Department of Commerce, 2012). Danzig and Jing (2007) found that travel experience provided a new context for thinking about old issues and exposed individuals to a more global perspective through their travel abroad. Many of the participants identified personal
growth and professional development as a result of their foreign travel, with value being placed on experiential knowledge. The participants also “sought opportunities to apply and extend new knowledge to their own professional practice” (Danzig & Jing, 2007, p.88).

Addleman, Brazo, and Cevallos’ (2011) qualitative study explored the reflective thoughts of 18 MAT students who participated in home-stays with middle-class families in Ecuador. The MAT students were placed in a private K-12 school as volunteers. While the group was predominately white and middle class, 35% of the participants had traveled to another country and most had at least some understanding of Spanish (Addelman, Brazo, & Cevallos, 2011, p. 60). During their three-week practicum, participants spent weekday mornings in the classroom in Quito while their afternoons were filled with two-hour long language institute study. The group took two weekend trips to locations in the Andes to experience the culture of smaller Ecuadorian towns. Participants wrote reflections based on each week’s experience, with the first week focused on comparisons, the second week on cultural adaption, and the third week on their experience in the private school and the methods and strategies that they employed for successful teaching. After coding their findings, Addleman, Brazo, and Cevallos (2011) found that students were more sensitive to the cultures around them, with culture shock serving as an important opportunity for critical reflection. Like the findings reported by Cushner and Mahon (2002), participants also expressed an increased self-efficacy in areas that extended past their language and teaching skills. This active engagement through self-reflection was a critical piece for students to question and evaluate their assumptions and thought patterns. Mezirow (1998) explained that evaluation and assessment served as a critical part to student’s transformational learning. Addleman, Brazo and Cevallos (2011) acknowledged that “student travel as cultural tourist” would enhance their teaching with their “wealth of stories and new experience,” but it
was “students who traveled for cultural engagement,” who would find a greater understanding and perspective of the world around them (p. 65).

G.K. Chesterton (1922) wrote, “The traveler sees what he sees, the tourist sees what he has come to see.” Chesterton (1936) noted that people often time miss what is going on around them because they are observing the experience thorough their own set of ideas and customs and therefore classify the experience as good, bad, or different based on their blindness to national differences. This blindness oftentimes creates unknown prejudice and interpretations of places, events and customs that are much different than the reality of those who live within the culture. Chesterton expounded on this idea stating:

“I am inclined to think that this vague prejudice is now much more dangerous than a more violent prejudice…. The nature of the error lies in this: that (Englishmen) never by any chance think of an English thing as a variation of a European thing. Only too often they think of a European thing as a mere misapplication of an English thing” (1936, p. 69).

The tourist in this manner can mistakenly misinterpret or misunderstand what they are seeing because their known customs and beliefs impede their experience and translate the experience into their own level of comfort and understanding. The tourist will be more likely to gawk as they board buses and checking off sights but rarely absorbing the places they visit and the people who inhabit them. In recent years, the tourist often looks to get the best deal on their all-inclusive vacation, buying a package that includes airfare, lodging, transfers, attraction tickets, and meals; leaving very little time or opportunity for exploring the culture on their own.

While on safari in Africa, journalist Tim Padgett was struck by the interaction between the locals and tourists, observing that many “were more respectful of the lions and rhinos than
they were of the Masai and Kikuyu” (2012, p. 12). It becomes apparent that tourists and travelers treat the locals differently and experience the place in much different means from each other by the way that they interact with the culture (Park, Tussyadiah, Mazanec, & Fesenmaier, 2010). Totten (2002) investigated the life of European traveler Theodore Dreiser whose keen observations and attention to detail made him more than just another tourist (p. 22). Instead of following travel brochures to see the villages, Dreiser visited the townspeople and they in turn showed him the village. In approaching his travels in this manner, he found “knowledge of local traditions, classical scholarship, and saw all that was worth seeing” (Totten, 2002, p. 24). Through the works of Dreiser, the reader better understands and can picture the “charming villages, canals, mills and landscape of Holland,” yet Dreiser himself feared that his work might make him appear as a sightseer, something that he loathed (p. 25). After completing his extensive study of Dreiser, Totten points out that Dreiser was not “trying to best his neighbors but had an interest in and knowledge of the background and history of what he sees” (p. 26). Once again, what the visitor sees makes a difference in the classification of traveler or tourist. That’s not to say, however, that the tourist does not learn on their tour. The tourist may experience new things and have a greater understanding of the world around them, but they do not necessarily arrive at the same conclusion of the traveler who saw everything around them.

Conclusions from the Literature

As the individual experiences new things, his/her perceptions were re-evaluated and his/her cross-cultural experience influenced the awareness of the diverse world. This may lead to transformational learning that may take place in “aha moments” of awareness of the world around them or through long-term interactions that create and build global mindedness as
individuals return to normative culture. In the diverse world we live in today, it becomes increasingly important to be global minded in the classroom today.

As the demographics of the United States continue to shift from white, middle-class students, it is important that teachers embark on cross-cultural experiences that allow them to learn about the world around them. While there have been many studies conducted regarding cross-cultural experience of preservice teachers, there have been very few studies that focus on the international cross-cultural experience of in-service teachers. This gap, in the study of in-service teachers with international cross-cultural experience is an important area to be studied because it focuses on the professional teacher who has experience in the classroom and is currently serving in our schools to connect both new and old ideas to the next generation of learners.
CHAPTER 3

Method

Introduction

As I stated in Chapter 1, this study examined the nature of international cross-cultural experience of secondary teachers. To investigate this experience, I used a microethnographic qualitative research design employing semi-structured interviews to explore the personal experience of teachers’ cross-cultural travel. Therefore, I restate the research question relevant to this study that I plan to explore:

Central question.

What is the nature of international cross-cultural experience of secondary teachers?

Subquestions.

1. How do the participants describe their international cross-cultural experience?
2. What did the international cross-cultural experience mean to the participant?
3. What international cross-cultural experiences shaped them as teachers?

Setting

The secondary school where the participants for this study teach is a secondary school of 1200 high school students in the Willamette Valley in Oregon. The high school is the only secondary school in the 240 square mile district and includes students from Marion and Clackamas Counties. The high school has 58 certified teachers on staff with the average teacher having 15.8 years’ experience. 80.4% have earned a Master’s Degree. The student ethnicity is 84.5% white, which includes 10% of students with a Russian Orthodox heritage and 9% with a German Apostolic heritage. In both of the Russian Orthodox and German Apostolic households, students will often attend language and religion class to help them understand their mid-week
and Sunday meetings, which are spoken in the German or Russian tradition. About 12.6% of the student ethnicity is Hispanic and 2% are American Indian. Approximately 41% of the total student body are on free or reduced lunches but many students who would qualify for assistance will not ask the government for help. A very small number of students, .8%, are identified as English as a Second Language learners with a primary language of Russian, Spanish, and Arabic.

Participants

Participants in this study were secondary teachers with 16 or more years of teaching experience in the United States who traveled internationally and returned to teaching following their experience. Eight participants were chosen through purposive sampling of teachers, because it allowed for the researcher to “sample at the site level, at the event or process level, and at the participant level” (Creswell, 2007, p.126). Purposive sampling, therefore, allowed me to identify and select participants through my experience and interaction with teachers in the building that I work. This included an equal number of teachers by gender that had more than five years of teaching experience. I used a convenience sample of teachers from my workplace, who were familiar with me and willing to take the time to be interviewed twice and keep a journal of their thoughts. The participants were interviewed by appointment either before or after the workday.

To provide anonymity, each participant were given a pseudonym; all names of participants, individuals named in the interviews, hometowns, and schools mentioned in the interviews have been replaced. This will maintain the anonymity of all people involved with the study.

Role of the Researcher
I am a Caucasian, middle class, high school social studies teacher in my 15th year of teaching. I am also a doctoral student, conducting this study to complete the requirements for my degree with a vested interest in the success of this research. I have traveled internationally for the past ten years to several locations in Asia and Europe. During my time overseas, I have stayed with local teachers in their homes and taught alongside them in their classrooms. I have also traveled to many international tourist destinations, visiting historic landmarks and museums, while staying in bed and breakfasts and oceanfront resorts. In my own experience, I have formed the opinion that my international cross-cultural experience has positively influenced my experience as a secondary teacher. I controlled my potential bias by using a member check, having the participants read through their transcript and approve them before I started coding them.

I affirm that I conducted the research to the highest professional standards in recruitment of participants, analysis of data, reporting the findings, and stating the conclusions. I knew all of the participants as colleagues and had an established rapport with them.

**Research Design and Procedures**

I used an exploratory microethnographic qualitative research approach to form my research design and data collection procedures. The purpose of ethnographic research is to describe an individual culture, social group or cultural experience through the perspectives of those in the study (Creswell, 2007). Microethnography is a subset of ethnography and studies a smaller experience or a part of everyday reality. Berg (2007) suggests that microethnography focuses on “particular incisions at particular points in the larger setting, group, or institution” (p. 174). Le Baron explains the microethnographic study as an approach to collects data, content analysis, and comparative analysis of a cross-cultural experience or situation, for the purpose of
formulating insights (as cited in Jupp, 2006). The focus of the study was the teacher’s experiences as a way to understand culture, meaning, and impact of international cross-cultural travel experiences. I believe that this microethnographic approach was the best choice for this study because it “produces the participants’ views through closely edited quotations and has the final word on how the culture is to be interpreted and presented” (Creswell, 2007, p. 70).

As stated earlier in the participants section, I interviewed eight secondary teachers with international cross-cultural travel experiences, conducting two personal interviews per participant and asked the participant to keep a self-reflection journal entry as my data-collection procedure. At the conclusion of the first interview, I gave each participant the questions for the second interview, with instructions regarding their self-reflection journal and arranged for the second interview two weeks later. Triangulation of the data took place through the interviews, participant self-reflection journals, and participant's member check for potential bias.

Through this microethnographic research, I look to expand and/or create the academic theory that describes the nature of cross-cultural experiences of secondary teachers. According to Creswell (2007) the procedures for conducting an ethnographic study includes five steps: (1) identify a topic; (2) create a literature review that identifies themes or issues of the group; (3) plan for data collection using personal interviews and observation; (4) data collection involving central cultural themes or issues to study about the group; (5) analysis the data through a coding process to identify themes that may expand upon and/or create new academic theory.

As stated earlier, the participants were identified through purposive sampling strategy and participated in two interviews, conducted two weeks apart from each other. The interviews took place before or after school in the teacher’s classroom. Each participant was interviewed individually with only one interview per session and interviews were digitally recorded for later
transcription. A set of guided questions served as the fundamental data collection instrument (see Appendix A). I developed the research questions and personally conducted and transcribed all interviews. Follow-up questions were asked to elicit further information and/or elaboration as deemed appropriate. The initial interview ran about 45 minutes and the follow up interview averaged 18 minutes.

The first interview focused on the teachers’ international travel and personal experience and was more general in nature regarding their travel. At the conclusion of the interview, the participants were asked to document any situations during the following two weeks that they thought about their travel experience, talked about it in class, re-addressed a topic from another perspective, or interacted with students or colleagues because of their international cross-cultural experience in self-reflected journal entries. All participants completed a personal reflection, but they were very different in nature, ranging from formal lists and paragraphs to snippets of paper stapled together with individual thoughts.

The focus of the second interview was on the participant’s personal reflection and how their cross-cultural travel experiences shape them as a teacher. As the beginning of the second interview, all of the participants started off the time either reading their personal reflections verbatim or summarized their notes. While the second interview had a set of guided questions that the teachers had in their possession ahead of time, much of the interview focused on their personal reflection with follow-up questions to clarify their experience. I personally transcribed the interviews myself.

**Data Analysis**

The goal of an ethnographic study is to provide an “emic,” or insider’s view into the culture (Creswell, 2007, p. 72). Once the data was transcribed from the digitally recorded files, I
submitted the transcript to each of the participants as part of a member check for them to approve the transcript, asking participants to initial the transcript as a sign of their approval. I then followed Le Baron’s microethnographic approach of content analysis and comparative analysis of the cross-cultural experience or situation, for the purpose of formulating insights (as cited in Jupp, 2006).

My first step was to analyze the transcribed documents with an open-coding analysis. In this process, I used a three-stage strategy of coding by using initial, focused, and thematic analyses of the transcripts. In the initial coding phase I looked to identify all themes in the interview, highlighting the individual’s transcript. I found 37 themes during this time that were repeated or similar in nature to at least two or more of the participants. At the completion of identifying themes, I moved to focused coding, where I collapsed the 37 themes into like categories. In this process, I created a spreadsheet with the 37 themed categories and then collapsed them into 13 categories. The final step involved thematic analyses, a process that looked for similarities, patterns, and uniqueness in both the transcript and the spreadsheet and reduced the like themes to eight. I also used the same three-stage coding strategy to analyze the participants’ self-reflection, using bracketing techniques to pull key ideas from the journal entries and identifying common themes. Since the participants had shared their self-reflection in the second interview, no new information was gained after reading their reflections on my own. The self-reflections were very important, however, because it presented the path and focus for the second interview, which I believe present a rich description and opportunities for the participant to share their own insight into the meaning and shaping of their profession through their experiences of cross-cultural international travel.

**Research Ethics**
I followed the procedures identified by the George Fox University Institutional Review Board in order to ensure the anonymity and confidentiality of all participants. I prepared a George Fox University HSRC Initial Review Questionnaire (Appendix B) and submitted it for Internal Review Board (IRB) approval. Once I received IRB approval (Appendix C), I moved forward to identify participants. I approached potential participants, explained my research and asked participants that were agreeable to complete the informed consent form (see Appendix D). I was diligent to inform my participants of the ethical framework that is described in the consent form and obtained all signatures before they were interviewed. I ensured anonymity and confidentiality of the participants in this study by keeping personal information and identities confidential, inserting pseudonyms in place of their real names. I also refrained from identifying the city where they teach as a mean of insuring additional privacy throughout my study. Field journal notes taken during the interview consist of informal notes, potential follow up questions, and observations about the interview experience. The field journal was not transcribed but was be used to augment and compare transcribed data analyses with additional contextual information to help with the interpretation of data. All research materials (i.e., digital recordings, transcriptions, researcher’s field journal, participant self-reflection journals, and signed consent forms) are locked in a secure location and will remain there for a period of no less than five years. I am the only individual who has access to these materials. After five years, I will personally destroy all relevant materials and delete the digital recordings.

**Potential Contribution of the Research**

This research gives greater insight into the nature of international cross-cultural travel experiences as articulated by U.S. secondary teachers. The study adds to the literature of the nature of cross-cultural travel experiences of teachers and its effect on their profession which are
found in chapters 4 and 5. The completed sample was made up of veteran teachers who had more than 16 years of experience in the secondary classroom and are all still continuing to teach and travel during their vacation time. From my initial search and continued search into the scholarly literature, there is very limited research available regarding the nature and/or impact of cross-cultural travel experiences of veteran teachers.

The personal interviews show a clear impact the individuals’ professional and personal lives as they reflected on their international cross-cultural experiences and their examination of the attitude, thoughts, values, beliefs, context, or situations that shaped their cross-cultural experiences. Teachers acknowledge a greater understanding of their own culture, which led to greater global mindedness and awareness of the cultures around them. Many participants identified their international cross-cultural experience led to transformational learning through self-reflection, deepening their understanding of the role that culture plays in the classroom and their daily lives.

My study was conducted from a theory-building perspective, with the potential to offer the educational community research-based themes regarding the nature of cross-cultural travel experiences that shapes teachers and impacts their profession. Prospective travelers who are teachers may find both intrinsic and extrinsic benefits that make traveling both rewarding and rejuvenating to their career.

