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<p>Study abroad programs for pre-service teachers aim to contribute to the cultural readiness needed for teaching in schools of today and tomorrow. Yet, the re-entry transition is an oft-neglected aspect of study abroad programs. We developed a model for reflective writing and examined the depth of post-sojourn reflection in pre-service teacher writing, two months after returning from a 10-week study abroad program. Although the majority of the writing illustrated descriptive writing or descriptive reflection, some students demonstrated dialogic or critical reflection, revealing the usefulness of reflective writing in capturing students' experiences in ways that deepen their learning for teaching.</p>	
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<b>Corresponding Author</b>	Nancy Arthur
<b>Corresponding Author's Institution</b>	University of Calgary
<b>Order of Authors</b>	Nancy Arthur, Sandra Becker, Roswita Dressler, Colleen Kawalilak, Katie Crossman

## Highlights:

- Learning from study abroad experiences was not uniform, indicating pre-service teachers' level of professional development.
- The majority of pre-service teachers' reflections post-sojourn remained at the descriptive levels.
- Reflections at the critical level showed clear implications for teaching and learning practices.
- Customized reflective practice approaches may better support learning in study abroad programs.
- Additional structure and facilitation is needed to encourage reflection about future teaching roles and practices.

**Pre-Service Teachers and Study Abroad Experiences: Don't Forget About Them  
When They Come Home**

Nancy Arthur<sup>1</sup>, Sandra Becker<sup>2</sup>, Roswita Dressler<sup>2</sup>, Katie Crossman<sup>2</sup>, Colleen Kawalilak<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Division of Education, Arts, and Social Sciences  
University of South Australia  
GPO Box 2471  
Adelaide SA 5001

<sup>2</sup>Werklund School of Education  
University of Calgary  
2500 University Dr. NW  
Calgary AB Canada T2N 1N4

E-mail addresses:

Nancy Arthur [nancy.arthur@unisa.edu.au](mailto:nancy.arthur@unisa.edu.au)  
Sandra Becker [sandra.becker@ucalgary.ca](mailto:sandra.becker@ucalgary.ca)  
Roswita Dressler [rahdress@ucalgary.ca](mailto:rahdress@ucalgary.ca)  
Colleen Kawalilak [ckawalil@ucalgary.ca](mailto:ckawalil@ucalgary.ca)  
Katherine Crossman [kecrossm@ucalgary.ca](mailto:kecrossm@ucalgary.ca)

Contact Information for Corresponding Author:

Nancy Arthur, PhD., R. Psych.  
Dean: Research and Innovation  
Division of Education, Arts, and Social Sciences  
University of South Australia  
GPO Box 2471  
Adelaide SA 5001  
Cell: +61 04 66 861887

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Running Head: PRE-SERVICE TEACHERS AND STUDY ABROAD

**PRE-SERVICE TEACHERS AND STUDY ABROAD EXPERIENCES:**

**DON'T FORGET ABOUT THEM WHEN THEY COME HOME**

As world populations become increasingly diverse due to mobility and migration, the opportunities and challenges of globalization are reflected in schools and classrooms (Luciak, 2010). The UN International Migration Report (2017) states that since the year 2000, there has been a 49% increase in the number of people living in countries outside their birth. Researchers suggest that this statistic is likely to continue to increase (Burns & Shadoian-Gersing, 2010) due to patterns of migration and opportunities for working or learning in other countries (Author, 2012). The increasing diversity of populations in local communities is reflected in the **demographic composition** of student populations. Teachers need to be prepared for the diversity of students and parents they are likely to encounter in schools.

Teacher preparation programs are prioritizing the development of cultural readiness needed to address the challenges teachers will face in schools of today and tomorrow. Educators are expected to be sensitive to the diverse educational and cultural needs of all their students by creating inclusive, cohesive learning environments (Burns & Shadoian-Gersing, 2010). Personnel in Faculties of Education recognize the importance of cultural readiness, not just for understanding the diversity of learners, but also to encourage pre-teachers to critically reflect on their personal cultural identities (Northcote, Kilgour, Reynaud, & Fitzsimmons, 2014). It is not only students and parents who have a cultural identity; teachers bring their socialization experiences, values and beliefs to their professional roles as teachers. Consequently, it is important to provide students, such as pre-service teachers, with learning experiences that support them in examining personal worldviews and how they understand themselves and other people (Author, 2002).

In turn, teachers have a pivotal role for supporting learners in their classrooms to engage with diverse cultural values, beliefs, and norms of behaviors that contrast with the experiences of learners. Students must address the challenges that often surface during interactions with people from other cultures and who require intentional support and actions from teachers who help them increase their cultural knowledge and sensitivity to other people (Campbell & Walta, 2015; Sharma, Phillion & Malewski, 2011). To that end, one of the hallmarks of internationalizing curriculum involves deepening pre-service teachers' cultural understanding (Rodriguez, 2011). Although many educators have written about the importance of preparing pre-service teachers, there is less agreement about the best ways to proceed and limited evidence regarding effective strategies for cultivating cultural understanding in pre-service teacher preparation.

As part of a growing focus on internationalization initiatives in teacher education programs (e.g., Rahatzad, Dockrill, Sharma, & Phillion, 2016), many Faculties of Education provide study abroad programs for pre-service teachers. International study abroad programs are intended to support the development of cultural awareness and understanding of educational practices in other countries (Covert, 2014), second language proficiency, capacity building for community-based partnerships (Zeichner, Bowman, Guillen, & Napolitan, 2016), and skills to broaden teachers' approaches to education (Francis, 2015; Johnson & Battalio, 2008). Many programs emphasize pre-departure preparation for travelling and for anticipating common adjustments that often occur in new country contexts, with less attention paid to the re-entry transition following a study abroad experience.

