

TUNDE SZECSEI¹ – JILL SHERMAN²
LINDSAY ILIOPOULOS³ – KATELYN MORRIS⁴ – ANNA OSORIO⁵

The impact of short term study abroad: Early childhood teacher candidates' self-reflection on transformation

In this study, three teacher candidates (TCs) in the United States examined their own experiences in a short term study abroad focused on early childhood education (ECE) in Hungary. Using the approach of autoethnography, they documented and analyzed their experiences about the two and a half week visit to uncover the process of transformation. The results of the data spiral analysis (Creswell, 2003) indicated specific themes of disruptive experiences and cognitive dissonance about culture, language and early childhood education. In addition, further analysis found themes related to reflection and to planned actions as a result of the transformative study abroad experience. The findings indicated that the study abroad program allowed the TCs to develop new knowledge and dispositions related to culture, language and ECE that have the potential to create long-term, deep changes in their thinking and actions.

Introduction

A major goal for teacher preparation programs is the development of teachers who can teach in a culturally responsive way and have competencies for enabling young children to become global citizens. Few teacher candidates start the teacher education program with these skills and dispositions, thus they need opportunities for meaningful learning experiences. One of these immersion experiences is studying abroad which is viewed as an increasingly important component of a college education. This view is mirrored by the rising number of participating students. For example, during the past 15 years the number of American students who participated in studying abroad has doubled, meaning approximately ten percent of undergraduate students now study abroad before graduating (Open doors, n.d.). In addition, many higher education specialists consider studying abroad a high impact learning experience, and document the value of short term study abroad programs (Anderson, Leigh, Rexeisen, Hubbard, 2006; Mercer, 2015). These high impact learning experiences allow

¹ PhD, Professor of Early Childhood, Florida Gulf Coast University, tszecsi@fgcu.edu

² M.E.d., Director of the Hunter Institute of Early Childhood Learning, Florida Gulf Coast University, jsherman@fgcu.edu

³ Kindergarten teacher

⁴ First grade teacher

⁵ Kindergarten teacher

students to transform their thinking and to become aware of the transformation process so that they are better prepared to embrace change and to live and work successfully after they graduate.

Transformation which results from high impact learning experiences is rooted in adult learning theories (Mezirow, 2000). According to Cranton and Know (2006), adult learners construct, validate and reformulate the meaning of their experiences. Though transformative learning never follows a one-way linear progression, some predictable stages still can be outlined. Specifically, Mezirow (1991) suggests that transformative learning develops out of a cognitive disequilibrium. This disequilibrium usually emerges from a disruption of previous worldview. As a response to the cognitive dissonance, an individual changes their frames of reference by critically reflecting on assumptions and views. This reflection that can be demonstrated through critical thinking, dialogues, both written and oral, offers opportunities for examining the learners' beliefs. Often these reflections open up new perspectives and ways to see the world (Johansson & Felten, 2014). Furthermore, transformative learning experiences consist of the following building blocks: (1) lasting impression- holding in memory details about an experience, (2) part of a person's narrative- including the learning experience within a narrative about him/herself and (3) changed behavior- recognizing specific changes in behavior due to the transformative learning experience (Wilson, Switzer, Parish, 2006). Similarly, Johansson and Felten (2014) outline the last two stages of transformation as: (1) acting upon the new beliefs and worldview which enables the learner to refine their new views and (2) full integration at which "*Everyday decisions and behaviors must sustain transformation*" (p. 14). Optimally, college students take part in opportunities such as study abroad that allow them to experience transformation.

A person's understanding of the world is his/her "cultural landscape" in which there are "vacancies", experiences to which one has never been exposed or even contemplated and that likely create holes of misunderstandings (Greene, 1994). Furthermore, Greene (1994) suggests "teachers break out of the confinements of monologism, open themselves to pluralism, become aware of more possible ways of being and of attending to the world" (p. 21). Participating in a study abroad experience might offer one the potential to become more aware of different worldviews. However, these experiences are more likely to enable one to think at a deeper level when reflection is involved (Cassidy, 2001). Therefore, opportunities for experiencing something new and unusual followed with reflection and creation of a narrative can provide a venue for college students' personal transformation.