The study provides the basis of a discussion that will advance the importance of cross-cultural experience of inservice and preservice teachers, creating and furthering discussion regarding the need of cross-cultural competencies in teacher education programs and professional development units for international travel. The findings may lead school districts, teacher licensure boards, and schools of education to encourage international cross-cultural
experience as a way to better equip teachers to work with the demographics in their classrooms, especially in regard to the achievement gap. It may also encourage teacher preparation colleges and universities to create opportunities for their students to travel cross-culturally; this allows universities to develop cross-cultural programs and systems for credit. With the completion of this research there is potential for expansion of current and/or creation of new theory to develop not only for classroom teachers, regarding the effects of international travel.
CHAPTER 4

Findings

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to explore the nature of cross-cultural international travel experiences as articulated by U.S. secondary teachers. I conducted initial interviews with eight teachers from the same high school in November and December 2012 at their workplace and then followed up each interview with a secondary interview two weeks later. I spent an average of 45 minutes with each participant during their initial interview and about 18 minutes with them during the follow up. This chapter presents the findings from those personal interviews as described by the participants and addresses the central research question: What is the nature of international cross-cultural experiences of secondary teachers? The sub-questions addressed include: (1) How do participants describe their international cross-cultural travel experiences?; (2) What did the international cross-cultural travel experiences mean to participant?; and (3) What did teachers self-report about how their cross-cultural travel experiences have shaped them as teachers? A preview of participants are listed below in Table 1.

Table 1.

Preview of Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Years Teaching</th>
<th>Teaching Assignment</th>
<th>International Travel Locations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participant 1</td>
<td>17 years</td>
<td>Social Studies</td>
<td>Austria, Botswana, France, Italy, Slovenia, South Africa, Zimbabwe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 2</td>
<td>22 years</td>
<td>Social Studies</td>
<td>China &amp; Rwanda</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 3</td>
<td>34 years</td>
<td>Special Education</td>
<td>Canada, France, Germany, Ireland, Mexico, United Kingdom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 4</td>
<td>16 years</td>
<td>Mathematics</td>
<td>Austria, Belgium, Czech Republic, Denmark, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Mexico, Netherlands, Spain, Switzerland, United Kingdom, Uruguay</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Findings: Themes and Initial Coding

After conducting two personal interviews with each of the eight participants, the transcription produced 125 pages of data. The personal interviews were the primary data collection tool, but I also had eight pages of self-reflection notes, one from each of the participants, that they wrote between the two interviews. My participants were equal in gender (4 males and 4 females), diverse in age (from 38-65), and were veteran teachers (all participants have more than 16 years of teaching experience in a secondary school).

In the initial coding stage of my data-analysis process, I took the data and organized it into similar categories. I started this with the three sub-questions and broke down the interview questions from each of those categories of my guided questions into like groups. I then searched for similarities in the participants’ phenomena and grouped these together and then used focused coding, which created seven themes (Table 2). Some of the themes had extensive answers with patterns that developed to form sub-themes within the theme.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Education</th>
<th>Country</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>Alternative Education</td>
<td>Bahamas &amp; Argentina</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>Mathematics &amp; Alternative Education</td>
<td>Albania, Argentina, Belize, Bosnia, Canada, China, Costa Rica, Croatia, France, Greece, Guatemala, Italy, Mexico, Montenegro, Thailand, Uruguay</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>Science</td>
<td>France, Ireland, Japan, Morocco, Peru, United Kingdom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>Language Arts</td>
<td>France, Ireland, Spain, Morocco, United Kingdom</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2.

Phenomena and Theme Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phenomena</th>
<th>Theme</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. To see things they’ve read about in books or on television</td>
<td>Why people travel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Escaping their busy life and experiencing a different</td>
<td>Why people travel</td>
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<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>To meet new people and learn about culture</td>
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<td>4.</td>
<td>To make me a better teacher</td>
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<td>5.</td>
<td>To rejuvenate my career</td>
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<td>6.</td>
<td>To see new places (curiosity, challenge, adventure)</td>
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<td>7.</td>
<td>Understand their own sense of history/roots</td>
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<td>8.</td>
<td>Picking out a place to go and paying for it ahead of time/booking a tour</td>
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<td>9.</td>
<td>Travel that caters to individual services or treatment of the participant</td>
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<td>10.</td>
<td>Arrived in country and went with the flow</td>
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<td>11.</td>
<td>Researched the location and arrived with a limited, flexible plan</td>
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<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>Spent extended time with residents of the area as they hiked and biked the land</td>
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<td>13.</td>
<td>Took family on a mission trip, interacting with culture</td>
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<tr>
<td>14.</td>
<td>Took teens on a mission trip and built homes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15.</td>
<td>Teaching language workshops to students to build the student confidence, while working with in-country teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16.</td>
<td>Teacher exchange</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17.</td>
<td>People staring at you/ sticking out like a sore thumb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18.</td>
<td>New respect for working with people from different cultures</td>
</tr>
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<td>19.</td>
<td>Openness to the treatment of others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20.</td>
<td>Openness to others</td>
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<tr>
<td>21.</td>
<td>Realization about self/Americans</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22.</td>
<td>Realization about others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23.</td>
<td>Broadening of Perspective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24.</td>
<td>Questioning of our possessions/ materialism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25.</td>
<td>Living from thing to thing vs. enjoyment of the process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26.</td>
<td>Perspective about the big picture &amp; our job as an instructor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27.</td>
<td>Professional development: Impact on teaching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28.</td>
<td>Citizenship: Gratitude for current situation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29.</td>
<td>Questioning if our system is best for all</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30.</td>
<td>Healthcare</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31.</td>
<td>Materialism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32.</td>
<td>Call to action to make a change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33.</td>
<td>Importance of world citizenship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34.</td>
<td>Examples to share in class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35.</td>
<td>Whole student learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36.</td>
<td>Encouragement of students to travel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37.</td>
<td>Where to next</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The seven themed groups that emerged from the initial and focused coding stage of my data analysis include: (1) why people travel; (2) the way people travel; (3) the best part about travel; (4) transformational learning; (5) cultural humility; (6) student impact; and (7) future travel. I broke down the seven themes that developed from the overarching research question regarding the nature of cross-cultural international travel experiences of secondary teachers in the following sections, connecting the themed groups and including quotations from the study participants that reflect the significance of the identified themes.

As the themes emerged, they related to and answered the sub-questions as articulated by this group of secondary teachers’ travel experiences (Table 3). As I listened and re-read the transcripts of the participants’ international cross-cultural travel experiences, I identified that an important part of the participants’ travel experiences included the why and how that individual chose to travel. The description of their travel was a critical component as to how they traveled, where they traveled, and why they traveled to their chosen destination and greatly influenced the type of experiences they encountered. Of the eight participants, six of the individuals traveled in the same fashion every time that they went out of country, while two participants took different approaches to travel from experience to experience (Participant 3 and 7). As the participants described their international cross-cultural travel experiences other themes also emerged, from the best and worst parts of traveling internationally, to experiencing life for the first time as a minority within a culture.

While the sub-questions were used to conduct the personal interviews, many of the themes that emerged crossed over between sub-questions two and three. The themes of transformational learning, cultural humility and the participants intent to travel in the future were
all strongly related to both the meaning of their travel and the shaping of their professionalism as a teacher. These ideas were interrelated through the participants’ processing of moments of sudden realization or comprehension that developed into their educational philosophies and the ways they approach their classroom. The student impact theme was laced with passionate descriptions of how the participants’ experiences had changed their curriculum, or the ways that they viewed their students, or the techniques that they used to bring out ideas, so that their personal journeys could be used to enrich their students’ learning.

Table 3.

Themes and Research Sub-questions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Research Sub-question</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Why people travel</td>
<td>Sub-question 1: How do the participants describe their international cross-cultural experiences?</td>
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<tr>
<td>How people travel:</td>
<td>Sub-question 1: How do the participants describe their international cross-cultural experiences?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tourist</td>
<td></td>
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<td>Traveler</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Servant</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minority experience</td>
<td>Sub-question 1: How do the participants describe their international cross-cultural experiences?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transformational learning</td>
<td>Sub-question 2: What did the international cross-cultural experiences mean to the participant?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cultural humility</td>
<td>Sub-question 2: What did the international cross-cultural experiences mean to the participant?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student impact</td>
<td>Sub-question 3: What international cross-cultural experiences shaped them as a teacher?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Future travel</td>
<td>Sub-question 2: What did the international cross-cultural experiences mean to the participant?</td>
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<td>Sub-question 3: What international cross-cultural experiences shaped them as a teacher?</td>
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Why Secondary Teachers Travel
During the interviews, all of the participants quickly identified and expanded on their travel experiences, having very specific stories that they shared to help me understand their personal experiences. Participants identified many reasons that they traveled from wanting to see things that they had heard about, to changing the pace of life and enjoying a simpler life, to exploring their family roots and history.

**To see things that they have heard or read about.** Secondary teachers traveled for a wide variety of reasons, and all eight participants identified that one of the main reasons that they traveled was to see things that they had read about in the past, watched on television, or heard about from friends and it was their curiosity to experience it in person that led them abroad.

It was the gold gilding of Versailles and the Napoleon Bridge and just to see that and the Hall of Mirrors and thinking about the Versailles Treaty and the history of that it was just like, wow. Everything that I read, for so many years in my history books, and there it is! That was goose bump stuff for me and now I could really envision all of these world leaders sitting down at the Versailles palace at the grounds that are endless. It was crazy. (Participant 1)

Seeing new things and getting a chance to stand where Christopher Columbus stood when he brought back his treasures to the King and Queen of Spain, I just think that was really cool and I can come back and use the stories later in (my classroom). (Participant 8)
You can go to Yellowstone, but it’s nothing like what it is like in Africa. Just that experience alone was tremendous, I thought, I would go back in a heartbeat to kind of have that taste and experience and to have that feeling and the animals were amazing. I mean to see an elephant, an African elephant which is much bigger than the Asians and how they could possibly blend in and they could be 50 feet away and you would be like “Holy, moley, they’re just right there.” (Participant 1)

The United States is so young, and we have history but we don’t have history. So to sit at the top of St. Nick’s Cathedral and look out and watch the sunset across El Alhambra, it is just mind blowing to think how long it’s been there. That they had running water through there and canals before anyone else, that blows me away and I’m always surprised by the depth of history. (Participant 8)

I think that (travel) opens your eyes to the rest of world, because you can be pretty closeted here. I mean I can read all that I want and I can listen to it and see it on TV, but you get to filter it from a step away, so any time that I get to filter that and see that those people are real and that the situation is real, that cannot be anything but good and will make us more empathetic and if anything we need more, we need more empathy of other people’s plights. (Participant 7)

Traveling internationally gave participants the opportunity to personally experience many things that they had read about, watched on screens, and dreamed about before heading abroad. These first-hand experiences gave participants the opportunity to weigh the situation for themselves,
allowing them to decide what the experience meant from their own perspective and without an outside interpretation.

**To learn more about locations and cultures.** There was also a level of curiosity involved in traveling in which participants looked to find out more about the locations and cultures, as they considered their travel itineraries of their trips. All of the participants researched the country or area of their intended travel to help them refine the travel plans. For some this meant surfing the internet or visiting the local library and for others it meant talking with people who had traveled to those places and could advise them on their potential trip.

We used Rick Steves and went to see as much or as many cultures as possible. We didn’t want to just do the touristy stuff, we want to do the background and find real ‘mom and pop’ types of places. I think that I would choose off the beaten path every time, rather than going to the cities, I mean sightseeing stuff is great, but you go there for the people. (Participant 4)

I like to investigate the areas that I’m going to and find out more about it. (Participant 3)

I always plan in great detail before we leave but by two days in, we’re always off plan. So I do plan and I generally know where we’re going to go and I know very specific information about that place and most of the route that we’re traveling on and I know if we travel certain amounts each day that we’ll end up in X place or Y place or Z place but that never happens. So it is planned but we plan to go off plan. I also know what is available where we’re at, so it’s planned in some parameter. (Participant 6)
Once we kind of knew what was cheaper … we spoke to neighbors and friends and talked to them and they had been to Slovenia and we had read Rick Steves and some other tourist books about what it said about Slovenia kind of being a type of jewels that is mix of Austria and Italy and kind of Eastern Europe and we picked Slovenia. (Participant 1)

**Understanding their family roots and history.** Two of the participants also identified that part of their curiosity in their research of location helped them gain a greater sense of their own cultural history and roots, giving them an opportunity to see where their ancestors came from.

I’m of Irish descent and everyone wanted to believe that we were related and they were very umm, warm people and I met a lot of really warm people. (Participant 3)

Our heritage is there and so and it would be so cool to go to the town of our family namesake and so that’s what it is, we want to see everything, so it’s like we’re in a candy shop and we want to taste it all. (Participant 1)

Researching the culture helped participants focus their area of travel and assisted them with devising a plan for their travel. Research into a geographic area also assisted individuals in making their travel plans more affordable and in some cases caused participants to change their destination to fit their travel preferences. Participants identified that they had greater confidence
in their ability to navigate the countryside and were more flexible as they traveled and making changes in their itineraries a fluid, pleasant experience.

**To experience a change of pace.** Escaping the busyness of American life and living at a pace distinctly different from their traditional schedule was identified as a reason that three individuals chose to travel. This change of pace gave some participants the opportunity to experience a much different lifestyle and culture, showing participants how individuals from that culture go about their daily life. The change in pace was also identified as a way for participants to rejuvenate their minds and bodies after a busy school year.

I love getting away from the American idea that it’s all about me and that I need more stuff. I love visiting new cultures and having a chance to experience the culture and the way of life and how things are done in other places. (Participant 4)

(Argentina is) just a lot more laid back. Really slow paced…. It was so much simpler. The simpler life was more family oriented and happened around family and friends. I would move to Argentina in a heartbeat, especially in retirement just because it’s so simple. It’s not expensive or extravagant and you go down there and you have 60,000 a year to live on and you could live very comfortably there and you wouldn’t run into a whole bunch of expenses to live there. (Participant 5)

The biggest thing for me is pacing. It’s not about how much money can you make or how much you can accumulate. It seemed more like help your neighbor out, visit, sit down, have coffee, have tea. (Participant 4)
For me it absolutely revives me. It’s like taking a college course. It’s like you’re inundated and reinvigorated with so many new surroundings and fresh sights. I don’t know how you could not be refreshed by traveling. I mean not necessarily the actual travel part but the experience of traveling. I mean hearing the languages, seeing the different people, how they eat, how they dress, how they live and you get that “hey, they do this a little bit different than we do. I find it fascinating to see how other groups go about their daily lives and it’s cool to have that. Then when you come back you have so much more to give in our world as teachers, because you have that to rely on because you have a source, an experience. (Participant 1)

The time frame there (Ecuador) was just so much more relaxed. When someone said we’ll meet at noon, as long as you war there by one, you’re good to go. It was so very flexible, people lived more, I mean to equate it to the States is that I feel more often than not, that we do and that we check things off of our list, more than we actually go out and live life. (Participant 4)

Living in a more relaxed manner in regard to time was a factor that set the new culture apart from the traditional American lifestyle. It opened up thoughts for individuals to consider how they live their own life and if they were satisfied with living that way. Participant 1 identified this time as rejuvenating, opening up doors for reflection and giving them more energy, excitement, and source material that would impact their classroom.
Intrinsic benefits of travel. Choosing to travel proved to be more than focusing on extrinsic benefits found in the pictures and experiences from a fantastic vacation, it also proved to be intrinsically rewarding. The in-depth interviews showed that three secondary teachers traveled for intrinsic factors that ranged from testing themselves to examining their own beliefs. For some this meant trying to live in a different manner and for others it meant challenging themselves to do something outside of their norms.

I think that it's really valuable to get outside of your own culture. It puts a lot of things in perspective, nothing is black and white in my opinion, but there is a lot of gray. There is a lot of similarities in cultures, it just kind of manifests itself in different ways. I just find it very interesting to put myself in that place. It makes you realize what it’s like to be a little different. (Participant 3)

I like the challenge. For us it’s a huge challenge (biking). It’s a physical challenge to start with and then it’s a psychological challenge to get by and then figure out how to stay safe and keep sane and how to interact with people and how to exist in the world as it somewhere else, rather than existing in our own little bubble here. So I really like that challenge. I like seeing other places. (Participant 6)

I think that traveling makes me a better teacher and that I experience as they experience it and it gives us common ground. It lets me step into their world and relate to their thoughts and ideas. (Participant 8)
Participants shared that their travel was valuable and gave them a sense of accomplishment as they conquered issues that challenged them and opened their eyes to the way that others live, making them better teachers.

**Summary of why secondary teachers travel.** Secondary teachers traveled to better understand the world, so that they could share their first-hand accounts with their families, friends and neighbors at home. They traveled so that they could experience the things that they read about in textbooks, popular magazines, watched on television and heard about on social networks. The participants traveled so that they could test themselves and appease their curiosity about the world around them, while coming to a better understanding of who they are as individuals and where they came from in the past. Teachers traveling proved to be an important component to helping them strengthen themselves as individuals.