The aim of this research was to explore the use of a reflective writing model for debriefing pre-teachers' learning before, during, and after an international study abroad experience. In the current study, we focused on how to support cross-cultural skill development

through the use of post-sojourn reflection. Within the context of this study, we discuss student reflections after a 10-week program in which pre-service teachers lived and volunteered to teach in an international location while taking online, for credit, education courses from their home university. Participating students receive co-curricular service credit for their volunteer teaching experience.

The discussion that follows begins with an exploration of the literature on reflective strategies used to expand cross-cultural competencies before, during, and after study abroad programs. Next, a critical review of the strengths and limitations of these reflective strategies is provided. We then share details of developing the post-sojourn reflection that is currently being used to debrief post-sojourn. Using the hybrid model that we developed as a basis of the reflection (Authors, 2018), examples from pre-service teacher reflections are offered to illustrate the different levels of the model. Finally, the discussion turns to recommendations for supporting pre-service teachers who return from a study abroad experience to maximize their learning through reflective strategies.

### **Enhancing Cross-Cultural Learning through Study Abroad Programs**

It is challenging to locate precise definitions as understandings and interpretations are influenced and impacted by culture and context (Authors, 2019). For this reason, precisely defining terms such as cross-cultural and intercultural learning and understandings of how these terms are interpreted in diverse contexts remains muddled, messy, and obscure. Deardorff and Jones (2012) referred to this lack of concurrence and to varied approaches to cross-cultural work relative to disciplines;

...there is little consensus on terminology either in the United States or elsewhere.

Varying by discipline and approach, terminology includes *intercultural competence*,

*intercultural communicative competence, global competence, global citizenship, multicultural competence, cultural fluency, communicative competence, cultural competence, intercultural sensitivity, cross-cultural awareness, cultural intelligence, cultural literacy, cross-cultural capability* and so on. (p. 284)

After some deliberation, we settled on the term *cross-cultural* rather than *intercultural* when writing this paper. Pre-service teacher participants primarily focused on a comparison of cultures when reflecting on experiences lived when immersed in a culture different from their own comfortable and familiar. Further, we believed that terms such as intercultural learning and intercultural sensitivity referred to a deeper level of cultural understanding and engagement—a level that extended beyond a comparison of cultures.

There has been a myriad of potential solutions proposed for deepening cross-cultural learning in pre-service teacher programs, from engaging pre-service teachers in prejudice reduction and equity pedagogy activities (Hollins & Guzman, 2005), to critical cultural self-reflection, service learning, and field experiences in diverse urban settings (Smith, 2009). Beyond experiential learning in the local context, study abroad programs for pre-service teachers have been created as potential vehicles for developing the cross-cultural competencies deemed critical in navigating other countries in a globalized world (Twombly, Salisbury, Tumanut, & Klute, 2012). Shadowen, Chieffo, & Guerra (2015) suggested that study abroad programs provide opportunities for the evolution of critical learning and problem-solving skills in challenging and unfamiliar settings. Study abroad, in blurring the line between personal and professional experiences, allows students to gain understanding, sensitivity, and empathy for others (Faulconer, 2003; Gillin & Young, 2009; Gray, Murdock, & Stebbins, 2002). However, it is not just immersion in another country that has the potential to inform new ways of learning. As

part of the pedagogy associated with study abroad, educators are faced with the challenge of how to capture and support the learning processes that occur through international experiences. Yet, prior to leaving, pre-service teachers are not always supported with cross-cultural knowledge and practices for managing their roles as teachers in a different cultural context, resulting in uncertainty about transporting or adapting teaching and learning processes and resources to do so (Chinnappan, McKenzie, & Fitzsimmons, 2013). Although there is wide variation in the type and length of study abroad programs offered to pre-service teachers (Smolcic & Katunich, 2017), there is one compelling observation: the learning by pre-service teachers, even in short-term programs, is enhanced through careful attention to ways of enhancing pedagogy (Tambyah, 2018). Researchers are beginning to determine the nature and content of such planning to improve the cross-cultural learning of pre-service teachers and the skills they gain for future professional practice.

Opportunities for critical reflection are often built into study abroad programs (Campbell & Walta, 2015; Forsey et al., 2011; Glass, 2014), with the aim of enhancing student learning. Reflection strategies have included the use of reflective journals (Brindley, Quinn, & Morton, 2009; Craig, Zou, & Poimbeauf, 2015 ) and papers (Gilin & Young, 2009; Gray et al., 2002), guided reflection activities (Campbell & Walta, 2015), interviews and questionnaires (Forsay et al., 2011), concept mapping (Francis, 2015), autoethnographic accounts (Garbati & Rothschild, 2016), dialogic reflection (Hepple, 2012), and blogging (Glass, 2014; Lee, 2011). Critical reflection, that which involves a deeper level of exploring assumptions, refers to a process that is intentional and continual for the purpose of uncovering and examining assumptions in order to determine if they are credible and legitimate (Brookfield, 2017). Not all reflections are critical, in nature. Yet, it is assumed that students can be encouraged and supported to engage in reflection

practices that will help them to uncover their prior assumptions, values, and beliefs, to position who they are in relation to their understandings. Such encouragement and support are intended to help students who participate in study abroad programs to extend beyond the superficial level of travelling to another country, e.g., tourism, to reflecting on the implications and impacts of their international experiences for: a) their professional identities; and, b) gaining a better appreciation of cultural diversity for teaching and learning processes. To reiterate an earlier point, reflection by students is encouraged not only to deepen understanding about their observations of other people, but to turn the lens inward and reflect about personal worldviews—tightly held biases, notions, and assumptions.