In this article, three TCs analyzed their own experiences from a short term study abroad. This study was based on the theoretical framework of transformational learning (Mezirow, 2000) with the purpose of uncovering and documenting the process of transformation. With the approach of autoethnography, the three TCs examined the disruptive experiences that generated cognitive dissonance related to culture, language and early childhood education. They also analyzed their own reflections with the intent of understanding how the reflection process contributed to the development of new understanding. Finally, they delineated a plan for acting upon the new understanding. This article concludes with a discussion of their findings and implications for teacher educators.

Methodology

This qualitative study examined the perceptions of the TCs about the impact of a short-term study abroad to Hungary. The methodological approach used in this study was qualitative narrative inquiry through critical reflection and autoethnography. To best capture the insider perspectives as members of that population, we found autoethnography to be a powerful tool that provided authentic knowledge. The purpose of the use of autoethnography was to connect the personal experiences of the authors to the social and cultural context (Reed-Danahay, 2009). It allowed for describing and analyzing the characteristics of a culture through the personal experiences of members of that culture (Ellis, Adams, & Bochner, 2011).

This study examined the following questions:

1. What disruption in their previous way of looking at the world did the three TCs experience during the study abroad trip?
2. How did reflection assist the three TCs in creating a new outlook about, culture, language, and ECE?
3. What actions did they decide to take due to their transformed view on culture, language and ECE??

Participants

Three TCs served as participants in this autoethnography. Due to the particular nature of the population and our role as members of that population, we used a convenience sample. We are aware that our thinking and our data interpretations were influenced by our experiences as

TCs who participated in the study abroad in Hungary. However, we consider the way our personal experiences shaped our research to be an asset.

Isabelle (23) is a senior majoring in early childhood education and recently accepted a teaching position in kindergarten. She is single. She is a first generation Colombian-American who is bilingual in Spanish and English. She has basic proficiency in French as well. Every other year she travels to Colombia to visit family: otherwise she has taken short vacations in the Dominican Republic and Canada.

Annamaria (22) is a senior in elementary education, and recently accepted a teaching position in first grade. She is single. She is Caucasian, and does not speak any other language but English. She has vacationed in the Caribbean islands and South America.

Alexandrea (28) is a senior majoring in early childhood education and recently accepted a teaching position in kindergarten. She is married to a first generation Greek-American. She is mixed race, Caucasian-African-American, and has dual citizenship from Canada and the United States. She has basic proficiency in French and Spanish. She has taken short vacations in Mexico, Belize and the Caribbean Islands.

The three participants of this study were senior TCs in a teacher education program in Southwest Florida, which is accredited by the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP). Their university serves five counties in Southwest Florida. TCs in this program take numerous courses on culture, diversity and languages, and complete their student teaching in schools with high percentages of English language learners (ELLs). They graduate with reading and English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) endorsements on their teacher certificate. In this way, they are equipped with skills for teaching a student population of diverse racial, ethnic and language backgrounds.

Study Abroad Program Background and Design

The three TCs received a scholarship for the study abroad program from a new early learning institute at the TCs' resident university. The institute's primary function is to serve as a resource to both early childhood majors in the College of Education and to the teachers, parents and care-givers of young children in the community. Since its inception, one of the goals of the institute has been to form partnerships with organizations using developmentally appropriate practice in early childhood.

In January of 2015, the host university in Hungary was identified as an optimal site for a study abroad experience. The program was open to candidates from the College of Education who were completing either their Level I (non-final) or Level II (final) internships.

Requirements for participating in the program also included knowledge of early childhood pedagogy and effective practice, along with the ability to teach in preschool and primary classrooms in Hungary. Finalists for the program were chosen based upon academic standing, references, a written essay and personal interviews with the Director of the institute.

Faculty and administrative members from the universities in Hungary and the United States developed the details and logistics of the study abroad program with the inclusion of a wide range of academic and cultural activities. The academic activities focused upon: (1) observations in early childhood settings, including the host university's laboratory school, (2) observation and participation in college classes, for example art, drama, puppetry and music, and (3) teaching lessons in English in preschool and first grade. Cultural activities included, but were not limited to, visits to historically and/or significant locations such as cathedrals, museums, medieval castles, Parliamentary buildings, agricultural regions and concerts, as well as international student events organized by the host university.