While the participants had many common threads to why they traveled, the ways they traveled to better understand the world was much different from each other.

**Ways Secondary Teachers Travel**

There are many ways that individuals chose to experience their international cross-cultural travel experiences. Some chose to book a tour from their local travel agent and arrived at their location with a set itinerary, while other participants arrived in country with a Eurorail Pass, bike, or a car rental agreement ready to set out to see the world, other participants traveled with a set mission to assist or change culture norms that would better the lives of the culture as a whole, while others traveled on their own in an attempt to discover something about themselves.

I identified three groups by the way that they planned, interacted with the culture, and described their travel experiences: tourist, traveler, and servant. The tourist was a comfortable traveler who went to see things and typically created a list ahead of their travel to check off along
the way. The traveler looked to learn about the culture first-hand as they experienced life in that place and had flexible itineraries that were fluid throughout their journey. The servant made other people the priority as they journeyed and placed his/her interests to the side to focus on serving others. While each of the group experienced the culture and location that they set out to explore, the amount of interaction with local cultures and customs varied greatly. Some participants traveled as Americans on vacation and looked to be catered to the American standard, while others interacted with the locals and looked to experience the culture as a visitor in a foreign land, while others lived among the individuals of the culture and looked to experience life outside of the traditions of America. Each group had unique experiences that opened their eyes to the culture at hand, but in choosing to live among the people in different manners, their experiences with the natives of the land greatly differed.

**Tourist.** For the purpose of this study, a tourist is an individual who travels especially for pleasure. To that end, the tourist tends to locate their accommodations before going on their trip abroad, locating the best hotels, restaurants, attractions, and viewpoints ahead of time. The tourist has a tendency to study up on their destination, mapping out their plan of attack, gathering materials to make the most of their time abroad, while wasting little time. Teachers who traveled as tourists tended to book a tour through a travel company that allowed them to pre-plan and pre-pay for their trip many months in advance. The tourist’s average length of stay was two weeks with one participant having spent four weeks abroad. Many of the participants shared that tours were much easier to work with and that it left all of the worries in the hands of the tour operators. For individuals traveling with students it also made the trip less expensive for the teachers.
I went with another teacher and we closed our eyes and said where and we both had always wanted to go (to Ireland). The benefits that the company provides for recruiting and then traveling is a win-win and we’ve had a lot fun and I’ve never had a bad experience. I get a humongous discount, but it’s also about security because when I travel with kids it’s about security. Everything we do is pre-planned, which is a bonus when you go and don’t have to worry. In Ireland we had a huge snafu but I didn’t know anything about it because the guy that was with us just took care of it. So for the kids it’s not as affordable but everything is packaged so that you gain that back by not worrying or doing pre and post tickets, etc. (Participant 8)

We were on a ship for the most part, we didn’t get a whole lot of cultural experiences except when we were getting off the ship and going to a casino, so it was kind of tainted there a little bit (Bahamas). We went to a really lavish casino, Trump owned it and it was Americanized with American money and it was the same as the U.S. So the Bahamas wasn’t really a cultural shock, other than the snorkeling and the ocean which were just amazing, amazing. (Participant 5)

We did a package deal to Italy for the first time and it was really easy. (Participant 3)

The European adventures I’ve been on have all been first world, except for the gypsies that come up to try to sell you something. I mean it was touristy in a white bred world. It was all fun and spend money, with sightseeing. Most of the places in Europe didn’t really matter if you spoke the language because they’re trilingual or bilingual. It didn’t
matter that I was in Spain and my Spanish is poor, it was good enough. So when you’re just there as a tourist to see the sights, there weren’t any cultural problems. On those type of trips you are not exposed to the super have-nots and the super haves, so you don’t see the dichotomy. So it’s kind of a lark. It isn’t very stressful. If you go and say you want to eat cuisine from the country that you’re in great, but it’s not the only option that is available. (Participant 7)

Tourists travel was simple for these participants, thanks to travel agents who made the decisions and dealt with travel glitches and complications, while leaving the individual to enjoy the new culture. Tourists were often kept separate from the ugliness of a culture, being diverted to sites and events of their liking that would offer them things to do. Lack of stress in making these arrangements also plays an important aspect in the ease of traveling as a tourist.

Several of the participants reported that the service afforded to them while traveling abroad, personally impacted their international travel experiences. For some it was about the standard that they were used to in the United States and for others it was about being in a place much different their own culture. In most cases, it meant that the individual had to change the way that they would typically interact with the culture at home. The tourist had set opinions of what they would see and find on their trip and expressed some disappointment when things turned out different than expected. This disappointment was magnified when it became more difficult to interact with the culture and/or when the individual could not find what they were looking for or get what they wanted.
Their customer service is horrendous. I mean maybe we are spoiled here in the United States because when we want it, we want it now, and we get it now and its part of a high demand for customer service. (In Italy) they make it the way that they make it and they don’t put it on the side or can you add something and the answer is no. (Participant 1)

It was just like National Geographic with the bicycles loaded with toilet paper and diapers and other things. Clearly we were on display as we came in on our bus. (Participant 8)

Everyone took a break between the hours of noon and two o’clock. Nothing was open, shops are closed it was like you hear about siesta. It was a city wide thing (Argentina). (Participant 5)

I don’t know what they do for work – you try to find a grocery store at two in the afternoon and none of them are open, they’re all sleeping. That’s not something that happens in the States. (Participant 4)

The tourist also had a greater tendency to acknowledge the value, deals, or expresses disgust with the foreign markets that they encountered. A three of the participants found the market experience to be very positive as their dollars stretched much further abroad than it could at home. For others the experience was uncomfortable because of the pressure they endured on the streets to buy and uncomfortable sites of poverty.
We went on a boat trip through the Delta and it was awesome. They were talking about the price of the house and stuff and I was thinking, “Are you kidding me?” I mean I could rent my house for the price that they were selling it for. It was so plain, but it was so beautiful. They took a lot of pride in the fact that they took care of their things, but it wasn’t anything lavish. It was just more plain and a lot more practical. (Participant 5)

In Argentina they do a lot of custom orders and I ordered a jacket to be made custom. I ordered it in the morning and I got it that night and it was all done and wasn’t ridiculously expensive like it would be here in the United States. I mean it wasn’t cheap, but it wasn’t expensive. (Participant 5)

We took one little day trip to Morocco and I kind of knew that the kids that were with us were going to have a major culture shock and that the people would need our money and we walked through an area which you and I would classify as a ghetto. I knew that’s how it was going to be, but it was still surprising and the kids were fairly shocked. They were sobered and a little afraid, I wasn’t afraid, but I could tell that they were apprehensive and it was really clear to them that these people really don’t have anything. They’re living in places that have been inhabited for 1000 years and the walls and apartments were falling apart and it’s really crowded and it’s smelly and taking American kids, we were really in shock. I noticed when we went to lunch, that it didn’t bother me to eat there and I had seen the dead chickens hanging on the wall, but I don’t think any of the kids ate in Morocco. The connection was too close and they were thinking that could
have been the chicken that we saw and I’m thinking, “Yep, it probably was.” (Participant 7)

While the tourist experiences the culture of a location, it is often through an insulated experience. The tour sets them apart from the culture of the place, protecting them from many of the hazards of everyday life. They are not forced to make decisions on their own or eat the food from a site or figure out how to get to the next place on their itinerary. At the end of the day, they have paid an operator to see many locations, who helps them find good food and arranges an American style hotel with clean sheets and a comfortable place for them to recover for the next day.

**Best part about travel through the eyes of the tourist.** For the tourist, the best part about traveling was meeting new people and seeing how other people live. This experience often accompanied observations of individuals in public places regarding how other cultures live and the way those interactions made them feel.

Ireland was the most welcoming. But even in Paris, it was one of the times we had free time and I went and sat at a Paris Café and you’re all squished in. There is no supersize in Europe, you’re all squished in, so you have to make friends with people you’re sitting next to because you’re food is going to end up on their plate or at least in their space. In Paris they were welcoming about that. I found that if you’re friendly, you get friendly back. I mean if you make an effort, they’ll make the effort back. (Participant 8)

I think that is one of the core things that we saw in the Dutch couple to the German couple that we met in Botswana and the people we spoke with in Cape Town, that was
some of the takeaway, when you boil it down people want a chance. They want a chance for freedom and prosperity; they don’t need to be Bill Gates. They just want a decent life and that sort of thing. I think that there was also a sense of democracy thing that thread through the Dutch couple to the trip in Cape Town to Mandela’s island out there, you just got a sense and it was all very recent and there was just this thread of freedom and democracy. (Participant 1)

The simple life. It was so much simpler. The simpler life was more family oriented and happened around family and friends. Uh, late night is four in the morning. Nothing happens between 6-9pm and there is a lot of family time with sit down meals together for breakfast, lunch and dinner. I really, well that was the best part of it. For the most part people were really friendly after they got to know us, but to start with they were kind of standoffish because I don’t know if they didn’t appreciate our culture or if we were kind of outsiders to start with. (Participant 5)

I like the stories and I like to collect stories along the way from different people, so I journal every day, usually on the road so I can come back and use the stories later on. And what I love about traveling with teenagers and kids is that they say that’s so cool and to watch them experience it. (Participant 8)

Worst part about travel through the eyes of the tourist. The individuals who traveled as tourists had the most descriptive dislikes and focused on issues of customer service and the way that people lived from day to day. The interviews focused on the participants’ personal feelings
and how their interactions with the culture satisfied their wants and needs. These interactions ranged from economic disparity and dealing with beggars, con artists, and poverty, to their disdain that the culture expected Americans to have more wealth, which meant a particular expectation for them to live up to.

The kids, it was pathetic (sad). They were walking with their hands out asking for pesos. But you couldn’t give it to one because they would all pester you the rest of the time you were there. So you had to just keep them away from you. You had to be rude to them because they didn’t take no for an answer. (Participant 5)

In Victoria Falls we saw the absolute poverty there which we knew we would see, but it was interesting to see how poor the people were. I mean our poor people tend to be fat. We don’t know poor in that sense, I mean we do in some extent but in some regards we don’t. Especially on the scale that they have and that they have to deal with that poverty and we saw that. (Participant 1)

I was pestered by every single shop we went by with ‘we’ve got a coat for you, we’ve got this for you.’ And it was like, oh my goodness, because people were constantly on you. (Participant 5)

I didn’t really like the way that we were perceived. At times we felt uncomfortable because we were American and it was obvious and were kind of expected to purchase more things. (Participant 5)
Comparisons also took place as participants sized up what poor meant in the culture that they were visiting and its meaning at home in America. In some cases, teachers had a sense of guilt for not giving the individuals the money that they were begging for. They felt frustrated but shared that they had been coached that it was not beneficial to hand out funds to the children in the streets. For some participants it became irksome for them to watch the fraudulent practices that individuals played to gain funds.

We saw the con game of poverty, too. I don’t know, maybe it’s entrepreneurial in some sense, but there was a boy probably 5-8 years old and an older male and we walked by in a very touristy area and so there are shops and people are going by and so people are walking by and some are pulling carts and you have tourists that you see and then you have very poor people and it’s kind of a weird sort of mix. One of the things that I saw was this boy that we thought was blind and he was begging and we thought, gosh, this poor blind kid and then later on as we were coming back we saw him running across the street and he’s dodging things (laughter) and we’re thinking okay, you’re not blind, there is no way that you’re dodging that but it was kind of an oh. (Participant 1)

Everything was bartered for in the Bahamas and we were mainly shopping in flea market or Saturday market open air spaces. If you paid full price, they thought you were goofy and you weren’t making good decisions. Things were fairly inexpensive there and when you got home, you knew why because they didn’t last very long. (Participant 5)
A few participants focused on the relaxation and vacation and their experience with customer service. Many of them were disappointed that the American expectations for customer service were difficult to find and that things were not easily packaged together to fit each customers’ wants and needs.

Italy’s customer service was horrendous. I mean maybe we are spoiled here in the United States because when we want it and we want it now, and we get it now and its part of a high demand for customer service. They make it the way that they make it and they don’t put it on the side or can you add something because the answer is no. There idea is that we make it the way we make it and if you don’t want it, the guy that is coming in the door is going to take it. (Participant 1)

At times we felt uncomfortable because we were Americans and it was obvious and we were kind of expected to purchase more. We were pestered on. In fact in Buenos Aires, I was pestered by every single shop we went by with “we’ve got a coat for you, we’ve got a coat for you.” And it was like, oh my goodness, because people were constantly on me. (Participant 5)

Participants’ expectations regarding their wants and needs played an important part of how they reflected that their journey went. For those who were looking for things similar to America, they were often disappointed that things were so dissimilar from the American experience. Conversely those who went to experience something new and were flexible, found many new things to experience.
The tourist experience reflected what they saw and experienced. Four of the participants’ interviews were day by day accounts of what they did and what they saw, with a focus on how much they were able to see during their time in the country. The tourist interviews also reflected much more discussion about the services that they received and how that affected their time abroad. Many of the participants made comparisons regarding what you would see in America and their experience abroad. Several of the tourists shared that they had looked at their pictures between interview one and two and were able to re-live much of their trip as they flipped through the pages of their scrapbooks, sharing the importance of capturing their time abroad on film.

**Traveler.** For the purpose of this study, a traveler is a person who travels or has traveled to distant places or foreign lands, and learns about the culture first-hand. While the traveler may have pre-planned their trip, they are more likely to adjust their schedule on the fly and are open to whatever the day brings. On average, the traveler spent four weeks abroad at a time and wanted to see new places, rarely going back to the same country more than once. The traveler looked to experience the local culture the same way that a person of the culture practices daily living. This meant that the traveler took time to observe native customs and traditions to immerse themselves in daily living.

We spent 65 days traveling around Europe. We planned it out and kind of decided to spend three or four days here and there and didn’t really deal with the transportation situation until we got over there. We kind of had a basic framework, but after that it was experience the culture. (Participant 4)
I’ve always backpacked it, taken trains you know, because I like to go into local towns a little and culture a little bit more and you know. (Participant 3)

I went with a friend of mine and we went to the Yucatan Peninsula and we rented a little Volkswagen, two little blond ditzes, not really, but we didn’t know anything about what we were doing and we rented a car and drove all around the Yucatan Peninsula by ourselves and we had a great adventure and we never had anything happen (that was bad). I mean the people there, they were all very, well shocked sometimes when we drove into these towns, where the water was literally going through and their whole huts were stacked in hammocks and their TVs were in hammocks because the water would wash through, but they would be very like, surprised to see us but they were always really great people. So that was a great experience. (Participant 3)

When I travel, I travel on bicycle. So we travel independently by bicycle, so when we get to a town, we have to find a place to stay and find a place to eat and find a place to do all the things that you need to do on your own and we end up interacting with people of that world more so I think than a person who would be traveling in that country in another situation. A lot of our travel has to do with interaction and travel and based on that and finding alternative sorts of travel and then getting to wherever we’re going to stay and then we figure out if we’re going to stay there for a few days or if we’re going to move on the next day. (Participant 6)
In South America it was much more of a cultural, climbing experience with indigenous people so besides the guide in the Andes, it was all indigenous people and that was quite a different experience. We took the kids and that was a really good introduction to the third world and still seeing the people in the little huts that you thought could be from 1500 or 1100 AD and they’re still cooking and living in the same manner. It wasn’t a white bred world and it was how people lived there and people that were on the lower socioeconomic status were the people that we interacted with. (Participant 7)

Travelers reported a rich interaction with the culture that changed from day to day. As they interacted with the natives of the area, they learned about the culture and how individuals lived on a daily basis. For the most part, the traveler was not insulated in their experience of the culture and had the opportunity to interact and learn from the natives of that land in a way that tourists did not encounter. This can easily be seen in the difference in transportation choices. Individuals who travel on a tour bus, will only be subjected to travel with other people on their tour, while individuals who travel on their own will interact with natives using public transportation on city buses and rail traffic. While riding public transit does not make you a traveler or a tourist, it does allow the individual to witness how people from that culture go to work and converse with others around them. The traveler will have more opportunities for change to occur in their schedule and has to be more flexible in the way that they approach their trip.

**The solo traveler.** Participant 3 was the only individual who traveled alone during her time abroad. During her time alone in Europe, she found a new understanding of who she was as
a person and found herself interacting with the culture in a way that she would have missed if she had been with someone else.