Researchers acknowledge that written reflection can be an effective tool for impacting learning and empowering practice (Delaney, 20009; Mantzoukas & Jasper, 2004; Smith & Jack, 2005). As stated by Cohen-Sayag and Fischl (2012), “Reflective writing in teacher education is an ongoing and developmental process ... [perceived] as a learning tool mediating between existing and new knowledge” (p. 21). Reflecting and writing about experiences lived supports pre-service teachers to amass deeper understandings of “how they will grow toward greater effectiveness as teachers” (Shandomo, 2010, p. 112). Further, Cohen-Sayag and Fischl (2012) maintained that “reflective writing requires practice” (p. 32) in order to prompt pre-service teachers to reflect beyond mere description of an event/experience to attain thinking in different ways that foster deeper levels of comparative and critical reflections. Written reflection may also be a pathway for uncovering assumptions, “the taken-for-granted beliefs about the world and our place within it that guide our actions” (Brookfield, 2017, p. 5). Brookfield further asserted that our assumptions “give meaning and purpose to who we are and what we do” (p. 5). By uncovering and reflecting on assumptions, there is potential to view experiences through an

alternate lens and to make deeper meaning of learning moments that may not have been recognized, earlier on, as being significant or impactful.

### **Learner Support Post-Sojourn**

The general literature on study abroad programs for students is instructive for informing programming for students who are also pre-service teachers. For example, returning home after immersion in another culture is often characterized as more difficult than the initial transition (Kartoshkina, 2015; Young, 2014). It is during the re-entry transition, after an international experience, that individuals reflect not only on what they have experienced abroad, but the new perspectives they have gained about their life at home (Author, 2016). Expanding on this point for students who are pre-service teachers, it may be necessary for them to unpack many assumptions about education that may have previously been taken for granted, such as the nature of learners and learning, and their roles as teachers. In order to derive the most impactful or significant learning from study abroad programs, research has shown that support through structured preparation and guided reflective activities to debrief learning is required (Campbell & Walta, 2015; Forsey, Broomhall, & Davis, 2011; Glass, 2014). Though it is recommended that considerable time for post-sojourn reflection be provided in order to develop the critical awareness necessary for cultural understanding (Menard-Warwick & Palmer, 2012; Northcote et al., 2014), these opportunities are not often taken up upon re-entry. This is a missed opportunity to provide support for students, including pre-service teachers, and to help them to maximize their cross-cultural learning.

Opportunities for reflection are often instituted prior to and during study abroad experiences (Sherraden, Lough, & Bopp, 2013), as opposed to when students return home. The emphasis prior to study abroad is premised on the idea that students will experience more

adjustments as they enter into a new country and cultural contexts. Students may benefit from orientation to the destination country—orientation may include an introduction to reflective practice as a learning tool. Following through with students in this way has been shown to help them to engage with their international experience through identifying critical learning moments, along the way, deemed as relevant for personal and professional development (Author, 2001). However, it is noteworthy that less attention has been paid to the importance of reflective practices following the study abroad experience. The neglect of the post-sojourn phase of study abroad may occur due to lack of resources. Alternatively, it is likely due to the assumptions that the re-entry process for students involves returning to a familiar country and practices at home. Also, as the emphasis is often placed on the learning that occurs while abroad, the notion of learning over time is often underestimated as is the integration of such learning after returning home. Further, learning that occurs during a study abroad program involves a process that may culminate or extend over a lengthy period, when students experience themselves, other people, or the local world around them with new perspectives. The personal growth that occurs through study abroad experience extends beyond the term of study abroad and can potentially result in transformative learning when pre-service teachers are supported to deepen their learning and apply new sights in their roles as teachers (Smolcic & Katunich, 2017).

We argue that the inclusion of learner support post-sojourn is an important phase of study abroad programs for all students, including support for pre-service teachers who embark on study abroad programs. Critical learning is not static or linear; it unfolds over time. What may be viewed as a major incident during a study abroad experience may continue to be perceived as important or salient over the long term, or fade to the background and, ultimately, be forgotten. Conversely, minor events or moments of interaction may be forgotten until pre-service teachers

return home and a local experience triggers them to reflect on incidents, or encounters internationally, in new and meaningful ways. Although many individuals find their experiences of immersion in another culture to be exhilarating, that is not always the case. Some students, including pre-service teachers, may find they are faced with difficult challenges that are taxing, confusing, and uncomfortable. It may only be upon returning home that individuals are able to gain perspective about their experiences and connect meaning to their emotional reactions at the time. To illustrate, in a short-term international and cultural immersion experience, Addleman, Nava, Cevallos, Brazo, & Dixon (2014) found that pre-service teachers triggered by unexpected events experienced a sense of disequilibrium. Rather than expecting students to figure out the entirety of the experience at the time, cultural immersion might be understood as a contextual experience that triggers learning and readiness to examine their personal perspectives. It is through ongoing reflection that individuals may gain alternate perspectives and incorporate new meaning about their experiences. It is also conceivable that the same experience may take on multiple meanings, over time. Consequently, beyond support while pre-service teachers are immersed in another country, it is critical to provide support upon their return home.

As previously indicated, the re-entry transition is often a time when students need to readjust to life at home. Students may not realize how much they have changed or learned until they take that learning home, or to a time when others in their home contexts provide feedback (Author, 2016). Therefore, it is important that the re-entry and post-sojourn phase of study abroad not be ignored, as doing so is a missed opportunity to capture the ways that pre-service teachers make sense of their experience. Particularly, because the period of re-entry is an opportune time to explore students' learning (Young, 2014), program personnel can be proactive about ways to support and engage pre-service learners upon their return home. Researchers are

now recommending that structured opportunities for post-sojourn reflection, as well as prior to and during the program, could have great benefit in deepening cross-cultural learning (Campbell & Walta, 2015; Forsey, et al., 2011; Jackson, 2009).

### **The Current Study**

The purpose of the current study was to further research post-sojourn reflection as a strategy for the development of cross-cultural competence. The specific aim of our research was to investigate a process for engaging pre-service teachers in a reflective practice exercise upon returning home from a study abroad experience. Our collaborative research team developed a guided writing structure for post-sojourn reflection and administered it to pre-service teachers over three consecutive study abroad sessions (Author, 2018). In so doing, we addressed the following research question: To what extent did critical reflection occur in the post-sojourn writing of study abroad participants?