Data Collection and Analysis

The data collection for this study started two months before the study abroad visit. First, the professor sent the TCs a pre-study abroad survey to explore the TCs' knowledge and expectations related to the culture and ECE in Hungary. It had eleven items: 4 questions about their knowledge related to the surface and deep level of culture in the USA and Hungary and seven open-ended questions. For example, "What do you know currently about ECE in Hungary?" and "What do you expect to learn about ECE in Hungary?" Then, for five weeks the TCs received several tasks to complete with the purpose of preparation for the study abroad. For instance, TCs read articles about a Hungarian preschool (Szilagyi & Szecsi, 2005) and reflected on questions such as, "Compare and contrast this preschool with preschools in the USA." With these weekly tasks, they had an opportunity to gain insights into Hungarian early childhood teacher preparation, teaching English as a foreign language and ECE programs, e.g. Montessori, and Waldorf. Consequently, during the 18 day trip, the TCs were requested to keep a daily journal with their observations and reflections about culture, education and any relevant experiences. Finally, within a week after returning home, the professor sent a post-survey with similar, open-ended questions that included: "What other learning outcomes do you think you gained on this trip? List them in the order of importance." In addition, TCs developed narratives with the research questions in mind. Each TC kept her data set, and the professor kept all data from the three TCs.

The three TCs analyzed the data with the process of qualitative data analysis that followed the “data analysis spiral” (Creswell, 1998; 2003). This analysis has the following sequence of steps: (1) data management; (2) initial reading and memoing; (3) coding, describing and interpreting data; (4) data presentation and interpretation. The findings were organized based on the categories that emerged through the data analysis and reported by the research questions. Because of the nature of autoethnography, the findings are reported in first person through the direct voice of each of the three TCs.

Findings

Teacher Candidates’ Disruption and Cognitive Dissonance during Study Abroad

Isabelle: Early education is more developmentally appropriate in Hungary than expected

Before the trip, I had limited knowledge about Hungary, the culture and its ECE. Therefore, I experienced cognitive dissonance between my prior knowledge and my first hand experiences in Hungary. For example, I thought that I would visit preschools that were less fortunate than the ones in the United States. However, I recognized that preschools in Hungary were up-to-date and well supplied with resources. For instance, some preschools had classrooms with “play” areas in the loft, swimming pools with twice a week swimming activities, and even salt rooms where children engaged in activities with deep breathing techniques to take in the healing vapors of the salty air.

Before the trip I believed that all the other countries were behind the United States in education. Now I know that I was wrong. I learned that Hungarian early education is developmentally appropriate for students, especially in regard to literacy instruction. Young children are taught literacy skills directly only after they are about 6 or 7 years old because many children are developmentally not ready to learn how to read until that age. As a result of this experience, I started to question some literacy practices in the United States. For example, is literacy instruction in pre-k and kindergarten age appropriate?

Finally, I believed that Hungarian preschool children were assigned to new teachers each year just like in the United States. I was shocked to learn that students stay with the same teacher in preschool for 2-4 years. In Hungary, I started to recognize that this looping offers many benefits such as the caring relationships and deep emotional bonds that develop between teachers and children. As a result of these stable relationships, the time for meaningful activities in the preschool classroom is increased because the children already

know the teacher's rules and procedures. Now I am wondering why, in the United States, we require young children to learn new procedures and rules for each new teacher, each year.

Annamaria: Importance of foreign language learning and art education

During my trip, I realized that foreign language learning is important in Hungary. I had assumed that preschool children's English proficiency would be lower than that of first graders. However, we visited a preschool in which children were singing, communicating and playing games only in English. I had planned to do simple drawings and naming object activities with this group, but quickly realized these activities were too simplistic. I was shocked at how advanced these 3-7 year olds had become with the English language, though they learned it almost exclusively through play. Not only was I unprepared for the preschool, but I was also lacking appropriate lesson plans for the primary students who were just beginning to learn English. Here I had to decrease the intensity of the lesson: I used lots of gestures, visuals and singing with movements. Ultimately, I also came to understand that a child's English proficiency in this country could also be dependent upon his or her parents' ability to pay for a private English immersion preschool.

Experiencing the importance of art education and the thorough preparation of early childhood majors in art made me question the current practice in the United States. In Hungary, the arts play a key role in teacher training. Teacher candidates are required to take 6 classes of art, 6 classes of music and 6 classes of drama. In Hungary, this advanced art training takes place not only in college, but also in the preschools. I was stunned at the major role arts instruction plays in the preschool/kindergarten curriculum and at the artistic masterpieces that children created. I was especially shocked when I learned teachers begin identifying gifted students by their artistic abilities as early as preschool (3-7 years old). In addition, we met with two passionate college art instructors who shared with us a variety of art disciplines such as bead work, sculpting, painting, drawing and weaving. I must admit, I can do none of these disciplines well. I recognized this training allows Hungarian teachers to make their own pillows, puppets, labels and decorations for their classrooms and to share these skills with their students. I believe that the lack of opportunity to take part in the arts in the United States hinders our youth. I am wondering why we do not have an abundance of opportunities for creating art and the training to improve teachers' skills in the arts.