I’d never traveled by myself before until I went from France to Ireland by myself and spent two weeks in Ireland. And that was actually a really great experience, well because, I’m of Irish descent and everyone wanted to believe that we were related and they were very, umm, warm people and I met a lot of really warm people. (Participant 3)

You know we go and we see towns and they live there, but it’s not the same as when you are traveling by yourself. (Participant 3)

One thing I noticed when I traveled more by myself in France, where I didn’t speak the language was that I felt vulnerable and sort of lost in the world a bit. I would find myself crying and didn’t feel like I had anyone to latch on to and that was a pretty significant experience. It didn’t last terribly long, but it was still an experience that I’ve never had before in that way. I really felt kind of isolated and didn’t know who I could reach out to, or even communicate. (Participant 3)

For the individual traveling on their own a unique moment took place as she made decisions based sole on her own situation, without regards to others. For Participant 3 this was the first time that she had truly experienced the feeling of being alone in an unfamiliar place, which opened up opportunities for individual self-reflection. While the journey was emotional, she
found the time alone to be worthwhile, opening up doors to experiences that would have been missed if not alone.

**Best part about travel through the eyes of the traveler.** For the traveler, the best part about international travel focused on the people they met along their journey. These interactions were not planned or thought out ahead of time, but occurred as the participants went about their day. The conversations also caused the participants to make comparisons between their native culture and the cultures abroad.

I loved getting away from the American idea that it’s all about me and I need more stuff. It is nice to get out and I loved the culture, so being down in Mexico, even down in the South in Laredo, Texas, that’s another culture there and in itself. Our main thing was experience the culture and the way of life and how things are done. (Participant 4)

New friends through ongoing relationships made on the journey. In Bosnia it was difficult because it was the first predominately Muslim place that we had ever been and so it was kind of fascinating and we got to talk to people about living there and wars that they’ve had there and then we rode out to a very small town and they were having a celebration and we didn’t know what it was, so we stopped to see what it was and they gave us plates of food and pulled us into their circle and we ended up staying there and met a little girl there and I’m still in touch with her. So that kind of thing is really what makes me love a place and the connections that you make there and the connections that you wouldn’t normally make around here. (Participant 6)
Almost everything, good or bad, I just like it. I mean you’re never going to know everything so every place you go that is new and fascinating. I’ve never had a bad experience, you know of being ripped off, other than losing things because of connections, but that’s just going to happen. In terms of bad experience from someone within the country, I’ve been pretty lucky. (Participant 7)

While individuals enjoyed the kinship of meeting people from around the world, there was also a distinct identification that the travelers shared regarding the lack of difference between people in the world.

It’s about how the things that I most like is that people are more alike than we are different and there really aren’t that many really bad people in the world and so we might have different lives and different lifestyles but really we have all the same types of passions and thoughts and you know love for our families and values. I mean we all have really similar values when you come right down to the core of things and so, that’s what I find. It’s interesting to be in a different place and see how alike they really are and how open they really are. (Participant 6)

When it comes down to it, people are people in same sense and it’s about what they want? You know that they want to be loved, they want to fall in love, they want to have a family, whether it’s kids and family and marriage—they want to feel safe if they have kids and that there kids have an education. They want the basic things. I mean if you
want to call it Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness, it’s just the basic core things.

(Participant 1)

The traveler engaged in the world that they were visiting by meeting people throughout their travels and developing relationships with them. While some participants have continued long-term friendships from their travel, others have permanent impressions of moments that opened doors into understanding cultures abroad. This interaction enabled the traveler to get to know individuals from different cultures and allowed them to see the similarities that we share with all humans.

**Worst part about travel through the eyes of the traveler.** For the traveler, the worst part about travel did not reflect a view that was negative towards the culture at hand or was complaining in nature, but instead was directed at the basic inconveniences of travel.

So I don’t know if there’s a negative. For me if something happens like the train breaks down or the car breaks down or we can’t get some place, that’s all just part of the experience. There are so many people in the world that put up with so much more than that. I don’t know if there was any part that I really disliked per se; it just brought a different experience. I think that any time that you can travel you’re not going to ever lose out. Even bad experiences you’ll be able to look back on them later and realize how funny it was or you can learn to laugh later, definitely good experiences. (Participant 4)

If you do if for a long time that you just get tired of the challenge and you just want to have a day that is just not so hard. Where you know where your food is and you know
where your stuff is and you don’t have to change towns and you don’t have to try to make a train or make a third attempt at trying to get a train ticket or whatever, sometimes it just gets really tiring and exhausting. It’s also exhausting to be with the same person 24-7 for weeks on end. (Participant 6)

Three participants pointed out their disappointment with fellow Americans who were traveling abroad as a worst part about travel, identifying their countrymen’s poor choices as reflecting disappointingly on Americans. This ranged from individuals who were demanding and/or were inappropriate with their requests to individuals, to people who were drunk and embarrassing themselves in the streets. All three travelers felt that these behaviors made Americans look poorly in the eyes of the inhabitants of the region that they were visiting.

You see some people that are behaving not very proudly or are very demanding and if I demanded the same thing from a hotel, from what I expect to have the standards of the State of Oregon or the State of California, I shouldn’t take that mindset when I go someplace else, because that’s not their reality. (Participant 7)

I think that every drunk American in Europe was in Barcelona when we were there and that was actually one of the few times that I was embarrassed to be an American, it was seeing young kids drunk, partying and carrying on, making fools of themselves. (Participant 4)
The travelers’ descriptions were more focused on the place and the culture around them. Their plans were more flexible than the tourist and much less descriptive regarding specific attractions or places that they visited along the way. The people that they met on the journey proved to be a critical component in their description of their experiences.

**Servant.** For the purpose of this study, a servant is a person who travels internationally and places his/her interests to the side and focused on serving others. In the interviews, servants shared that they traveled to lead or participate in Vacation Bible Schools, English fairs, skill camps, and missionary outreaches that were designed for natives of the country. The average length of time that the servant spent abroad was two weeks, with the plan being planned out in advance. The servant interacted closely with the culture as they taught skills or shared the message that they had come to present. The servant also had very set objectives at hand, which helped the individuals focus their time abroad but also made them more aware of their destination ahead of their travel.

Taking our family on a mission trip had been a long time goal and we went for two weeks in August. We were able to do a home visit with the boy that we sponsor in Rwanda and
we put on a basketball clinic and tournament for a couple of days and we went to schools and we organized a library and we did a vacation bible school type of things. (Participant 2)

We took a youth group down to Mexico and stayed in a church down there and just worked with high school kids and served the community. I did a little bit of building, did a little bit of witnessing and some things with kids. (Participant 4)

I went with a team from my church and we designed a speaking English curriculum for English teachers in China. So we were there for about three weeks and the students, they were all teachers, that we were working with were probably more knowledgeable about English grammar than we were but their pronunciation was poor, and so that is what our focus was on. (Participant 2)

Individuals who traveled as servants reported a belief that they had greater opportunities to spend time interacting with people from the culture. This allowed the individuals to build meaningful relationships that still continue today thanks to email and social networking.

Rwanda had a lot of variety in what we were doing. We traveled out to the mission, the mission had four different schools in different communities and so we went in different directions just about every day and to different places depending on what needed to be done, with a lot more variety and a little bit more free time for us to just interact with
people in Rwanda without any particular agenda and we spent more time on the road. (Participant 2)

Servants who participated in education programs reported long days that were very focused with little time to change or maneuver within their schedule. Their time, for most part, in the culture was working alongside community members in school and activities that left little time to tour the country.

In China I was there without the rest of my family and it was all teachers and assistants and it was fairly rigorous. We were up early in the morning and getting ready for a day of teaching and we had the curriculum all laid out and activities into the evening. It was very focused and busy. (Participant 2)

In Japan it was totally educational and that’s what we focused on and that why we went. (Participant 7)

Traveling as a servant often meant that the individual was following someone else’s schedule, which was packed full so that the learners could gain the most from the servant’s travel abroad. The servants gave of themselves to help those that they were assisting, but also came away was a rich experience of getting to know a small group of people from that culture. Participants 2, 4, and 7 shared that they are still in contact with the people that they met while they are abroad and that the experience is still actively thought about in their classrooms today.
Best part about travel through the eyes of the servant. For the servants, the best part about travel was watching the students and the individuals they interacted with show off their new skills. This normally occurred after the individual had been in country for some time and a relationship developed that allowed the participant to interact with individuals in cultures.

Best part for me would be that I had 14 students in the class and seeing the relationship with them grow and to the point where I could understand them well and they could understand me and their personalities start to come out in the classroom, so that was the most enjoyable part of that. (Participant 2)

In Rwanda we put on a basketball clinic and we prepared all year for the trip and I knew this would be a focal point for me. I think the highlight looking back on it was putting on the actual basketball clinic. We were kind of prepared, this was Africa, you don’t ever know what is going to happen and who is going to be there and what time it’s going to happen, etc. After leaving the coaches clinic in the morning, we thought we were going to work with a couple of basketball teams, maybe a national girls’ team and another boys’ team. But during the coaches clinic I noticed that kids were starting to fill up the stands at the national stadium, but we didn’t think too much of that because it seemed like whatever we did and wherever we were, that kids were kind of showing up and watching. But sure enough at the end of the coaches clinic, one of the coaches called up to the kids in the stands to come down and we had 140 kids out on the floor and only two baskets and we were going to put on a clinic for them. So, well, I felt like I was helped along by God because I quickly put together seven stations and figured out where we could fit
people and how we could fit. So that was my highlight. It was so neat to see all of that come together and it was beyond me on how all of that came together. (Participant 2)

I think (travel) gives you a much better appreciation of the rest of the world and of who people really are. It’s kind of like, you know, in the news last night that Israel is firing and they say they have a right to because Hamas is doing this. If you don’t see people as people, that doesn’t mean anything, you know. If you don’t see people in Peru or wherever you are going as real human beings, you feel sad when they die but not really. It doesn’t even matter if you go to the same place, once you see a group of people and understand that their reality is that they are never going to have electricity or they’re never going to college or two out of five of their kids aren’t going to make it, if that’s their reality it’s much more effective to have that experience and you take it elsewhere and you have a better reality of people. Maybe we aren’t always right and we shouldn’t have such a judgmental or snap judgment because there are always four sides to every way, not just two. Without seeing that, you’re pretty much insulated living here. Yeah we have poor people in town, so we’ll give to the Tree of Giving and here’s what I can do but that’s not how the real world operates. I’m glad that I did it, but I’m more glad that I have two sons that saw that at a young age and that it really affects what they do and how they approach the world, so they can be thankful for what they have and can use what they have for others. (Participant 7)

Worst part about travel through the eyes of the servant. For the servant the worst part about travel focused on the feelings and adjustments of the traveler regarding how to treat and
interact with the people around them. With a very limited time period to adjust to the new culture, the servant often arrived a day or two before their serving assignment began. The busyness of the day’s schedule, the weariness from travel, the effect of living in an unfamiliar situation and lack of understanding of the cultural norms affected the experiences of the participant.

It wasn’t like or dislike. More like a matter in both situations in trying to soak in as much of the situations that you can and anticipating what is new to you. Anticipating what you might see next, so on both experiences I don’t know, I feel like I had a heightened since of, well maybe my senses were heightened or more aware. I felt especially in China that I was on sensory overload much of the time, where all these sites and sounds and smells were very much different. In Rwanda, kind of the same sort of things, although life in China was just a little bit faster pace and especially for us in our role there, than it was in Rwanda. In both experiences it was a matter in trying to soak in as much as you can and organize all these new experiences in your head as you are there. (Participant 2)

In both places, I had kids coming up to me and begging and I never felt endangered but those were uncomfortable situations because you lack the communication and you can’t really communicate with them that well and you don’t know what to do for them at that point. I suppose I could have given them money or something like that, but you don’t know if you’re being lied to or manipulated and you don’t know if you are being manipulated and you don’t know if giving them something would be best for them and so dealing with need in both cases, and there is plenty of need in China and Rwanda, as well
as here, but being in a different culture and not knowing quite how to confront that, that was probably the most unsettling experience I had. (Participant 2)

The servant interviews focused on the assign task that brought the participant abroad and their interaction with the people that they worked with. Each of the participants worked ahead of their journey on instructional activities, coordinating with people on the ground in that location to help them find greater success. The highlight for these individuals unquestionably was witnessing the individuals that they were instructing make progress and forming a relationship that would continue after their departure home over the years to come.

Summary of the ways teachers travel. Teachers who traveled internationally chose many different ways to experience their travel abroad and were classified as tourist, traveler and servant. Each of these classifications was determined by their description of their cross-cultural international travel experiences. The descriptions of their travel experience greatly varied especially in regard to how they experienced the best parts and worst parts of the journey (Table 4).

Table 4

| Best and worst part about travel identified by the tourist, traveler and servant. |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| **Tourist**                  | **Worst Part**                |
| • Meeting new people         | • Economic disparity (beggars, cons, poverty) |
| • Observing how other people live | • Attitudes that Americans are all rich |
| • Seeing things that you’ve heard about | • Lack of customer services to satisfy their needs |
| • Easy, no hassle            |                               |
| **Traveler**                 | **Worst Part**                |
| • New friendships that continued upon their return home | • Being tired from the journey |
| • Realization that people have a lot of similarities to each other | • Observing and/or being associated with countrymen abroad who displayed poor behaviors |
| • Learning new things        |                               |
| **Servant**                  | **Worst Part**                |
| • Watching the growth in skill and | • Limited time to adjust to the new culture |
relationships over a short time
• Appreciation for how it all comes together
• Busy schedule without very much flextime
• Uncertainty of what to do in some situations (beggars)

The tourists made travel arrangements ahead of their journey and made ease of travel one of their top priorities. The tourists reported excellent experiences with highlights of meeting new people and experiencing new places. They had less flexible plans, with their set itineraries and sites booked for tours. Oftentimes these tours were custom designed and travel plans were made easier by using private buses and transportation to transport participants from place to place. The tourists travel experience allowed them to interact with the culture but limited their opportunity to live in the culture abroad.

While the traveler researched their trip ahead of time, they were more flexible with their plans. It was not unusual for travelers to make plans and changes to their trip along the way. Like the tourists the travelers enjoyed meeting people from the culture, but unlike the tourists, the travelers had more opportunities to interact with the natives of the culture within the context of their daily life. The traveler looked for opportunity to see how the people lived, focusing on the experience of traveling and interacting instead of the more touristy stops along the way.

The servants traveled to assist groups abroad keeping a set travel itinerary with little flexibility. The servants’ busy schedule did not allow them many opportunities to get out and see the countryside, but gave them a very unique experience of spending time one-on-one and in small groups with the citizens of the land. This interaction with the citizens was deeper than the travelers or tourists groups, giving the servant a unique opportunity to learn about the culture from their students. The highlights for the servants included seeing the progress of their students as they improved their skill sets and the connections that they were able to make with their
pupils. Negatives for the servants were tight schedule that left them tired from busyness and little time to explore the countryside on their own.

**Minority Experience**

Seven participants identified that sometime during their international cross-cultural experiences that they felt like they were a minority within the culture that they were visiting. This experience was not necessarily a negative interaction but was more focused on the fact that they were different from other people. This difference was explored in some cases by participants, allowing them a unique view of how a minority member in a culture may feel, giving them a deeper understanding of the minority experience.

**Sticking out like a sore thumb.** Individuals referred to this experience as “sticking out like a sore thumb” (Participant 2, 4, 5, 6). Participant who stuck out in the crowd focused on the difference of their looks in comparison from individuals who were native to the culture.