### **Methodology**

#### **Research Participants**

The 37 pre-service teachers who consented to participate in this research project were in their final year of their Bachelor of Education program at the university. Data were compiled during three years, with 6 participants in the first year, 16 participants in the second year, and 15 participants in the third year of data collection. Program participants had all recently returned from a 10-week study abroad program in countries that included: Vietnam, Spain, Germany, Australia, Japan, China, and Brazil. Although the students often had opportunities to teach, the study abroad experience was not an official practicum and as such they were not accompanied by faculty or observed teaching as one might expect from an official practicum (Gelfuso & Dennis, 2014). As compulsory activities in the program, the pre-service teachers took part in pre, during,

and post sojourn activities. These activities involved coming together as a group to explore interests and motives for participating, country orientations, and ongoing correspondence with the instructor overseeing the study abroad program. Following the study abroad program, students came together to verbally discuss their experiences, and to plan for a group presentation. Participation in research was a voluntary component offered to pre-services teachers at the same time as they participated in the program activities. Ethics approval for this study was obtained from the research ethics board of the institution where the research took place.

### **Using a Structure for Post-Sojourn Reflection**

The guided reflective writing session for post-sojourn debriefing was developed by the research team (Author, 2018). We began by researching various models of reflection and selected three of them to inform our work. Briefly, this process entailed three members of the research team, all professors, trying out three different models of reflection (Gibbs, 1998; Johns, 2010; Rolfe, Freshwater, & Jasper, 2001) in relation to a personal international experience. As researchers, we felt that it was important to go beyond gaining knowledge about models of reflection to trying them out and testing them on ourselves. We consequently developed a process that positioned us as learners who were engaging in reflection in relation to a personal international experience. First, each member of the team instructed the other team members about one of the three models of reflection and developed a reflection question to stimulate exploration of the model. Next, each of us independently journaled for approximately 30 minutes to test out the model in relation to a personal experience of working internationally or working locally on an international project. This experience helped each of us to develop understanding of the models on an intellectual level but also on a process level as we individually worked through our reflections using the model. Next, the three researchers came together and offered

feedback that was used to inform discussion about the relative strengths and limitations of each model. The same steps were taken with each of the three models. Upon completion of our work with the individual models, we reviewed what we perceived to be the strengths and limitations of each of the three models and extrapolated content that we felt worked well to stimulate our reflections during our practical process of discovery and reflection. Through this process, the researchers co-created a hybrid model, The Cross-Cultural Reflective Model (Author, 2018). The main concepts that we extrapolated and renamed included Imagine (an invitation to students to center their focus for the reflection exercise), Describe (provide a detailed description of a critical experience before analyzing the experience), Reflect (capturing the affective experience), Make Meaning (making sense out of the experience), and Take Learning Forward (how learning might connect to future teaching practice). Although the concepts are presented in order here, we want to recognize that pre-service teachers' study abroad experiences do not neatly fall into linear progression and involve recursive interactions between the main concepts of the model. We deem this to be a hybrid model because we incorporated key aspects of the original three models that we found to work well from our personal reflection process and added dimensions that we felt were missing. The researchers then reviewed and refined the process for administering the model in the pre-service teacher education program, for the purpose of supporting reflective practices by pre-service teachers who participated in the study abroad program. Of note, we intended the reflection process to be neutral and we deliberately tried not to lead the learners or emphasize a process of critical reflection. Rather, our intention was to engage learners and let them illustrate what was meaningful to them about their study abroad experience, and subsequently analyzed the data to determine the nature of their reflections. In essence, reflective writing was deemed as tool to capture their experiences.

The focus of this study is on the process of reflective practice upon re-entry and the phase of the research involving post-sojourn debriefing. In order to administer the reflections, one of the researchers and a research assistant met the study abroad participants in scheduled debriefing activities two months after their return home, where they conducted the post-sojourn reflection. In the first part of the process, the researchers began with a guided imagery activity to focus participants' minds on writing. Next, participants were given time to engage in structured writing in response, based on a step-by-step reflective process that was derived from our review of previous models of reflection (Author, 2018). The guided imagery activity and the researcher-developed model served as the faculty mediation for this reflection (Gelfuso, 2016). The pre-service teachers were then invited to orally debrief the content of their writing with another participant to bring thought to action. Those students who consented to use their reflective writing in the research study sent it to a central e-mail for the research project, demonstrating consent by specific action. Those who did not consent to participating in the research study sent their reflective writing to themselves.

### **Coding the Post-Sojourn Reflections**

To code the reflections, the researchers elected to utilize four types of reflective writing including *descriptive writing* (Type 1), *descriptive reflection* (Type 2), *dialogic reflection* (Type 3), and *critical reflection* (Type 4) (Hatton & Smith, 1995; Maarof, 2007). In developing these reflective writing types, Hatton & Smith (1995) addressed a gap in the literature related to specific descriptors for the analysis of reflection. Through a dialogic process of framework development (Hatton & Smith, 1995), a list of specific criteria from which to recognize and provide evidence of the different types of reflective writing was conceived. Descriptive writing (Type 1) was essentially identified as “not reflective” (Hatton & Smith, 1995, p. 48), but rather a

depiction of an event. Descriptive reflection (Type 2) builds on Type 1 with a descriptive element, but also includes reasons for actions (Hatton & Smith, 1995). Dialogic reflection (Type 3) “demonstrates a ‘stepping back’ from the events” (Hatton & Smith, 1995, p.48) in order to analyze potential multiple factors in situations (Hatton & Smith, 1995). Critical reflection takes a multi-perspective stance “influenced by multiple historical, and social-political contexts (Hatton & Smith, 1995, p. 49).

Maarof (2007), building on the work of Hatton and Smith (1995), added further illumination to Types 2, 3, and 4. According to Maarof, descriptive reflections (Type 2) are “based on some evaluation or judgement” (p. 209). Dialogic reflection (Type 3) involves a dialogue with the self or “thinking out loud on paper” (p. 209). Critical reflection accounts for broader historical and socio-political perspectives and also incorporates people’s ability to offer justifications for decisions.