Alexandrea: Different priorities: play, physical education and languages

In Hungary, I observed many differences in teaching. For example, I realized Hungarian teachers used a play-based curriculum to foster children’s emotional and cognitive development instead of pushing them into learning complex concepts in reading, writing and math. The children had access to resources that helped them explore literacy at their own pace and they were not forced to learn letters, numbers, or even how to write their own names.

I also learned about the importance of physical education. When children were singing traditional Hungarian songs, they were also dancing to the song. When the students went outside, they were all playing and moving, never complaining about being tired or wanting to go inside. I think when students are exposed to these physical activities at a young age, they are probably more equipped with the right tools and knowledge to make healthier choices as they get older. I came to realize that in the United States there is an epidemic of childhood obesity, seemingly because of the very limited amount of physical activity.

While in Hungary, I was also surprised by the number of students who were able to speak two or more languages. I saw how happy and proud Hungarian people were to speak with native speakers of English. All of my life I have heard people either saying, “Why speak anything other than English?” or “You came to America, you speak English.” Now I realize the importance of speaking more than one language and have had a firsthand experience with how language can connect people.

The Role of Critical Reflection towards Transformation

Isabelle: Benefits of shared reflection

During the trip, there were several opportunities for reflection: writing notes about my daily activities, communicating ideas or thoughts with my colleagues and professors, or just mentally having a conversation with myself. For me, it was most beneficial when I communicated and reflected on my thinking with my professors and colleagues, and heard about their thoughts and experiences. For example, when discussing the topic of learning another language, my professor and I shared personal experiences about the benefits of speaking more than one language. Furthermore, most of my reflections addressed developmentally appropriate early education in Hungary, especially in regard to literacy education. My peers and I discussed how literacy is taught in Hungary and through these shared reflections, we compared the Hungarian approach with our college courses. We all

agreed that teaching literacy in Hungary is more beneficial to students because it allows children time to grow cognitively and emotionally before they are exposed to structured instruction in literacy. This new perspective makes me want to expose my future students to these developmentally appropriate practices in literacy.

Annamaria: Reflection gives deeper self-understanding

Engaging in oral and written reflections allowed for deeper thought and understanding of the overall experience. For example, we made friends with six Turkish students and spent many evenings telling stories about our cultures and childhoods. We talked a lot about our experiences with poor instruction in a foreign language, e.g., having short classes and learning primarily basic words with the translation in English. I think reflecting on my own culture and language helped me understand why I never learned Spanish. Not only did I change schools and restart basic classes often, but I was also never forced to use another language. I could always give up and use English when I struggled. Now, after this study abroad, I am going to make every effort to read in Spanish and play games in Spanish to force myself to use the language. Furthermore, my written reflections on the school visits helped me clarify the nature of the classroom that I want to have. For example, in one first grade classroom, children were trying to understand and speak English, and both the teacher and children used visuals such as puppetry to really convey the meaning of the new language. Children also seemed engaged because they had choices regarding their activities and were not forced to sit still or listen for long periods of time. This approach seemed to decrease behavior problems. Overall, reflecting during and after the trip has given me a deeper look at myself and how I can change to be a better me. I believe you really can grow from the understanding one achieves when reflecting.

Alexandrea: Reflection generates a change in thinking

My reflections, in written form and in dialogue, have changed my thinking about pedagogy, culture and language, and ultimately have given me new knowledge about approaches to teaching. For example, through conversations with Hungarian teachers and TCs, I gained insight into a play-based curriculum which gives students the freedom to choose activities and ways of learning. Due to my reflections, in my future classroom, I want to incorporate more play in the curriculum which will keep my students involved and engaged. I believe that

by using more play during the day, students will be able to utilize their prior knowledge and interests to help them understand the new information being learned.

After observing and discussing our experiences with language learning and teaching in Hungary, I think I developed an appreciation for foreign/second language learning. I have realized how difficult learning is in a classroom in which you do not understand the language. In my classroom, I am determined to assist my ELLs and to help them succeed with games and books on different languages and cultures. Furthermore, I now hope that I will be able to learn another language, maybe Spanish, so that I can communicate with my students in their native language.