There are a lot of smaller people and I stuck out like a sore thumb. My wife and girls fit more in because Argentina was predominately a white culture, which was different from what I was expecting. I was expecting to see more Indian mestizo type groups, but we didn’t. I didn’t feel uncomfortable, it was just different. (Participant 5)

In Ecuador we stuck out like a sore thumb, especially some of the blonde girls who were with us. I’m taller than most people there, so in a crowd, I stuck out like a sore thumb, too. It was never in a bad way, not sure if that was because of me being an American or if it was just because of me as a person. I like to think it was me as a person but they didn’t have anything to gain from me usually. (Participant 4)
In China we were in areas that not that many tourists and whites regularly come to. It’s kind of on a back road, I suppose you say and so the Chinese people were especially interested in white people and here I am, and it was an area with Han Chinese people who are shorter and I stuck out like a sore thumb. Here’s this tall white guy, with no hair and then we had some blondes with us and they were very interested in us. They were welcoming and took us to the town square one evening and wanted us to do things together. The wanted us to join them in a traditional dance and I felt like I was spectacle in those. (Participant 2)

In Rwanda we had the experience with people wanting to know what we were doing there and that kind of thing. They were curious about why we would come. (Participant 2)

In China we were coming into a small town with our bicycles and our gear and our helmets and our sunglasses and our mirrors on our helmets and our little book with a picture of a hotel. I would talk to people pointing out the picture of the hotel and the people just look at you and think that you must have dropped down from outer space and it took them a good long time for them to say, “oh, you want a hotel.” (Participant 6)

“Sticking out like a sore thumb” was a prominent feeling for individuals who found themselves in cultures much different than their own. This feeling of being different focused on their looks
and the fact that their skins was pale or that they were tall or bald or had other physical traits that set them apart as different from the people of the visiting culture.

**Understanding different culture.** While the minority experience did make some participants more aware of their own personal traits, it also provided participants with a new or renewed respect for working with people from different cultures. This ranged from individuals thinking about how their minority students went through their daily life to just realizing the thought process that it takes to translate and understand something that is unfamiliar.

I think that (the minority experience) had a big effect, just the simple fact that I can identify with my minority students. I’ve been a minority now. I was the only person that was 6’5” and everyone stared at me when I walked down the street. I think that it helps me to understand a little bit more how my students that are minorities feel in the classroom. Like language barriers and how I communicate with parents directly through an interpreter. I know now to look (at the parent) in the eye and speak to them and let the interpreter talk to them. So I’m talking to them and not the interpreter. I realize when I first started off that I talked to the interpreter and not to the student or their parent. So it’s just more of a respectful thing that I speak to families. (Participant 5)

The experience certainly helps me understand the trials and tribulations of somebody that comes in with not very much language where you sit in a history class and don’t understand how to take our your pencil, or know the basic directions that someone is giving you or that you have to process it for a minute and turn it over in your head before it can happen and somebody is onto the next three questions before you can turn over the
first one and you’re sorting through your head processing. That really helps me as a teacher when I’m in my classroom, even kids who speak English when I get going too fast and I know that there are kids who do not process fast and I’m on the third step and they’re back on the first step wondering “where did she get that information from.” I’m reminded that I to slow down so that they can process more slowly. (Participant 6)

Participant 7 shared two unique situations that she encountered as a minority in Japan. In both of the situations the experience was magnified by her lack of understanding the culture and the area that she was in. Her cultural error at a shrine was not meant to be disrespectful, but was a cultural faux pas.

I can’t read Japanese and I’m always trying to go the highest place (so I can see the area) and I didn’t realize I had crossed a barrier to a shrine, which would have been like you going to a Mormon temple and not being Mormon. They indicated to me you need to stop and once I realized that I was like oh -- I’ve had a few of those, but they were instances where “I’m sorry” is universally accepted. It was my mistake and they weren’t upset, they just wanted me to get to where I should be. I’ve never had a terrible minority feeling other than it was an interesting experience. (Participant 7)

Participant 7 followed up with this idea later in the interview. She wanted to make sure that in discussing being a minority that she was clear about her minority experience in Japan and her reflection of what it meant to her.
I look at the minority experience and think of being oppressed, but I never felt threatened so I didn’t feel out of place. It was all Asians and it was interesting to think for them that I looked really different, but it was a good experience, not a bad experience. We got turned around on the subway and we looked like lost Americans, we had the hotel written down where we were staying, so it was very sweet that people would point us in the right direction. (Participant 7)

The minority experience was an important aspect to the participants’ international cross-cultural experiences opening up individuals’ eyes to how it feels to be a minority and the attention that comes with the phenomena, but also gave the participant ideas about the way that they would like to be treated in the future. This awareness of the minority experience affected the participants’ professionalism and approach to their classroom, from better understanding the use of an interpreter to making connections with students to help them understand the expectations of the American school system.

**Summary of the minority experience.** Individuals who had the experience of being a minority in a culture found themselves standing out as different from the people that they were surround by. This difference was not viewed as a negative experience but more often as an eye opener to the experience that their students encounter on a regular basis. The minority experience also helped some participant recognize how interactions could make an individual feel comfortable or uncomfortable, making them more aware of the way that they interact with their students and the parents of students from minority cultures.

**Transformational Learning**
As stated earlier, transformational learning occurs when learners re-evaluate past beliefs and experiences, which had previously been understood, as new experiences that alter the individual’s perception (Mezirow, 1997). Participants reflected that their international cross-cultural travel experiences allowed them to examine their own beliefs, giving insights in regard to the “big picture” that education and teaching is about more than academic tests and memorized facts.

For me it helps to keep in mind what is important. I mean we’re here to educate, which is great but there is more to the kids than just the academic side. So for me, just seeing people do things differently throughout the world and remembering that we do things differently even throughout the building here and realizing that kids do things differently, keep things in perspective. It was a reminder for me to just keep in mind the whole student. I mean it’s easy in this day and age to work on just the numbers, just the data, rather than focus on the kids as a whole. (Participant 4)

Two weeks after his initial interview Participant 4 came back to idea that teaching was about more than the numbers and hard quantitative facts, but had to include thought about the individual’s personal life.

There is a whole lot of life going and a whole lot of suffering going on out there. But I think that most people are clueless to it. I guess that I kind of empathize what some of the kids are going through. Also, it’s a reminder to me to try to see the kids to think outside of themselves and outside of their circumstances. So, a lot of the education
process that takes place isn’t official. It’s not on the CCSS or on the scope and sequence. So a lot of it, what I think it brings to the table is a lot of the behind the scene things that we do as educators that we never quantify or measure it on any test, we don’t quiz it, it’s the teaching that goes on as we go about our jobs and do different things. I think for me that it is one of the main benefits I realize from traveling internationally. (Participant 4)

Participant 4 was clear and passionate and his theme of focusing on students and not getting caught up in the requirements and/or quantitative aspects of education were clearly important to him. His teaching career has been deeply affected by his international cross-cultural travel experiences, which occurred early in his career and prompted him to look deeper at his students as they learn. His personal experience as a math teacher and the recent changes to graduation standards play a role in his contemplation regarding the best way to educate students as he tries to prevent cookie cutter approaches to mathematics education.

**Transformational learning shapes the participant.** Smith (2009) found that novel experiences promoted self-reflection, an important factor in both professional and personal development. In the participants’ reflections, they too discovered that their international cross-cultural experiences shaped and molded them. For some participants it was a personal realization that created a simple awareness of their own strengths and weakness, but for others it opened up doors to re-examine how they approach their work.

I think that (cross-cultural experiences) kind of permeates everything that I do and goes back to that piece when I was kind of rigid, self-righteousness, black and white sort of child and then when you travel you get those shades of gray and it does really impact
how you do your everyday life and how you judge kids and see things from their perspective. Because I have kids (students) who are like that too, who will come in and say something like, “well, we’re entitled” and I say “well, let’s take a look and see what their perspective might be and wade through that.” I think that it impacts everything that I do. (Participant 3)

It’s so much a part of me that it shapes me as a person. It’s not like I had one experience and come back and say, “Wow that was different.” I’ve had so many experiences that it’s an integrated part of me. (Participant 6)

I think it gives you a better appreciation of the rest of the world and of who people really are. It’s kind of like, you know, in the news last night that Israel is firing and they say they have a right to because Hamas is doing this. If you don’t see people as people, that doesn’t mean anything, you know. If you don’t see people in Peru or wherever you are going as real human beings, you feel sad when they die, but not really. It doesn’t even matter if you go to the same place, once you see a group of people and understand that their reality is that they are never going to have electricity or they’re never going to college or 2 out of 4 of their kids aren’t going to make it, if that’s their reality it’s much more effective to have that experience and you take it elsewhere and you have a better reality of people and maybe we aren’t always right and we should have such a judgmental or snap judgments because there are always four sides to every way, not just two. Without seeing that, you’re pretty much insulated living here. Yeah we have poor
people in town, so we’ll give to the tree-of-giving and here’s what I can do but that’s not how the world operates. (Participant 7)

The experience changed some of their views about the world and about themselves, opening up doors that asked them to re-examine what they believe and how they fit. A key piece to understanding the experience and how it shaped them as a person were the feelings that they experienced in culture that made some things feel good and some things feel bad. It also gave them a broader scope to compare information with, opening up conversation and times of reflection in areas that had never taken place before.

**Understanding how secondary teachers fit in a global world.** As participants examined their experience following their international cross-cultural experiences, they were more aware of how they fit in the world and society and became more global minded with these realizations. These experiences did not necessarily take place in one interaction with a culture or within a moment of sudden understanding but were the results of the participants processing their time abroad and how they look at their place in the world. For some understanding how they fit in their place and space has vaulted them into action to serve, while for others it meant a greater understanding of their own perspective.

For me it helps to keep in mind what is important. I mean we’re here to educate, which is great but there is more to the kids than just the academic side. So for me, just seeing people do things differently throughout the world and remembering that we do things differently, even throughout the building here and realizing that kids do things differently, keep things in perspective. (Participant 4)
It’s so much a part of me that it shapes me as a person. It’s not like I had one experience and come back and say “Wow that was different.” I’ve had so many experiences that it’s an integrated part of me. I have noticed since we talked that I’ve gotten a new student from far away that speaks very little English and has had very little schooling and it does help me recall what it’s like to not understand language. I mean the counselors are telling us that no one knows what to do with these kids. But I know what to do with them, put them in my class. I know how to do that. (Participant 6)

I was just talking to someone, actually it was to the kids yesterday or the day before in math lab and we were talking about how this and how that works here and there and I was surprised by what I saw overseas and how they did things and how I had so many things to be thankful for. It was just a different way to look at life. I guess the big one for me is perspective. (Participant 4)

I think that in general that traveling does broaden your prospective and gives you a greater understanding of how and why people do things. (Participant 3)

Participants appreciated the unique perspective that travel brought to their lives identifying their new insight as beneficial to their lives. These perspectives ranged from being surprised at how people do things much differently in other place in the world to being grateful for the difference between people groups to gaining a better understanding of the world around them.
Several participants found themselves questioning their own beliefs after their trip abroad causing them to dig deeper about how they viewed the world and the way that America interact with other countries. Participants also found themselves drawing comparison between countries, gaining ideas and perspectives regarding the way people live differently than that in the United States.

I have a tendency to be kind of arrogant about the U.S. system and democracy and all of that and I’ve had a lot of questions and recently it’s been an issue in the news if democratic systems can be exported and in that respect, I may have more questions than answers after my trip because I’m not sure if our system is the best thing for everyone in other places in the world. We would like to see, or we think we would like to see, certain things elsewhere in the world, but it might not fit with what they have going. So I’m not quite so quick on imposing my worldview on somebody else, that’s probably my biggest change. (Participant 2)

The Cliffs of Moher (Ireland) surprised me because there is a shaky little fence and then it’s straight down. I thought, “this would not pass code in the U.S.” So sometimes I’m surprised by the different European attitudes because here we have a certain height and so many rules because someone might fall and sue. But in Europe, it’s like “Hey, if you go over there, we warned you.” Here, no matter where you go, people have scooters but in Europe, people walk. A few museums had ramps but you don’t add those features on a 1000 year old cathedral. With inaccessibility it wasn’t to keep people out, it just wasn’t
doable because it wasn’t practical. Europeans are more practical, because what’s it going to do? The sheep don’t fall off the edge, neither should you. (Participant 8)

It was interesting because my biggest concern (about having a medical emergency overseas) was how am I going to pay for this and I’m immediately giving them my ID and here’s my passport and here’s my insurance card and they are saying, ‘No, no. Just fill this out’ and I’m sitting with the clipboard and within five minutes I’m seeing a doctor and having surgery. I got released on Monday morning after the surgery and I had asked the surgeon Saturday evening about paying and that they hadn’t taken his insurance stuff and he said don’t worry about it, we’ll talk about that later. So on Monday when I was released, I was like, what about insurance and they said ‘Nope, don’t worry about it, it will all be taken care of.” I was like, okay, and it really made me think about the way we do health care here and if there might be a better system. (Participant 1)

I think that (travel) opens your eyes to the rest of the world, because you can be pretty closeted here. I mean, I can read all that I want and I can listen to it and see it on TV but you get to filter it from a step away, so any time that I get to filter that and see that those people are real and that the situation is real, that can’t be anything but good and will make us more empathetic and if anything we need more, we need more empathy of other peoples’ plight. (Participant 8)

You should go expecting to see something new, rather than expecting something you wanted it to be. If you have that attitude that I wanted to see that castle, rather than not
meeting a certain expectation, compared to travel and want to see it. I mean you’ll always like it if you have an open mind and I think that there isn’t a downside to travel. I think that it’s good and I wish I did it more. (Participant 7)

**Summary of transformational learning.** Participants found that their international cross-cultural experience added something unique to their lives, broadening their perspective and making them more global minded and aware of the way that other people in the world live. This awareness affected the way that participants looked at the way they fit in society, to identifying ways that their experiences shaped them into something new, to identifying that other countries might do things better than the United States. All participants reflected that this re-shaping of values made an impact to their approach on life and that many of them were still processing this impact, especially the participants who recently traveled abroad in the summer of 2012.

**Cultural Humility**

Teachers who traveled internationally came home with a new awareness of their cultural understanding as it related to their citizenship and the way that they live in the United States compared to their destination. Soep and Chavez (2010) believed that cultural humility asked individuals to acknowledge their own barriers to true intercultural understanding, differentiating between intellectually knowing another culture and being able to truly relate to it. This concept of understanding barriers both intellectually and relationally is sometimes discussed in communities as “book smarts” and “street smarts.” Both ideas point out that there is a difference between what we learn academically and what we learn hands on. Participants acknowledged that greater cultural understanding occurred for them as they experienced other cultures through international cross-cultural travel.
I think that it makes you more of a world citizen. It’s hard to understand until you kind of walk in someone’s shoes. I mean in order to walk in someone’s shoes, you have to be there. (Participant 4)

You learn to be a good citizen. I always tell my students that when we travel abroad that they are ambassadors. So it’s not that you have to be a flag, waving in your face American, but you have to be open to the possibilities that perhaps all French people aren’t rude. You learn something about how people from five different cultures can sit together at the same table and enjoy conversation. Or how over a meal you find common ground and things like that. Citizenship isn’t necessarily by country. (Participant 8)

Personal experience in other cultures helped participants better understand the way that people live, opening up doors to greater understanding of how and why they do things. This occurrence allowed participants to find similarities with people who are different from them.

**Appreciation for home.** Participants acknowledged in the why people travel theme that their time abroad allowed them to experience things that they had only read about in books or seen on television. Participants identified that their interaction through first-hand experience gave them something that they could not have previously explained before going abroad and they were thankful for the opportunity to travel.
As far as citizenship, you have an appreciation for where we’ve come from and where we’re at. Especially in 2012 when you see that we don’t have some of the issues that they are having to deal with. (Participant 4)

I think that someone who didn’t realize all of the types of freedoms that we have and who might have a negative attitude about the United States, that international travel might have a real impact on them. (Participant 5)

More of an appreciation for what we have here in the states and the resources we have and the way that our government works. (Participant 4)

Individuals better recognized how they fit into their own place in society and how the United States interacted with the countries they visited abroad. The experience also showed participants that the United States does not have to deal with many of the problems of other countries. As participants processed the experience, they found themselves comparing the cultures with new eyes after visiting a foreign culture.

I certainly appreciate where we are and I appreciate this country when I come back and how functional this country is. People think it’s so dysfunctional but in comparison we’re functional. I mean people say our educational system is not so functional. But in comparing that when I look at statistics and people are saying that we’re doing so much worse, I tell people we don’t count the same way. Their education doesn’t look the same and it gives me a more global framework of what we have and what we have is pretty
amazing. I complain sometimes about having 30 students in my class, but I talked to a teacher from China who had an English class of middle school students and she said that they don’t seem too interested in learning English and I said, “How many students do you have?” And she said, “80.” And I said, “In one class?” And she said, “Yes.” So, it made me feel ever so lucky to have 30, so it brings a different level of appreciation.