In preparation for initial coding, we conducted a focused discussion to share interpretive understandings of the four types of reflection. This discussion lead to the development of key probes used in the coding process, which are summarized alongside examples of the results, in Table 1.

An iterative process of coding was used to determine the types of reflection that were offered by pre-service teachers in this study. Following the initial discussion to determine joint understanding of the reflective writing codes, each of us coded an individual reflection independently. We then came together for an in-depth discussion of the four types of reflection in relation to the individually coded example, to come to consensus as to what constitutes types 1, 2, 3, and 4 in written reflections.

The two research assistants then coded two more written reflections independently. This coding was followed by further discussion with the entire team to refine our understandings of types 1, 2, 3, 4. One member of the research team was unable to attend the discussion; however, later dialogue with a research assistant provided another credibility check to confirm the team's consensus about the coding of reflections.

Subsequently, the two research assistants independently coded the reflections from each year by hand and then met to compare and converge their interpretations. There were a few cases where assigning types proved difficult or warranted further discussion. These excerpts were then brought forward to the entire team for consensus building. The manual codes were transferred to NVivo. Once the data were entered, the results were compiled into an Excel spreadsheet for analysis. Data, spanning a three-year period and represented in the Excel spreadsheet, was subsequently reviewed to determine the overall representation of each type in the corpus of post-sojourn student reflections.

### **Results**

To revisit the purpose of the study: the researchers were interested in the nature of pre-service teachers' reflections in the post-sojourn phase of their international experience. In particular, we were interested in exploring the use of a hybrid model we developed for supporting students in program activities that included reflective writing. The aim of the study was to determine the degree to which student writing comprised critical reflection.

The results of the current study evidenced a range of responses. The majority of the written reflections by pre-service teachers in this study remained at the two descriptive types. Descriptive writing (Type 1) represented about 31.84% of the students' writing, descriptive reflection (Type 2) represented 48.71% of their writing, dialogic reflection (Type 3) typified

14.06% of the coded texts, and 0.8% of the coded texts consisted of critical reflection (Type 4). To clarify, the texts of all post-sojourn reflections contained descriptive writing and descriptive reflection; there were 29 students (out of 37) whose texts contained examples of dialogic reflection, but only four students whose texts contained examples of critical reflection. In order to represent the four different types of reflection, exemplars from students’ post-sojourn writing can also be found in Table 1.

Table 1

*Four types of post-sojourn reflective writing*

Types of Reflective Writing and Key Probes Used in Coding	Examples from Post-Sojourn Reflective Writing
<p>Type 1. <b>Descriptive Writing:</b> Reporting of events or literature, list making, describing “<i>what</i>” <b>31.84%</b></p>	<p>During my placement in [the country], I had trouble finding my way around. There had been a multitude of helpful locals who would approach me and ask whether I needed help as they saw me standing on the corner of a sidewalk attempting to decipher a map on my phone. Some directed me, and others walked me as they had been heading the same way. As I got to talking with these individuals, they asked whether I had been from Canada or the US due to my accent.</p> <p>A significant experience from my placement was the first day at school where I was introduced to teachers and taken to our classes where we jumped right into teaching. This took place in [city], at my placement school. I was there on my first day of my placement to begin my role as a teacher or assistant teacher in the English department. There were the other teachers in the English department who were preparing for their own days and classes while welcoming me into the school and my role.</p>
<p>Type 2. <b>Descriptive Reflection:</b> Reasons, rationale, judgment, evaluation, describing “<i>why</i>” in reference to self. <b>48.71%</b></p>	<p>It would have been nice to have a heads up while I was observing the lesson so I could pay more careful attention to what she said and how she said it, but I guess it was more of a challenge this way too. I came out of the lesson proud of myself for being able to get through it, but also slightly incredulous about what had happened. I later learned to constantly be prepared to teach at the drop of a hat, because they wouldn’t always tell me when and what we were teaching.</p> <p>I became a lot of relaxed as a teacher and no longer sought the perfect, silent classroom. During this experience I wish I had more knowledge of what to do when blank happens. But realistically, this is not something you can teach in a classroom at a University. I honestly believe that field experience is the most valuable as a pre-service teacher. It is not until a student tells you that a class is boring or there is a bullying situation in your class that you know how to respond professionally. I was challenged with new situations, but ultimately this is the best experience I could have had as a new teacher. Thinking back now, I feel I did as best I could with limited resources and support.</p>
<p>Type 3. <b>Dialogic Reflection:</b> Dialogue with self, thinking</p>	<p>One of the values that I had not realized that I had, surfaced during my TAB experience in the most unexpected way. Growing up in an [specific] culture,</p>

<p>aloud, evidence of <i>cultural humility</i>, describing “<i>why? but</i>” beyond self and referring to others.  <b>14.06%</b></p>	<p>my parents had always instilled in me the value of being respectful and grateful about what I have and to never ask for more or for favors. While I was in [country], it was interesting to see how similar my values were with [the country’s] culture and it was also interesting to see a clash in other individual’s values with [country’s] culture.</p> <p>Being able to communicate to many people across the world and in a different language was very important and made me become more aware of how lucky we are. I have also valued my ability to take a chance and try new, exciting, intimidating adventures more.</p>
<p>Type 4. <b>Critical Reflection:</b> reasons and justifications, accounts for broader historical/political/cultural events, describing <i>privilege</i>, <i>power</i>, <i>critical thinking</i>.  <b>0.8%</b></p>	<p>Not only that, but to have a real, authentic, conversation about racism requires a huge amount of trust and a supportive relationship.</p> <p>.</p> <p>I was talking to some of our language buddies about Nazism and Germany, and Canada and the Residential schools, and I made a comment about how strange it was that they were taking responsibility for things that happened so long ago, when the language buddy pointed out that I was doing the same when I was talking about the Residential Schools. I feel that I have a lot of knowledge on both Nazism and Residential Schools, but I wonder if I would encounter the same feelings and emotions if I had to teach about Residential Schools to Indigenous peoples as I did when I had to teach Nazism to Germans.</p>

We were particularly interested in further examining the nature of reflections that were deemed to be Dialogic Reflection and Critical Reflection, as these represent deeper levels of reflection. In the next step of the analysis, we coded the reflections in each of those two categories to delineate the content and to better understand what was common and unique about student reflections. Initially, we accessed the framework created by Jiang, Coffey, DeVillar, & Bryan (2010), who studied two cohorts of student teachers immersed in an international teaching experience. In the current study, results from independent coding by two members of the research team ascertained that although there were resemblances to the themes in the Jiang et al. framework, the data analysis produced many codes that did not naturally fit. Rather than forcing the data, we coded openly and then met to compare results and discuss discrepancies until consensus was reached. Through the discussion of the emerging codes, the definitions of the themes were also revised.