Impact of Study Abroad as Represented with Action

Isabelle: Supporting English language learners in a play-based program

The most important lesson from this study abroad program was to fully embrace diversity and to recognize how ELLs might feel in a classroom where the teacher does not speak their native language. When attending college classes in Hungarian, it was difficult for me to grasp the content. As a future teacher, this experience impacted me. When I have ELLs in my classroom, I want to provide resources like manipulatives, pictures, and modeling to help the students to be successful. Also, I want my students to benefit from my native language, Spanish. I hope one day I will teach in Spanish. I believe my students, if they are bilingual, will be able to find a better job and to communicate with people from other countries.

I also recognized how productive the play-based approach is for young children and their learning. For example, I was able to observe how students build their fine and gross motor skills while playing and partaking in activities in the swimming pool. For example, the teacher asked them to grab small plastic balls and throw them. Then, she encouraged them to swim and catch their ball and bring it back. Clearly, these children were building essential physical skills through play. With the insights that I gained in this trip, I plan on adding play and physical movement such as singing, dancing, and pretend play to my curriculum. For example, teaching essential body parts through the “head, shoulders, knees, and toes” song is a good way to help ELLs’ comprehension in a play activity. This developmentally appropriate play curriculum will engage my students in activities in which young children build language, social, and motor skills. Furthermore, when I analyzed my pre and post study abroad survey results, I found a significant increase in my knowledge about the surface and deep culture of Hungary. My knowledge of the surface culture expanded with every visit to

museums, churches, city tours, and restaurants. I also became familiar with Hungarian values, such as respect for history and traditions, hospitality, and the importance of and respect for childhood. I am grateful for the experiences that I had during this trip and all the relationships I made along the way.

Annamaria: Arts and physical well-being is pursued

Although the United States is filled with diversity, the language of the country is predominantly English. This monolingual culture often prevents students from learning or speaking another language fluently. In Hungary, I was pleasantly surprised that most university students are bilingual or at least fluent in one foreign language, e.g. English or German. This experience made me feel really behind in my own foreign language skills because I only speak English. After I returned to the USA, I even checked research on language learning. I learned that the brain has a critical period for language learning. Young children are more likely to master the language and obtain a native-like pronunciation of a second language. With motivation, however, adults can learn a foreign language as well, though they may never achieve native-like fluency (Bialystok. & Hakuta, 1999). As a result of experiencing the English proficiency level of Hungarian people and international students, I am now planning to continue my education in Spanish. I feel it is now necessary that I speak another language. I will take the time to take Spanish classes and push myself to read more in Spanish, such as directions and menu items that are often found in Florida.

My other major intention for action is to expand my students' interests and immersion into the arts and music. As a result of this trip, I will try to make my lessons more cross-curricular, and incorporate more arts in science, math, language arts and social studies. Especially on Fridays in my room, children will have opportunities for a variety of fun art projects, such as creating sock puppets of living creatures and bring them to life using our hands. Another example is practicing addition and subtraction with music and pretend play because catchy tunes will help students remember some of the basic facts. According to Lucas (2009) music can help children stay focused, evoke emotion and stimulate visual images.

The United States is known for restaurants like McDonalds and Burger King. These fast food giants serve highly processed burgers and French fries at cheap prices, but with low nutritional value. A lack of cooking and eating nutritious food together, as well as the lack of physical exercise, has caused a health crisis in the United States. During this trip, I witnessed

a country with all of these same restaurant options, but Hungarian people seemed to eat much healthier and make fitness a priority. In schools, they served traditional Hungarian food and they also had plenty of physical education. I observed teachers using many physical movements incorporated into lessons. I intend to take this practice back to my classroom. I will make it my priority to have at least one physical activity planned each day. I want to encourage healthy living and support physical and mental well-being.

Alexandrea: Developmentally appropriate early education infused with native culture

The impact that the short term study visit has made on me is a new outlook on teaching in early childhood. I learned that preschoolers should not be forced to learn their alphabet and numbers or how to write sentences, but should develop their social and emotional skills first. With my experience in preschool (ages 2-4) in the US, I have seen the struggle and the push to teach skills that are not age appropriate, e.g. letter recognition at the age of three. Before this trip, I thought it was great to have students reading, writing, and doing math when they entered kindergarten, but now I think that it is too early and too much for students. With my new knowledge, I want to become more creative and more proactive than ever before. I am determined to aid my students in finding fun, active, and engaging ways to learn age appropriate new concepts.