(Participant 6)

Travel was a real eye opener. In Japan I had an area of interest with middle school science kids and how we do science here and how they do science there and that was very interesting because everyone says, ‘Look at the Japanese they have such better science students.’ They have some really good things about their program, like discipline, but they also pick who is in the class. They really pick who goes on to what high school, whereas in our high school it’s a fairly broad continuum and we have magnet schools where a student can go focus on a subject, but theirs are all magnet.

(Participant 7)

A personal experience gave individuals a greater understanding of what was actually taking place in other countries. For some, the chance to witness the education process first-hand brought much greater understanding of the educational process abroad and made them more informed. First-hand observations also brought out other thoughts outside of the education system. A topic that came up several times in interviews was the presence or lack of police with military grade weapons.
The police presence was not really that notable. The people didn’t have holstered guns but they had guards standing at some businesses doors with semi-automatic weapons. (Participant 5)

The police at the airports with the AK-47 and you see that as an American, our kids had never seen anything like that. I mean they might have seen a policeman with a revolver but to go into a major airport in a first world country and see that, that was probably more shocking to me than the (market). (Participant 2)

We saw assault weapons in Lima, Spain and Paris and in a lot of the famous places. The Europeans just take that as normal and I come back with a greater appreciation of flying to LAX or Denver. I mean if we had police or the military with weapons like that in the general public, it would be because something super, super major was going on. Even in Japan, they had more military type police than our type of state police with armed guards. I’m glad I don’t have to see that every day. (Participant 7)

The participants arrived home with a greater understanding of how the world interacts and the uniqueness of different locations. They also recognized that living in another place could shape the way that they chose to do things and were cognizant that some parts of the world live very different lifestyles than the American way and that it was not a bad thing.

**Challenges to American materialism.** Participants questioned their cultural humility as they examined the way that other cultures live. One of the major issues that arose in several
There is a challenge to American materialism and recognizing what you have in comparison to the rest of the world. Really, it’s kind of surprising, and of course I’m still kind of working through it. My trips haven’t inspired guilt, it was just different. On the other hand, I’m starting to understand or am understanding that I’m more dependent on the materials. Or I think I am and that I think I need them to be happy, when in both cases, apparently not. People are happy without stuff. (Participant 2)

They took a lot of pride in the fact that they took care of their things but it wasn’t anything lavish. Everything was a lot more plain, a lot more practical. The house that we stayed in had two bedrooms and the girls stayed in one room and the parents stayed in the other room. There was a full size bed for the parents, two twins for the girls and it was relatively cramped for our culture, but they utilized their space so very well. Their garage doubled as an extended room, it was all tiled and nice and then they put the cars in at night only and then they went back on the street during the day and that room was used for entertaining, but nothing was extravagant. Plain was simple and plain was easy and it was really nice to not have to impress anyone. Food and drink were lavish but they had everyday sinks and showers. (Participant 5)

Questioning what participants needed to live and how materialism played an impact on their own thoughts about the cultures was an important part of individuals coming to a better understanding.
about how the world lives. Some participants found themselves thinking very deeply about their wants and needs as they returned to their American lifestyle and questioned if there was anything incomplete about living in smaller spaces with less things.

**Summary of cultural humility.** First-hand experience played an important role in participants breaking previous thoughts and potential barriers to true intercultural understanding. As participants experienced the world in different situations around the world, they were able to better understand how and why individuals made choices. For some, this proved to be an important part of their personal reflection regarding American lifestyle and choices and forced them to look deeper into their beliefs on how people around the world should live.

**Impact of Secondary Teacher Travel on Students and Practice**

All teachers reported that their students were impacted by their international cross-cultural experiences. Participants identified a strong value for students to consider traveling internationally so that they could go and experience life and see the world for themselves. Global mindedness was a key value that teachers hoped could be communicated based on their travel to other places. Teachers identified many ways that their travel improved student learning and understanding of the other cultures around them. These ideas included encouraging students to travel, creating improved curriculum, having personal examples to share with students and creating atmospheric changes to the classroom environment.

**Encouraging students to travel.** All of the teachers shared in their interviews that they regularly encourage students to travel for a wide variety of reasons. These reasons varied from teacher to teacher and from content area to content area. For some, travel was important because it offered individuals a chance to see things for themselves and a get a bigger picture of the world through a first-hand interaction with people from a different culture. For others, it was about
students getting away from home and spreading their wings to experience their first waft of independence and self-reliance. Some teachers stated that they were looking for opportunities for students to be more open regarding the possibilities around them. Yet another group of teachers looked for opportunities for their students to be able to compare other systems with the American System, while giving the student a chance to really figure out what they believe.

I think that everyone should get out of country every two years. I know that the experience for me is a good priority thing and it helps me remember what is important in life. Even a bad experience will allow a person to be able to look back on it later and realize how funny it was or how you can learn to laugh later and it can end up being a good experience. (Participant 4)

It’s easy for these kids to get stuck in the world of our little town or the Northwest and that it’s hard for them to even look outside but with technology the world is shrinking these days, there is just a lot of the world that these kids’ don’t have any clue about. (Participant 4)

I think that it should almost be mandatory. Here in this town you have kids, and believe me I love this place, but our kids have a tendency to be very closed and don’t know much about other cultures or have an empathy about what goes on in the world outside of here. I think that it’s kind of important that they should do some travel. I realize it’s not always possible, but I think that it could be very beneficial. (Participant 3)
I think that always when you go out to just be open to the possibilities and whatever those might be. Whether it’s meeting new people, learning new information, or all of the above, just to be open and ready to listen, might help you understand something in a way that you didn’t understand it before. Whether it’s through the people or riding on the Tube, there are just all these things we need to be open and accepting to, that might bring you something. (Participant 8)

I think students should travel, if they can. I mean even within the States here. We could take some of our students and do a cultural experience if we just went to a nearby city and went to high schools that have predominant culture than our own. I think that anything we can do to send kids out and let them see other places, is helpful. (Participant 7)

Yes, go immediately! I don’t hesitate; I send them off every time. Even for kids who are thinking about going to the East Coast, I tell them to not be afraid and go check it out, because home will always be here. I tell them their parents aren’t going anywhere, the door will remain open here, but go see things. I just think that the kids that go abroad come back so much more enriched and I think that is so good from them see. (Participant 1)

Teachers believed firmly that their students gained something unique by traveling abroad, acknowledging that both good and bad experiences could be important to students. They also
pressed for students to travel so that they could see if for themselves and explore an area outside of their comfort zone, away from their parents.

I think it’s a huge character builder as you go off by yourself and the maturation process is taking place. I mean even in this country on the East Coast, it’s an “I’m all alone and mom and dad are more than 45 minutes away type of situation.” There are opportunities for self-discovery and you can learn a lot about yourself whether you are on a continent far away or just across the state line from where you are from. You have to learn to rely on yourself and you find out how strong you are and you also find out what matters to you and what doesn’t matter to you. I think that it’s a very enriching process for kids. (Participant 1)

Teachers believed that their students investigating different cultures would be helpful to the development of themselves and would open up doors to greater understanding regarding how people lived around the world. The belief that first-hand understanding could make a long-term impact on students was very high and teacher encouragement for international cross-cultural experience and exploration by their students was important.

**Curriculum development.** Developing new ways and ideas to teach materials was another important aspect that teachers identified as ways that their travel assisted student learning and understanding. While the social studies and language arts teachers had some of the strongest opinions on new curriculum being added to the classroom, most teachers found that their travel experiences were beneficial to their students and that whole student learning occurred across the curriculum.
Reminder that education is more than just test scores and benchmarks. (Participant 4)

With the kids who (think) kind of black and white, I try to engage them in a discussion about this perspective or how would you feel or what do you think would happen if someone tried to make you change your religion or you know, just getting the discussion going. It’s part of world peace as we say and it’s about understanding cultures and other people. (Participant 3)

Socials studies and language arts teachers looked for opportunity to bring their experience back home and make their cross-cultural experience applicable and in some ways shareable with their students. In some cases, teachers identified specific standards and objectives could be met through discussion of their unique travel experiences.

As far as teaching is concerned it comes up in a class a lot just because I feel like I might have a different perspective or more perspective about what is happening here in the United States. Recently with what we see in world history with imperialism and Africa after imperialism and China after imperialism, in both cases, those trips give me more perspective on how those countries perceive us and why they have some of the issues that they have. It comes up in class a lot and the kids hear me mention Rwanda and China quite a bit. (Participant 2)
Africa was such an eye opener for me and when I came back home, I was really grateful to be back home. You see poverty in a different sense. I mean poverty there is REAL poverty, poverty here is much different and is about not having things. It has an impact on us as we see it. Part of travel makes me feel great and other parts is just horrendous because I see how poor people are and I find myself thinking how blessed we are in this country and that we don’t have to live like that. But I think that when you travel and see and meet and talk with people that the sample gives you inspiration and hope that … sometimes we look at the world and we say that it’s going to Hell in a hand basket, but sometimes you think, ‘Wow, there are just some amazing people in the world, not just in our country but just all over the world.’ I mean as much as you get down on something, you can also be so inspired in your travels. I think that I’ve gone back and forth between the humble enriching experience and this isn’t good type of situation and I find that it’s an incredibly enriching experience; I mean you can’t read it in a book. I mean I’ve read plenty of books about traveling and other peoples experience and other places, but you can’t put a price tag on the travel experience. (Participant 1)

Participants were inspired by their time abroad and re-shaped their curriculum to allow their first-hand experiences to shine brightly. For some, this was the ability to share their experience as a primary source to explain how and why things worked and for others it was an opportunity to bring the pictures home and make their textbook come alive.

**Examples and experiences to share with students.** As teachers shared their experiences with the class, many teachers identified specific stories that have greatly enhanced their curriculum. These stories and examples proved to be powerful learning tools in helping students
gain a better understanding about why and how people do things and come to greater understanding of geography and space and place.

We saw a demonstration at city hall and it started when we heard a big boom from our hotel. The city garbage workers were on strike and were protesting and it was directly across the street from our hotel. They were throwing bags of garbage at people as they walked by and dumped two large garbage trucks of garbage on the front steps of the building and set it on fire. (Participant 5)

I’ve shown students pictures of some of my experiences and that has prompted questions on their part. I think that it has been incorporated in my teaching for sure, especially units that directly relate. Like with world history the imperialism and Africa. Africa, well Rwanda, was a part of that and the specific history of Rwanda and then second semester we do a unit on China, too, and I’m able to incorporate a lot of what I experience and learned in China in that unit. (Participant 2)

It’s the stories and being an English teacher, it’s all the stories. The whole time I’m there I’m thinking how can I use this and how can I share this information, so my students are inundated with stories that I learn on the trips. When you travel and I always phrase it that way, when you travel and when you get to go, you know this is what you want to look for and here’s a story for this and a story for that as you make connections and not be ethnocentric U.S. I’ve always been aware of that and even this last spring we went to
D.C. and coming back from stories from there, I can use those in my classes. (Participant 8)

The things we saw like Toledo, where the three cultures with Jews, Christians, and Muslims all live together in order to exist and survive the onslaughts and then we traveled from Morocco from there and stood where Christopher Columbus brought back his bounty to the Queen. You know those, places to me are so rich in story, and culture, and detail and I use those examples in my class. Showing pictures of the Alhambra and the irrigation system when I teach Othello and can share this is what the Moors really brought to us. I’m really able to draw on that and I think that kids have a better understanding when I do that and have a better understanding of this is what it’s like to be a Moor and be considered brilliant and aboriginal all at the same time. I use it in my classroom several times a week that I can use images or pictures or make connections for my students based on my experience overseas. (Participant 8)

Yeah, I mean I think that there are subtle things that come out. I’d say one thing in talking politics and government with kids and you’ve seen some other things and other places and that it’s good for me as government teacher because other people view their governments differently and to get that appreciation for that different set of values or perspective per say. I mean we have our values but it gives us a different lens to look through and our students don’t have that and we can share our experience with the students. (Participant 1)
Just when you’re dealing with kids that are different from others. I can look at people from different countries and see that they live differently and I’m reminded that people are just different. There is a point where you can use it as a teaching point and bring in those experiences and those difference to help in the classroom. (Participant 1)

Stories that teachers shared in class brought their personal experiences alive for all individuals involved in the discussions and lectures and opened up opportunities for listeners to have a greater understanding of other cultures abroad. Sharing experiences also opened doors for students to ask questions and dive deeper into some areas that are difficult for the American population to understand. This interaction generated healthy interaction and curiosity with students giving them a chance to better understand how people around the world live.

Changes in practice since the first interview. Participant 6 and 7 both identified in the second interview that they had made changes in their classroom since our first interview. They acknowledged that the first interview made them think about some of the feelings that they experienced and caused them to reflect on the experience that some of their new students, who had just arrived in America, may feel out of place or unaware of the cultural norms.

I have noticed since we talked that I’ve gotten a new student from far away that speaks very little English and has had very little schooling and it does help me recall what it’s like to not understand language. I mean the counselors are telling us that no one knows what to do with these kids. But I know what to do with them, put them in my class. I know how to do that. (Participant 6)
Participant 6 was passionate about knowing the feeling of being on her own in another country and hoped that her past experience could be instrumental in helping other students adjust to a new culture. Participant 7 came to an awareness that two of the new immigrants that she works with have weaker language skills that hold them back. After the first interview, she recalled her time in Japan and made adjustments to the course to assist the students who were learning a new language with their science studies.

I actually tried to mention (my experience overseas) more and talk about it more, especially with my students who have weaker language skills. There were two students in particular that are good students but what keeps them back are their language skills. Both of these kids are relatively recent immigrants to the United States and I made an effort to learn a little bit more about them, like where are you from and make some connections that way and just let them know I care. After all, the more they can be familiar and understand the more they appreciate it. It makes me or I hope that it makes me more approachable. Because I value their experience and it’s not a hindrance that they are from a different place, it’s valued. And with those two students, I think things have gone better, not that they were bad students or anything like that, they’re just asking me more questions. The kids that have been here a while, they don’t deal with the issue of how standoffish should I be with an American teacher, but new students are not use to a more casual American school system. It has raised my awareness. (Participant 7)

Participant 7 identified that it was her reflection and thoughts about her own experience that spurred her into action with the new students in her classroom. She identified the effort to be
making a difference for the students who had developing language skills and that it was helpful for the entire class to have these students be more willing to share their experience.

**Summary of student impact by teacher travel.** Students did not have to travel to be impacted by their teacher’s travel, their experience in the classroom with the teacher’s interactions overseas gave them new ways to share information and explain the way that other cultures live. For the teacher it could be as simple as sharing a picture or a story with the students in their classroom in regards to how people in other places live. Some participants came to an awareness that they experience something while they were overseas that left them with questions and they hoped to be able to help students come to a better understanding and limit and/or prevent those awkward moments from happening. For some participants they were able to make the place that they traveled jump off the pages and inspire their students to travel in the future. The importance of students being able to travel and experience things on their own and in person, was an important thought that was shared by all of the participants in the initial interviews.

**Future travel**

Most of the participants had a location or time already identified as the destination for their next travel experience. All of the participants also reported that they would continue to travel in the future and looked forward to other opportunities that would allow them to come to a better understanding of why and how people do things in different cultures and how they would prefer to travel.
I’m going to head to Brazil next because it has some really unique pieces I would like to see and then I could stop in Argentina again, too. I would also like to go to Europe and maybe Japan and I would like to go to the Mediterranean. (Participant 5)

I’ve looked at some of my photo albums in the last two weeks and I have an urge to go again. It makes me excited to travel and I find that I really want to go somewhere and I need to get another group going again and I think that traveling makes me a better teacher and that I experience it as they experience it and it gives us common ground. It lets me step into their world and relate to their thoughts and ideas. I know that I’m going to do it again, I like to travel. (Participant 8)

It’s been 13 months since we’ve gone somewhere and we’re realizing that we can’t do it until next summer and know that it’s probably a year and a half out. I miss it, it’s nice to think of but a big part of it is dreaming and thinking and planning what we’re going to do. I think that we’re going to get an apartment in Spain and stay there for three or four months. I’d like to go to Turkey though too. (Participant 6)

The participants were excited about future travel and while some were not sure when it would happen, there was no doubt that it would happen. As they shared, there was a sense of the value that regarding their potential experiences and the impact that past travel played on them as teachers and citizens.

Traveling with family. Of the eight participants that I interviewed, four of the individuals had traveled at least once with members of their family and at least once without
members of their family. All four members identified that they preferred to travel internationally with members of their families. For some it was the benefit centered around the impact that the travel experiences made on their children.