Each of the themes are described below with exemplars of Dialogic Reflection and Critical Reflection.

### **Dialogic Reflection**

The participants in this study demonstrated dialogic reflection in their reflective writing that related to comparative schooling awareness, valuing professional development, cultural responsiveness, emotional preparedness, their perceived role, and instructional engagement. Although the codes are represented as distinct themes, there were many connections drawn between the relative experiences of participants outlined in their reflections.

**Comparative schooling awareness.** This code was used when participants made comparisons between teaching, teaching styles, school systems, school-related activities in Canada and the host country. For example, one of the participants noted a conversation with a teacher in the school where she was placed, related to differences in school climate.

She spoke about the culture of family that exists within the school and the English department. When I explained the culture of workplace that is typically found in the West, she became perplexed and stated that people need to love each other and really care about their minds.

Another student teacher wrote a reflection about differences in school norms for student behaviour.

For instance, teachers would often go to class late after the bell rung, which I had difficulty adjusting to because in Canada teachers are usually welcoming students into the classroom. Students were also a lot closer with teachers and less formal, which again is not good or bad, just different from Canada.

Reflections that involved schooling comparisons also surfaced how important it is to be student-centred in teaching practice.

I learned a lot about how teaching is different in other countries, drastically so. The kids are used to one style of teaching, and it can be really hard for them to adapt to something different. It made me think about how it would feel to immigrate to Canada and be faced with our education system. For some kids, I think it would be terrifying to be in a classroom where you sometimes work in groups or get up out of your desks and move around. It was an eye-opening role reversal for me.

This latter reflection demonstrates the student teacher's capacity to move beyond her personal experience and to consider the contextual differences for learners who move between cultures and countries.

***Professional development.*** Several student teachers reflected about the value of the study abroad experience as a professional development activity that they could not replicate in their home environment. One student teacher reflected on gaining insight about links between theory and practice. "Although the education program talks about roles and provide readings of teacher impact in society and how we contribute to our communities. I didn't personally understand or connect how that felt till this experience took place." The professional development opportunity helped student teachers to gain increased competence and confidence in their abilities as a teacher. "As a result of this experience— and the subsequent classes I taught alone— I have learned that I actually feel quite comfortable in front of students and I now have a greater confidence in my teaching abilities." One participant knew intuitively that the professional development of study abroad was important, but honestly reflected that she had not yet made the connections to future teaching practice. Through some of the experiences that were deemed more

personally challenging, reflections were focused on what to do and what not to do in their future roles as teachers.

***Emotional preparedness.*** Beyond the content of what is learned through study abroad experience, it is important to recognize that emotional learning is often the road to gaining insights and making meaning of the experience. This code includes preparedness as a teacher while abroad, but also generally to reflections about their emotional state of being or learning to cope with cultural or classroom differences. The anticipation of teaching in another country triggered emotions. As one participant revealed, “To be honest, I was extremely nervous and hesitant because this was the first time in my life that I left the comfort of my home in [name of city] to live in a completely different environment”. Another student was able to show how she turned her own sense of discomfort into increasing empathy for her students. “I have seen how a high achieving and highly motivated student, like myself, can become overwhelmed and defeated due to exterior circumstances... When a student is struggling, I hope they’d open up to me about where their difficulty is coming from. But, even if they don’t, I have a better understanding of how circumstance can affect learning. This is an important reminder not to assume anything about my students, and to always be empathetic to how they might be dealing with school and life in general.”

***Cultural responsiveness.*** The majority of the dialogic reflections by the pre-service teachers in this study related to gaining cultural awareness and responsiveness. The reflections about cultural responsiveness contained examples related to an examination of privilege, ethnocentrism, shifting worldview, and transformation of personal learning to professional learning. For example, one participant recognized that it was her financial stability and privilege that allowed her to embark on the study abroad experience. “...[I]t is important to touch on this

note because it allowed me the freedom to explore and discover my new setting that I may not have had otherwise.” One of the student teachers reflected on how the study abroad experience raised the importance of being open to diversity.

Handling a class of diverse cultures requires moving away from ethnocentric viewpoints, and instead adopting behaviors and values that are characterized by awareness, compassion, openness and non-judgemental viewpoints, no matter how many differences there are between any culture and my own.

Several of the student teachers noted aspects of what they had learned about themselves through the exposure to cultural differences. “It really opened my eyes to my misconception of my North American culture being dominant. It was a bias that I had not perceived, and something that I may not have ever become aware of without this experience and involvement with this program.” As a result, the student teachers reflected about the implications for ways that they could be more culturally-responsive to students in their future role as a teacher.

***Perceived role.*** The theme of perceived role related to how participants in the study abroad experience described their role as a student teacher, as an ambassador for their country. The reflections were indicative of how participants relayed their immediate role and identity as a teacher. For some participants, this was an unsettling experience.

I became less confident in what I was teaching and when the time finally came for me to teach the lesson, I found that I felt beyond unprepared and under qualified to approach the topic that was not my history but the direct history of most of the student within the classroom.