My views about the incorporation of heritage language and culture were also changed. I saw how much Hungarians appreciate and understand their own culture and history. In classrooms, culture was consistently infused in everyday school activities: students were singing traditional Hungarian songs and participating in dramatic play with traditional Hungarian clothes and settings. I became aware of how little tradition and culture is incorporated into students' school work in the United States. After seeing the joy, happiness and excitement on the students' faces when learning about their culture, I intend to incorporate culture and history into my curriculum. By paying more attention to my students' lives, holidays, and cultural stories, I can help them develop pride and knowledge about their own cultures and traditions.

Discussion

The three TCs who participated in the two and a half week long study abroad program seemed to have been immersed in a high impact learning experience. This rich academic, cultural and social experience appeared to be transformative as well. Faced with cognitive

dissonance, their continuous reflection on this disequilibrium promoted the emergence of new understandings and the disappearance of “vacancies” in their cultural landscape (Greene, 1994). Ultimately, through this autoethnography, the TCs began planning their actions according to their new beliefs, views and knowledge (Johansson and Felten, 2014).

The three TCs’ recollection of and reflection on experiences during the study abroad program showed common themes, such as the importance of foreign language knowledge and the appreciation of developmentally appropriate practices in early education. Regardless of their own language background, they seemed to develop a new perspective on learning and speaking a new language and its role in their own lives and professions. Annamaria and Alexandra recognized their monolingual skills as a barrier, and appear to be proactive about learning a new language and incorporating languages in their classrooms. This finding substantiates research on the benefits of cultural and linguistic opportunities for TCs who spend time outside the U.S. (Youngs & Youngs, 2001). In addition, their new and emerging interest in foreign language abilities is promising. Research indicates that teachers who speak more than one language have heightened awareness and competence for supporting ELLs in both learning English and maintaining the heritage/native language (Lee & Oxelson, 2006; Szecsi, Szilagyi & Giambo, 2015).

This study abroad program seems to generate the most evident change, however, in the TCs’ views about effective practices in early childhood. They appear to reconsider their views about the role of play in preschools and kindergartens and their beliefs about approaches to teaching literacy, arts, and music. Their new understandings are reflective of the developmentally appropriate practices which focus on age and individual and socio-cultural appropriateness (Bredenkamp, & Copple, 2009). However, before the transformation, their views about teaching literacy in early years seemed to be driven by “the earlier, the better” approach. Only after the study abroad, this view shifted significantly. The TCs expressed their consideration of age appropriate development, and their plan for implementing their new perspectives in a classroom in which “*Play isn’t the enemy of learning, it’s learning’s partner.*” (Brown and Vaughan 2009, p. 101). In addition, all three TCs emphasized that optimal early education must include a strong emotional foundation through the stable relationship between the children and the teacher, and the incorporation of music, arts and physical education as a driving force in the curriculum. They even raised concern about obesity and lack of physical activities in the USA. When discussing the

teacher's role in healthy and active lifestyles, they echoed recommendations by Lynn-Garbe & Hoot (2004).

This autoethnography about the impact of a study abroad program infused with student research had a limited number of TCs. Therefore, the in-depth examination of their views about their transformation was meaningful and personal rather than striving for more generalizable findings. Although a higher number of participants might add additional perspectives on the transformation process, it would not challenge the existence of the views of these participants (Ernest, 2001).

Conclusions

This study indicates that a short term study abroad program infused with undergraduate research has generated transformation in the TCs' views and beliefs about language, culture and ECE. These TCs became engaged in critical thinking and reflection about unfamiliar or unusual situations, and developed a new set of knowledge, skills and dispositions that have the potential to create deep and long lasting changes in their identity and thinking (Johansson & Felten, 2014). These changes were likely to emerge because the TCs were involved in pre-study abroad research, daily reflection on their experiences, and post study abroad activities. Ultimately, these self-narratives served as essential tools in the transformative process. This finding is aligned with Barkin (2016) in terms of the effectiveness of short term study abroad experience with pre-departure inquiry and post-program follow up. This current study suggests that the three TCs might now employ effective early childhood pedagogical practices in their own classrooms. In addition, the findings of this study will serve as further support of the transformative experiences that come from rich and engaging study abroad programs.

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