We went through the shantytowns and my kids got to see the shantytowns and that was important to me. It was important to know that they were homeless and we talked about how some kids live in mansions and some are homeless and the same thing takes place at home. (Participant 5)

I’m glad that we did it but I’m more glad that I have two sons that saw that at a young age and that it really affects what they do and how they approach the world. They can be thankful for what they have and can use what they have for others. (Participant 7)

Participant 7 pointed out that their family vacation to Peru shaped her children in a profound way. Participant 5 acknowledged the doors that opened in regards to conversations that he could have with his teenage daughters. Both parents recognized that seeing the culture made an impact on their families and that they desired the results of the conversations that came from their cross-cultural travel experiences.

Participant 2 found it difficult to explain his travel experience to China with his family because they didn’t have the same point of reference. In his case, he found that words could not describe the experience appropriately.
I would definitely have my family with me just because it’s hard. It was hard, I don’t know if it was an easier to process, but (when your family is with) you have someone to process with that is closer to you. Then more than anything, coming back and trying to explain that experience to those you live with and with the China thing; that was hard. They didn’t understand what I had been through and there is no way that they could, so here’s a life changing event and the people that you love the most, aren’t with you and they didn’t get to share it with you and so with Rwanda, that is something as a family that will probably be a lifetime highlight that we all shared together. (Participant 2)

Frustration was evident in Participant 2’s voice and manner as he explained his “life-changing” travel experience in China and his inability to truly share or explain the results to his family. Three of the participants shared like experiences of trying to explain a moment that could not be accomplished with words.

As teachers reflected on their potential for future travel several participants mentioned that they could be more purposeful with their travel. For some it was a quick mention that they had not thought about their travel experience as professional development before the interview or that they had not thought of the long term results of travel in regard to their professionalism. Participant 1’s personal reflection was the most specific pointing out that his time abroad could have been more enriching if he had integrated his professional focus to his travel plans.

I think that I could gain even more if that was my focus, I mean to go abroad and focus on the government in country and then go hook up with some professors from that country and have a one on one and learn from them. I mean that would be so enriching.
and I often times in government and I know what I’ve read and when I do travel that is kind of a passion for me but I’m looking for people to learn more from about their government. If we had more focused time I could sit down and plan ahead to meet up with some secondary teachers or professors and just say hey, “I’d like to schedule a 20-30 minutes meeting with you and here is the topic or I would like to discuss…..” I mean that would be amazing, really cool. Because then I could feel assured that what I’m teaching about these countries and their difference would and it would be much more solid.

(Participant 1)

The idea of using part of his travel time abroad with teaching in mind, caused excitement in the voice of Participant 1. His cadence increased, he leaned forward and backwards as he explained and he grew more intense as he shared how his past experienced could have been enhanced and his belief that his future visits could open up doors for his government classes to better understand the way that other people live in the world.

Summary of future travel. Participants were anxious and excited to travel again in the future. Many of the teachers had specific locations already picked out and were identifying places and things that they wanted to see during their next international travel experience. For individuals who had traveled with their family in the past they highly endorsed the idea that individuals consider traveling with their family because it gave them common understanding to significant moments that occurred as they traveled overseas.

Summary

Seven themes emerged from an analysis of the transcripts of the eight participants regarding the nature of international cross-cultural experiences. These themes, noted in Table 2,
include (1) why teachers travel; (2) ways that teachers travel; (3) the minority experience; (4) transformational learning; (5) cultural humility; (6) the impact of teacher travel on their students and practice; and (7) future travel. While the findings are not generalizable to a population beyond these eight participants, I believe the following themes are true regarding these secondary teachers who travel internationally. First, secondary teachers travel out of curiosity. Second, pre-travel arrangements and philosophy of travel directly impact participants’ experiences. Third, international cross-cultural experiences of cultures much different than their own allowed participants a greater understanding of the minority experience. Fourth, international cross-cultural experiences promoted transformational learning as participants examine their perspectives. Fifth, international cross-cultural experiences encouraged future international travel. Sixth, international cross-cultural experiences fosters reflection on teachers’ practices. Seventh, international cross-cultural experiences encourage participants to promote student travel. Finally, international cross-cultural travel energized participants and created opportunities for professional development. The meaning and implications associated with these eight findings are further discussed in chapter 5.
CHAPTER 5
Discussion and Conclusion

Introduction

After traveling internationally many times in the past ten years, I found myself using my travel experiences in my classroom on a regular basis. I discovered instruction that included information, pictures, or stories from my experiences overseas seemed to bring about powerful connections for my students and I was curious if other teachers who traveled had similar experiences with their students. I grew more and more curious about the nature of international cross-cultural experience of inservice secondary teachers but found a lack of research in that area pertaining to inservice teachers disappointing. A majority of the research regarding cross-cultural experience centers on pre-service teachers (Addleman, Brazo, & Cevallos, 2011; Bell, Horn, & Roxas, 2007; Cushner, 2007; Cushner & Mahon, 2002; Ferrence & Bell, 2004; Keengwe, 2010; Middleton, 2002; Pence & McGillivray, 2008; Scoffham & Barnes, 2009; Ward & Ward, 2003; Wehling, 2008) with few studies focusing on teachers who had previous experience in a classroom (Merryfield, 2000; Mezirow, 1997; Smith, 2009; Wilson, 1984). This study came from my desire to better understand the impact of international cross-cultural experiences for inservice secondary teachers.

I used personal interviews and participant journal reflections, within a microethnographic research design, to explore the nature of international cross-cultural travel exploring three issues: (1) participant descriptions of their international cross-cultural travel experiences, (2) the meaning of the cross-cultural international experiences to participants, and (3) how the participants self-report their cross-cultural travel experiences shaped them as teachers. The final
sample included eight licensed secondary teachers, four males and four females, from the same high school in the Willamette Valley in Oregon.

As I examined the overarching research question regarding the nature of international cross-cultural travel experiences through the sub-questions, seven themes unfolded during the coding and transcription of the data. These themes, noted in Table 2, (1) why teachers travel, (2) ways that teachers travel, (3) the minority experience, (4) transformational learning, (5) cultural humility, (6) the impact of teacher travel on their students and practice, and (7) future travel, shed light on the nature of international cross-cultural travel experience and directly linked with the research questions.

Discussion

Sub-research question #1: How do participants describe their international cross-cultural travel experiences? Teachers are traveling the world, experiencing cultures and encounters that are much different than their lives at home. Martin (2012) reported that Americans would travel in greater numbers in the coming years to international destinations. Of the eight participants in this study, seven had traveled internationally in the past 12 months and all of the participants had travel experience to more than one international location during their teaching career. Participants described their international cross-cultural travel experience through specific stories that offered a window into their experiences. Descriptions of their accounts focused on two themes (1) why teachers traveled; and (2) how teachers traveled. Why they traveled was an important part of their description regarding their international cross-cultural travel experiences and grounded the reason for their travel and their interests in the locales overseas. In their descriptions of their travel the participants also identified specific
aspects of travel and the way it made them feel that directly related to how secondary teachers chose to travel.

**Secondary teachers travel out of curiosity.** Participants identified a barrage of interests that led them to travel and directed me to believe from the data that secondary teachers travel out of curiosity. It was the participants’ curiosity that led them to travel abroad, taking them on journeys to see things that they had only seen on television and read in books. While this curiosity may have originally induced them to research places, locations, and artifacts online, their inquisitiveness was not quenched in the research, leading them to arrange first-hand, primary-source type of experience. As participants stepped forward abroad they identified feeling of escape from the busyness of normal life and experiencing a pacing that was much different from their normative lifestyle. This curiosity enabled them to meet new people and learn about different cultures first-hand, opening up doors to greater understanding of people from different cultures.

Curiosity regarding participants’ family roots and history also led teachers abroad to search out specific information, which led some to towns of their forefathers’ births and others to places that had places in family lore. While most participants had no known direct relatives living abroad, the opportunity to visit places of family origin was observed when available.

Some participants also identified curiosity to test their own stamina on the actual journey, whether on bicycle or Volkswagen Bug or trekking across the continent for an extended period of time. The experience of testing themselves opened up opportunities for self-reflection and greater understanding of self and others as they experienced daily living outside of their everyday reality.
Pre-travel arrangements and philosophy of travel directly impacts participants’ experiences. While I questioned how participants’ travel planning may have impacted the nature of their international cross-cultural experiences before starting this study, I was surprised at the scale of impact that travel planning played on the outcome of their travels. In the theme of how people traveled, three sub-themes emerged: (1) tourist; (2) traveler; and (3) servant. Identifying these sub-themes was an important finding of the study because it showed how different choices and comforts impact what and how participants see and experience their travel. Author G. K. Chesterton (1922) wrote, “The traveler sees what he sees, the tourist sees what he has come to see.” The words are simple yet the outcome of how and what an individual see is drastically different.

The traveler knows the value of setting a direction and charting a course, but also recognizes the value of observing the way of life, the attitudes, the landscape, and the unexpected (Hwang & Fesenmaier, 2011). I found that the traveler and the servant tended to be more spontaneous visitors, who mingled with their hosts, ate their food, and tried to learn their words and customs. The traveler was also more apt to be flexible with their schedule and more willing to make significant changes to their travel plans. While the servant was flexible, they had a job to accomplish while they were abroad, making them very focused on their mission at hand. The tourist, on the other hand, tended to observe the culture as they boarded buses and checked off sights from their itinerary, rarely absorbing the full cultural aspects at hand or the people who inhabit them. For the tourists who traveled in a tour group, they rarely were able to interact with locals abroad and instead mingled with the other foreign nationals on the tour. The tourists, who traveled with ease and in comfort, focused their reflection on how the experience made them feel, comparing the experience to normative American behaviors and/or lack thereof. This is
similar to Chesterton’s (1936) observation regarding people using their own culture as a lens to understanding the world around them. The traveler and servant also reflected on the experience and how it made them feel, but they were also curious about the other people around them and rarely compared cultures so that they could identify if one culture was better than the other. Instead the focus was on the experience and soaking in as much as possible in terms of learning about the culture around them.

While on safari in Africa, journalist Tim Padgett was struck by the interaction between the locals and tourists, observing that many “were more respectful of the lions and rhinos than they were of the Masai and Kikuyu” (2012, p. 12). It becomes apparent that tourists and travelers treat the locals differently and experience the place in much different ways. This lines up with in regard to the idea that the way individuals interact with the culture impacts the experience (Park, Tussyadiah, Mazanec, & Fesenmaier, 2010). I found that while all groups enjoyed meeting individuals as they traveled, travelers and servants were more likely to gain the background and history of the new culture they were experiencing and tended to develop more long-term relationships with the individuals that they met. Tourist could remember great conversations but did not tend to go the step further and attain contact information to continue their relationship upon departure. In this case, the traveler and servant were more likely to look at different cultures as being different but not necessarily wrong in how they went about their lives, whereas the tourist tended to judge the culture based on the feelings that were discerned from their own normative culture.

What the visitor sees and how they interact makes a difference in the classification of them being a traveler, servant, or tourist. That is not to say that the tourists does not learn on their tour, on the contrary the tourists reported seeing new things and having a greater
understanding of the world around them. The travelers and servants experienced more of the life in regard to the culture around them and were more likely to interact in greater depth with the new cultures they encountered. Keengwe (2010) points out that this experience creates greater confidence for the global minded teachers who are able to teach and interact with students from different cultures and language abilities. Participants in this study confirmed that the experience increased their global views and reduced negative stereotypes, but travelers and servants came away with a greater understanding of how the cultures they visited live.

Sub-research question #2: What did the international cross-cultural travel experiences mean to the participant? Participants shared the meaning of their travel experiences with thoughtful reflections that demonstrated that many participants were still identifying what the experiences meant to them years later. Descriptions of the meaning of their international cross-cultural experiences focused on four themes: (1) minority experience, (2) transformational learning, (3) cultural humility, and (4) future travel.

*International cross-cultural experiences of cultures much different than their own allow participants a greater understanding of the minority experience.* While most participants identified that they experienced a time that they were minorities during their international cross-cultural travel experiences, individuals who traveled to a location where they spoke a different language and looked different from the normative culture, had a more in-depth experience. This experience was marked by a culture that was much different than their own and made life more difficult to adjust to while visiting abroad. On the surface participants identified that they “stuck out like a sore thumb” in terms of looks (height, hair, weight, etc.), but the experience went much deeper and involved how they felt judged or out of place in a society. This was particularly true for all participants who traveled to Asia. Participants who traveled to Asia noted the greatest
realization of the minority experience, noting that “it helped them understand the trials and tribulations of somebody that comes in with not very much language … or understanding of the basic customs of the day” (Participant 6). Like Soep and Chavez (2010), participants were forced to acknowledge their own barriers to intercultural understanding and their own intellectual rationale as they experienced life as a minority.

**International cross-cultural experiences promote transformational learning of the participants’ perspectives.** Transformational learning took place for participants as they re-evaluated their perspectives upon return from their international travel. Cushner and Mahon (2002), Almarza (2005), and Scoffham and Barnes (2009) all acknowledged that transformational learning of pre-service teachers offered opportunities to experience learning outside of the traditional environment that led to personal growth and perspective. For the inservice teachers, who were participants of this study, transformational learning focused not on their role as teachers but on their greater role as members of society. The veteran teachers acknowledged that they had a good understanding of their role and purpose as teachers but came home with a greater understanding of their own personal beliefs and insight into the “big picture” of education and teaching. For some this focused on the idea that education was more than academic tests, memorized facts, and common curriculum standards, but was about students as a whole.

The Scoffham and Barnes (2009) and Mahon and Cushner (2002) studies both focused on pre-service teachers who traveled internationally. A difference between their studies was that Scoffham and Barnes (2009) traveled with their students and helped them de-brief their experiences on a daily basis, whereas Mahon and Cushner (2002) sent their preservice teachers to teach abroad on their own. I found similar results to both of the studies but found that that the
participants I interviewed preferred being able to examine their experience in a group or with their family. This preference mainly focused on the fact that it gave them the ability to talk through and receive feedback and counsel from individuals who had similar travel experiences. Participant 3 who traveled independently abroad, confirmed Mahon and Cushner’s (2002) finding that individuals gained greater belief about self and others from their independent experience. In Participant 3’s case, she identified that she would not have experienced the emotional moment of being alone and feeling “vulnerable and sort of lost.” While she stated that she preferred to travel with others, Participant 3 acknowledged that “the feeling of isolation and inability to properly communicate” made her examine herself more deeply.

*International cross-cultural experiences encourage future international travel.* All of the participants identified future travel plans in the coming years, acknowledging that travel gave them a better understanding of why and how people do things around the world. For some, travel plans were very focused with cities, places, and events pre-identified to help keep them focused on saving the necessary funds to travel abroad. For others, it was a continent or a place that they were curious about that had been identified on their “bucket list” but had not yet been visited. Most spoke of future travel not as a want, but as a need. “It’s nice to think of, but a big part of it is dreaming and thinking and planning what we’re going to do” (Participant 6).

The preparation and planning was also an important part of their pre-travel planning and after reflecting on the meaning of their international cross-cultural experience, many teachers identified that they now realize that through pre-planning could enhance their experience abroad in the future. Some participants identified this as saving enough to travel with their families, while other participants identified how their curriculum could be enhanced if they could interview individuals from other cultures about their government or daily life. The belief that
they could create a stronger experience in terms of their professional development was an important component to their future travel plans.

Sub-research question #3: What did teachers self-report about how their cross-cultural travel experiences have shaped them as teachers? While participants identified that the experience shaped them as teachers and encouraged them to make changes in their classroom on return, teachers self-reported that the experience was much deeper than just impacting their teaching career, but that it re-shaped the way that they live and look at the world. The experiences abroad triggered the participants to examine how their travel shaped them through five themes: (1) transformational learning, (2) cultural humility, (3) impact of secondary teacher travel on practice and students, (4) minority experience, and (5) future travel.

International cross-cultural experiences fosters reflection on the teachers’ practices. Participants identified that international cross-cultural experience shaped their practice as teachers. This molding took place across many of themes and focused on the teachers’ self-reflections on how their experiences caused many of them to re-shape some of their teaching practices and strategies. Teachers identified that their experience as a minority caused them to reflect on how they interacted with their students and their parents. This ranged from working with language barriers and the way they communicated with the family via a translator, to the rate and speed that they spoke as they explained new ideas to students who were speakers of other languages. Teachers also reflected that they took more time to help students feel comfortable in the classroom, helping students to identify cultural customs and situations that would help students gain greater awareness of new situations.