Other participants found that their experience helped them to clarify and test boundaries with students. Several of the student teacher reflections pivoted around a stance of expert/non-expert

in the classroom and “getting it right”. For example, one participant noted, “it was an experience that I appreciated because it made me look at my teaching style and authority a lot closer.” This reflection was echoed by another participant, who emphasized, “...it helped deepen and further my purpose within the classroom as someone who isn’t just an authority figure.”

***Instructional engagement.*** Reflections were coded as instructional engagement when there was mention of teaching practices that participants encountered and reflected upon. For example, one participant reflected about the value of patience for working with diverse learners. “Sometimes you won’t entirely understand something, but by making the effort to engage – it was possible to overcome any obstacle to understanding. This affirmation has huge implications for the reality of teaching students from diverse backgrounds.” Several student teachers emphasized relationship building as a way to increase student engagement.

Carefully asking students questions about any topic, as well as observing their behaviors, and what they like to do in class became an important way for me to establish a closer relationship with the learners. I see this experience as a reminder of the power in knowing your students, especially in what it does in terms of engagement and trust.

Another student teacher also emphasized the power of relationships with students for building connection and for creating a climate that encourages engagement with learning.

Connection played a big role on my trip, and it plays a big role in my personal life, and I intend to have it play a big role in my teaching career. Building relationships and connecting with my students is something that will be able to make me a better facilitator to their learning and will allow me to build a child entered learning environment, in which students feel safe, supported and valued as individuals.

Several of the participants noted what they learned about a relational approach to teaching. There were critical moments such as the following: “It was in this moment that I truly understood how important it is to me that my students come into a classroom where they can be certain they are valued and respected.”

These examples of excerpts from reflective writing illustrate how participants in the study abroad experience reflected about their student teaching experience, moving beyond description to demonstrate cultural humility. Student teachers were able to move beyond their personal experience to question the meaning of that experience and the implications for their current and future roles as teachers.

### **Critical Reflection**

The student teacher reflections that were coded as forms of critical reflection represented the lowest number of reflections in this student sample. Further analysis revealed that one of the codes was indicative of Comparative Schooling Awareness and three of the codes were centred in the theme of Cultural Responsiveness. To recap, students made comparisons between their home and host countries in terms of teaching, teaching styles, and social systems and school-related activities. In the powerful quote listed in Table 1, a student teacher reflects about her understanding of multiple forms of historical oppression and her questioning her role in teaching about the experiences of other people who have been marginalized in society through the residential school system and genocide.

Through the experience of immersion in an international teaching experience, some of the student teachers were able to critically reflect about how such experiences increased their cultural responsiveness. One student teacher critically reflected about the ethnocentrism

generally found in Western countries and the neglect of important perspectives of countries around the world.

Furthermore, I learned that in North America we are in a bubble. When I spoke to many friends back home that hadn't heard anything about the situation occurring in (country). However, if this was occurring in the United States or Canada, it would probably be international news, and other countries would be informed on what was going on in North America. It's upsetting that our region can often be so blind to extreme situations happening elsewhere.

Another student demonstrated critical thinking about the role of teachers for adapting to students, versus expecting them to fit into existing systems.

[I]t's important to try and help new comers feel at home, so if I ever had a [country's] student in my classroom who wasn't used to my way of doing things, I think I would make a more conscious effort now to change the way I run my class to fit their needs, rather than expecting my students to adapt to me. Just as I was powerless to the [country's] education system, my students would be powerless in my classroom if I don't listen to them. I want to listen and respond to my kids.

This example illustrates how the pre-service teachers constructed cultural responsiveness as including their capacity to identify the multidimensional needs of students and to be flexible and adaptable. Their critical reflections illustrate a process of challenging their own worldviews and turning their personal learning into critical thinking about the implications for their professional learning – in a process of developing cultural humility. The examples of critical reflection suggest that these student teachers were able to consider broader societal influences and the implications for how they might need to adjust their approaches to teaching and learning.

### Discussion

Study abroad programs have been identified as a key resource for promoting cross-cultural and international understanding within broader efforts to internationalize teacher education programs (Covert, 2014; Francis, 2015; Johnson & Battalio, 2008; Rahatzad, Dockrill, Sharma, & Phillion, 2016). However, through contact with contrasting cultures in other countries, individuals presumably develop new forms of knowledge and cross-cultural skills that have the potential to inform their future roles as teachers and to facilitate cross-cultural forms of knowledge in their students (Devillar & Jiang, 2012). Rather than relying on trial and error practices, there is a growing body of evidence suggesting that reflective practice is a form of learning that can be leveraged to maximize learning in relation to study abroad experiences.

Many teacher education programs have invested resources in pre-departure training and reflection about culture *prior to* beginning an international experience and *while* studying abroad. Although these are important points in time to encourage student reflection, less attention has been paid to the importance of reflective practice *after* an international experience, when students return home. Contemporaneously, as students face the demands of adjusting to life back in their home country, demands that may include “exploring any reentry difficulties they may encounter” (Wiekliwicz & Turkowski, 2010, p. 649), there are important opportunities for supporting students to consolidate and to integrate their learning into their career pathways (Author, 2013; Young, 2014). However, there are fewer resources available to guide reflective practices and to encourage students to deepen their understandings. For pre-service teachers, there are opportunities to strengthen their learning by investing in a continuum of instruction that begins pre-departure, extends during and follows up with activities to

strengthen reflective practice when they return home. Rather than considering each phase as distinct, it is important to consider that preparation activities with pre-service teachers prior to departure sets the stage for engagement at later stages of the study abroad experience. As noted earlier, careful and intentional planning is needed to influence both the process and outcomes of study abroad experiences for all students, including pre-service teachers.