Teachers who traveled internationally often re-shaped their curriculum upon return home, using new materials from their time abroad to better assist student learning and understanding.
Secondary content areas of social studies and language arts were identified as subjects that received the most changes to their curriculum upon return home. Participants identified that the changes help their students’ gain greater understanding or perspective regarding what was happening outside of the United States. For some participants this was found in identifying historical landmarks and “walking in the footsteps” concepts of their predecessors, while for others it was gathering stories that could be shared to make the history pop out of their textbooks. Pence and Macgillivray (2008) stressed that active engagement expanded worldview and created greater awareness of other cultures, which helped to diminish ethnocentric ideas.

I was surprised to find that two participants had adjusted their teaching style with students who were new to the education system in the United States between interview 1 and 2 (Participant 6 and 7). Participant 6 adjusted their rate of speech and the amount of time that they gave students to solve math problems, identifying that students were often double translating their work and they realized that process took longer than the time she was allotting for practice. Participant 7 went even further to change the way that she interacted with new students. She had become more aware of the hindrances and unknown procedures that met new students in her reflection and tried to make herself more open to students. The extra time that she invested in getting to know individuals made her more familiar with their situations and she hoped more approachable, allowing the students greater opportunities to be successful. While it was not unexpected that teachers adjusted their curriculum to meet the needs of their students, it was surprising how quickly restructuring took place and that results could be seen less than two weeks after implementation when the second interview took place.

In terms of transformational learning, participants identified that their experiences molded and refined who they were as teachers, making them more aware of their personal
strengths and weaknesses. For many participants they identified specific moments that caused them to re-examine how they look at the world and in their reflection they noted how other people do things differently. Their conclusion focused not on the differences, but on the multiple aspects available to solve problems, with one answer not necessarily being right or wrong.

*International cross-cultural experiences encourage participants to promote student travel.* Every participant in the study stated in their interview that they encouraged students to get out and travel. Their reasons for travel varied from teacher to teacher but the overwhelming idea was that the travel experience would benefit the student by giving them a bigger picture of the world through their first-hand interaction with people from different cultures. The belief among the participants that students would become more culturally aware and have a greater understanding of the world, matches the assertion found in Pence and Macgillivray’s (2008) study that focused on global mindedness. Participants identified that travel did something for them that could not be matched at home and that students could enhance themselves through an experiences abroad. Like Nieto and Booth (2010), participants also concluded that cross-cultural experience opened up their lives to different worldviews and helped them understand cultural differences. Understanding these differences was an important aspect of encouraging students to travel in the future.

*International cross-cultural travel energized participants and created opportunities for professional development.* Teachers who traveled internationally were excited to share their experience as I interviewed them. As they started talking about their experiences in the interview, their body language changed and they leaned forward, smiled and reflected enthusiastically about their time abroad. For many, it seemed like they were re-living moments from the past and their recollection of the event was clear. They spoke about how their travel
gave them energy and helped them refocus on what their jobs were as teachers and that it carried into their classrooms as they return to teach and share their new perspectives that they gained during their summer trips.

Participant 1 shared that the experience of traveling was better than taking a college class, stating that “it revives me.” This was a common experience of many of the participants who shared that the travel brought new stories and new experiences that could be used in their classroom to help prompt learning and promoted professional development. Participants also identified that if opportunities were available to create professional development through international cross-cultural experiences, that they would take the opportunity because that they could identify many ways to make it a very meaningful experience. Several participants also shared that their experiences abroad brought focus to their work at hand and helped them strengthen their content to include other perspectives outside of the familiarity of customs of students and teachers from the United States.

**Recommendations and Implications**

I recognize that the results of this study are not universal to the population of secondary teachers beyond the participants of this study; the limitation of my study is the lack of generalizability. The study, however, was designed to build theory and the following areas are ways to test my findings and theoretical conclusions. Areas for future study based on my research include:

- Broadening the scope of the research to include a larger, more diverse sample to compare the findings.
- Continue research with case studies and narrative research regarding the international cross-cultural travel experience of secondary teachers. This may focus on but is not
limited to the intrinsic and extrinsic values of travel, the impact of stories, and first-hand experience on classroom learning, identifying how the way teachers travel may give us preferred methods of travel, and impact of cross-cultural international travel as professional development.

- Longitudinal research regarding international cross-cultural travels of secondary teachers as professional development.
- Further study both qualitative and quantitative is needed in regard to veteran inservice secondary teachers. As noted previously, there is a shortage of research available regarding inservice secondary teachers.

I would further recommend that secondary teachers find ways to travel abroad and experience other cultures so that they can enrich their own lives and the lives of their students. Each participant in the study pointed out the importance of his/her international cross-cultural travel experience in both personal and professional terms. All of the participants affirmed that the experience was worth the monetary price of the journey and both refreshed and rejuvenated their outlook in their classrooms. But it is the journey’s expense that keeps many teachers from traveling more often due to limited funds. Because of this monetary impact, I would recommend that teachers who cannot afford to travel overseas apply for teacher and culture scholarship exchanges. I also recommend that the Department of Education and Schools of Education look for ways to make international cross-cultural travel professional development units and/or continuing education credits. I believe this would create an opportunity for meaningful professional development opportunities that gives secondary teachers professional incentive to travel internationally. By identifying objectives linked to their international travel, secondary
teachers can also better navigate the experience to fit their travel preference. I further recommend that teachers consider traveling as travelers and servants so that they can interact more freely with residents of the cultures and have the opportunity to build longer lasting relationships.

Conclusion

Secondary teachers should travel internationally so they learn about the world, quench their curiosity, and further develop their cross-cultural skills and awareness. The experience will pay enormous dividends in the classroom as teachers bring their new experiences home to share with their students both academically and as citizens. International travel further benefits teachers’ professional journey, opening doors for individuals to learn and realize how they fit in a global world, while encouraging cultural humility and transformational learning. In some cases, this self-reflection allows for teachers to adjust their teaching styles and practices so that they can better connect with students and provide more in-depth, hands-on learning. Teachers who travel internationally come away with different experiences to share, many of which were determine by their choice to travel as tourists, servants, or travelers. The choice of how the teacher travels is important because it affects his/her interaction with the cultures and people abroad. For many teachers, international cross-cultural travel refreshed, revived, and energized them as they returned to their classroom. The experiences were not quickly forgotten and continue to be drawn on many years later as teachers instruct and encourage their students to travel and experience the world outside their own.
REFERENCES


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http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/cross-cultural


Appendix A

Guided Questions

Interview #1: About the participants travel experience

Tell me about your international cross-cultural experience and travel?

Where did you go and how long were you there?

Describe the experience.

Potential follow up questions if not addressed:

- Where did you go? or What did you do?
- What was a typical day like?
- What did you like or dislike?
- What was interesting to you about the different places you lived and visited?

How did the experience differ from what you expected?

Potential follow up questions if not addressed:

- What was the best/worst part of your experience?
- Did you experience any time when you were a minority or felt like a minority in the culture? Explain.
- Have you experienced any place to be more open to outsiders than others?
- Is there anything about the culture, lifestyle or general knowledge of a place you had moved that surprised you or led to more awareness after you moved and found out the ‘truth’?

What did the international cross-cultural experience mean to you?

Potential follow up questions if not addressed:

- How did the cross-cultural travel tie to your culture & your beliefs?

Self-Reflection Journal (between Interview 1 & 2)

For two weeks following the initial interview, participants are asked to document any situations during that time that they thought about their travel, talked about it in class, re-addressed a topic from another perspective, or interacted with students because of their international cross-cultural experience in self-reflection journal entries.
Appendix D

Letter of Consent

A Study of the Nature of Cross-Cultural Experiences among Classroom Teachers

Dear ________________________.

My name is Kirsten Barnes and I am a doctoral candidate in the Department of Educational Foundations and Leadership at George Fox University in Newberg, Oregon. I am conducting research on the international cross-cultural experience of secondary teachers. You are invited to participate in two personal interviews regarding your personal international cross-cultural experience. The initial interview will focus on your international cross-cultural experience. At the conclusion you will be asked to document any situations during that time that they thought about their travel, talked about it in class, re-addressed a topic from another perspective, or interacted with students because of their international cross-cultural experience in self-reflection journal entries. The second interview will be a follow up of the first and will focus on your self-reflection with more specific questions regarding cross-culture experience your role as teacher.

While the research will be used to prepare a Dissertation, the findings promise to explore the nature of cross-cultural experience among classroom teachers. The risks associated with this research are minimal. Your participation is voluntary and you may decline to answer any question at your discretion. If you choose not to participate or to withdraw from the study at any time, there will be no penalty.

The results of the study will be used for research purposes and for presentations at professional conference and/or academic publications. Personal interviews will be audio recorded and later transcribed. Information will be analyzed and presented in an anonymous fashion and no individual will be personally identified. I affirm to keep any personal information and identities confidential. All research materials (i.e., audio recordings, transcriptions, and signed consent forms) will be locked in separate, secure locations for a period of no less than three years. I will be the only individual who will have access to these materials. After five years, I will personally destroy all relevant materials and delete the audio recordings.
Interview #2: How did the international cross-cultural experience shape you as a teacher?

Discuss individual’s self-reflection.

How did the international cross-cultural experience shape you as a teacher?

What international cross-cultural specific experiences had the greatest impact on you as a teacher?

Potential follow up questions if not addressed:

- How do you use that new knowledge that you learned abroad today?
- What would you like to share with your students from the experience?
- What type of impact did the experience have as you as person? teacher? As a citizen?
If you have any questions concerning the research study, please call me at XXX.XXX.XXXX or you may also reach me by e-mail at XXX@XXXXX. If you have any further questions, you may contact my chair Suzanne Harrison by emailing XXX@XXXXX.

Sincerely,

Kirsten A. Barnes
George Fox University
Doctoral Candidate

If you understand the use of this research and agree to participate, please sign below.

Participant signature _____________________________ ______________________________
Researcher signature _____________________________ ______________________________
Appendix B

George Fox University HSRC Initial Review Questionnaire

Date submitted: October 26, 2012                                    Date received: October 26, 2012

GEORGE FOX UNIVERSITY

Human Subjects Research Committee

PROTECTION OF HUMAN SUBJECTS INITIAL REVIEW QUESTIONNAIRE

Title of Proposed Research: The Nature of International Cross-Cultural Travel Experiences as articulated by U.S. Secondary Teachers.

Principal Researcher: Kirsten A. Barnes

Degree Program: Ed. D.

Rank/Academic Standing: Graduate Student

Other Responsible Parties: Suzanne Harrison, Professor of Education

(1) Characteristics of Subjects (including age range, status, how obtained, etc.):

The participants for this study will include 8-10 secondary teachers with three or more years of classroom experience, who have traveled internationally after they were hired for full-time employment. The participants will be identified through purposeful sampling in a suburban school district in western Oregon. The study will not include minors or any other member of a vulnerable population.

(2) Describe Any Risks to the Subjects (physical, psychological, social, economic, or discomfort/inconvenience):

The study will explore the nature of international cross-cultural travel experiences as articulated by U.S. secondary teachers. Many of the issues that may arise during the interviews and self-reflection may be of a personal nature. However, the researcher will not specifically seek to elicit sensitive or troubling issues. The risk to the participants as minimal.

(3) Are the risks to subjects minimized by (i) using procedures that are consistent with sound research design and that do not unnecessarily expose subjects to risk, and (ii) whenever
appropriate, using procedures already being performed on the subjects for diagnostic or treatment purposes?  Yes

Degree of Risk: 1 Low

(4) Briefly describe the objectives, methods, and procedures used:

The researcher will conduct an exploratory qualitative microethnographic study, engaging 8-10 individuals in two personal interviews and ask the participant to document any situations during the following two weeks that they thought about their travel, talked about it in class, re-addressed a topic from another perspective, or interacted with students because of their international cross-cultural experience in self-reflection journal entries. The overarching question to be examined is the nature of international cross-cultural travel experience as articulated by U.S. secondary teachers. The study will further inquire regarding 1) How do the participants describe their international cross-cultural experiences; 2) what did the international cross-cultural experiences mean to the participants; 3) what international cross-cultural experiences shaped them as teachers; 3) the importance and potential for experiences outside of normative culture in enriching the classroom, and 4) the prevailing patterns that emerge from the data that informs the nature descriptions rendered.

(5) Briefly describe any instruments used in the study (attach a copy of each):

The personal interview will be kept as short as possible, respecting the time commitments of the participants, who are busy educational professionals. The first interview will likely last no more than 45-60 minutes with a focus on the individuals international travel experience. At the completion of the initial interview, participants will be asked to reflect of any situations during the following two weeks that they thought about their travel, talked about it in class, re-addressed a topic from another perspective, or interacted with students because of their international cross-cultural travel experiences in self-reflection journal entries. Participants will be given the follow up questions for the second interview at the conclusion of the first interview. The follow-up interview will like take 45-60 minutes and focus on the individual's personal reflection and how the teacher self-reports about their international cross-cultural travel experiences and how it shapes them as a teacher.

Appendix C provides the guide questions for the interviews and self-reflection.

(6) How does the research plan make adequate provision for monitoring the data collected so as to ensure the safety, privacy, and confidentiality of subjects?

Informed Consent:

Participants will receive a letter of consent (see Appendix B) and the researcher will review the ethics of the research and the rights of the respondent with each individual. No interviews,
observations, or personal history narratives will be conducted until the participant has signed the letter of consent.

Confidentiality and Anonymity:

Personal interviews will be audio recorded and later transcribed. The self-reflection journals will be transcribed and coded as part of the research process. Additionally, the researcher will keep detailed field notes on each interview and a field journal on the process of the research process. These materials will constitute the basis of the data derived for future analysis. The transcriptions of the interviews will contain no personally identifying information (i.e., personal names). Also, any information offered by the respondent that could reasonably identify the individual will be redacted from the transcription or personal narratives. Likewise, neither the field notes nor the field journal will identify the individual. All materials will be secured in a locked file. Specific materials to be secured will include: signed consent forms, audio recordings of interviews, self-reflection journals of the participants, transcriptions of interviews, field notes, and field journal.

Common to qualitative research, pseudonyms will be used to refer to the participants when reporting the findings.

Disposition of Data and Materials:

All materials (including the signed consent forms) will be kept for a minimum of five years after the research is completed. After that, the researcher will personally destroy the signed consent forms and delete the audio recordings. However, in keeping with accepted research practice, the interview transcriptions, field notes, and field journal will be retained as the researchers' professional, intellectual property.

(7) Briefly describe the benefits that may be reasonably expected from the proposed study, both to the subject and to the advancement of scientific knowledge. Are the risks to subjects reasonable in relation to anticipated benefits?

This study provides an opportunity to explore the nature of international cross-cultural experience of secondary teachers and the impact of that experience on the educator as a professional. Research on the nature, impact and experience is important to be attempted because of the trending discussion on the possibility of cross cultural competency in teacher education programs. The study could provide important insight to the scholarly literature on teacher travel and the nature of travel on professional development.
(8) Where some or all of the subjects are likely to be vulnerable to coercion or undue influence (such as children, persons with acute or severe physical or mental illness, or persons who are economically or educationally disadvantaged), what appropriate additional safeguards are included in the study to protect the rights and welfare of these individuals?

Does not apply.

(9) Does the research place participants “at risk?” No.

COMMITTEE REVIEW

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Chair

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Comments (continue on back if necessary, use asterisk to identify):
Appendix C

George Fox University HSRC Approval Letter

Title: The nature of international cross-cultural travel experiences as articulated by U.S. secondary teachers.

Principal Researcher: Kirsten A. Barnes

Date application completed: October 26, 2012

COMMITTEE FINDING:

Oct. 31, 2012

Ms. Kirsten Barnes
Ed.D. Student
Department of Educational Foundations & Leadership
George Fox University

Dear Ms. Barnes:

This letter is to inform you that as a representative of the GFU Institutional Review Board I have reviewed your proposal for research investigation entitled “The Nature of International Cross-Cultural Travel Experiences as Articulated by U.S. Student Teachers.” The proposal is approved.

Best wishes as you complete your research investigation.

Sincerely,

Terry Huffman, Ph.D.
Professor of Education
Human Subjects Research Committee
George Fox University
(503) 554-2856