A key question that program personnel and funders pose in relation to study abroad programming centers on: What did they learn? The results of this study underscore that learning is not uniform and there will be variation in the reflections made by pre-service teachers. As the exemplars demonstrate, some pre-service teachers remained more focused on the events, providing more superficial descriptions that occurred during their study abroad experience. Other pre-service teachers were able to personalize those events and reflect about the implications for themselves and for future action. Exemplars in the results also demonstrate that pre-service teachers were able to show indicators of cultural humility (Deardorff & Arasaratnam-Smith, 2017) in which they maintained a stance of curiosity about other people and began reflecting dialogically about the influences of culture on other people for teaching and learning practices. In the responses that reflected deeper levels of critical thinking, pre-service teachers were able to consider contextual influences and articulate the influences of power, place, and privilege for peoples' experiences—their own experience and the experience of other people. The dialogic and critical reflections illustrated that only a few pre-service teachers were engaged about exploring the socio-political and historical contexts of teaching and learning (Smolcic & Katunich, 2017). For several students, critical consciousness was evident in their reflections about privilege and the possible influences that their life contexts may have in shaping their personal worldviews. This perspective-taking was carried over into the implications for teaching

practices and professional identity as a teacher. These examples underscore the emphasis not only on *what* students learn, but the *process* of tapping into student learning.

The reflective practice exercise that was used in this study offered a two-step process. The data analyzed was based on individual writing and analysis according to the four levels of reflection identified in our model. We want to emphasize that the reflections of students whose writing was descriptive writing or descriptive reflection are not any less valuable than the reflections of students who demonstrated a greater degree of dialogical or critical thinking. This is a key point as critical reflection tends to be idealized in the literature on reflective writing. It is important to consider that cross-cultural learning is a developmental process—a continuum that builds on acquiring cross-cultural competence related to awareness, perspective, and knowledge (McAllister, Whiteford, Hill, Thomas & Fitzgerald, 2006). Learners will enter study abroad programs at different points on this continuum, with varied levels of life experience, maturity, openness, cultural sensitivity, cultural humility, proficiencies, and personal resources from which to make meaning of their study abroad experiences and to expand their worldviews. Although some students may maintain their original level of reflection over time, it is entirely possible that, over time and with additional life experiences, their reflections may shift and become more dialogic or critical. However, it is unlikely that exposure to another culture is sufficient to awaken critical consciousness in students. Without intentional intervention and instruction from faculty members, exposure to another culture and particularly short-term study abroad experiences, will most likely result in superficial and descriptive reflections.

As part of program planning for study abroad, members of the research team offered input as to how to facilitate the reflective writing process and what activities might help students to deepen their reflections. We designed and tested The Cross-Cultural Reflective Model

(Author, 2018), as part of a faculty-mediated process. In doing so, we want to emphasize the importance of faculty testing out the materials that they ask their students to use, in order to better appreciate the nuances of the content and how they may need to adjust learning activities for the intended student audience. Additionally, we encourage faculty to find creative ways to facilitate faculty-mediated experiences related to reflective writing. For example, an important step in the learning process, as part of the post-sojourn experiences of pre-service teachers, involved sharing and discussion of the writing, between pairs. We introduced this step to support peer-learning and to help encourage students to continue to expand their reflections. Sharing reflections with others also provides further opportunities to reflect on biases and assumptions (Kratzke & Bertolo, 2013) — some that may not have previously been realized prior to or during their study abroad experience. Further research could address the ways that additional feedback or forms of reflective practice might be used to deepen critical reflection. Borrowing from other program designs focused on preparing sojourners for returning home, group discussion may be a valuable tool to encourage learning between students in the post-sojourn phase of study abroad (Author, 2016). Peers can be powerful role models to demonstrate knowledge and skills and help other pre-service teachers to stretch their learning. The sharing of peer experiences and facilitated group discussion could be designed to encourage the surfacing of new perspectives and more critical thinking about examples that were outlined in the reflective writing process. A facilitated process could also be used in a group context to further explore the implications for teacher education and practice, encouraging pre-service students to deepen their learning and generate possibilities for future applications.

Another possibility is the use of peer role models who have previously embarked on pre-service study abroad programs. As part of student orientation at the time of pre-departure, role

models might detail their journeys of discovery and illustrate what helped them to move beyond descriptive learning and enter into critical reflection. This may encourage others to “take the plunge” and enter into unfamiliar territory – both geographically and introspectively – to explore their presuppositions and to encourage critical consciousness as teachers. With consent, reflections from prior pre-service teachers may be used to illustrate the reflection process and offer current students the opportunity to read and analyze the content. Seeing examples and recognizing the differences between descriptive reflection and the deeper learning involved in dialogic and critical reflection, may help pre-service teachers to better understand possibilities for their personal learning journey.

Given the widespread use of reflective practices in educational programs such as study abroad, organizers of such programs for pre-service teachers also need to critically evaluate their approaches. Beyond the positive aspects for teaching and learning suggested above, it is also important to consider some limitations to engaging in written reflection. These considerations may include: students worrying about maintaining confidentiality of experiences (MacIntosh, 1998; Pee, Woodman, Fry, & Davenport, 2002); potential psychological damage in revealing traumatic experiences (MacIntosh, 1998); fear of retribution in acknowledging bad practice (MacIntosh, 1998; Pee et al., 2002); and, students writing what they think others want to hear (Hannigan, 2001; MacIntosh, 1998; Pee et al., 2002). Students will bring varying background experiences and some students may not have the ability to reflect deeply (MacIntosh, 1998; Pee et al., 2002) or be able to determine whether or not deep reflection has actually taken place (Pee et al., 2002). It is important to remain open to a broad range of student perspectives and to be prepared to work with learners at the place where they enter into any reflective practice exercise, including written reflection. At the same time, instructors who create a safe learning environment

can offer encouragement to students, through feedback, probes, and provocative questions, to challenge pre-service teachers to engage more deeply with their individual and group learning during study abroad programs. This requires a commitment of resources to pre-service programs for instructional personnel who are, themselves, prepared with knowledge and skills for the nature of such experiential learning.

We also wish to emphasize the role of the facilitator for introducing reflective writing as an experiential learning exercise. Facilitators need to be well-prepared to orient students to any debriefing exercises, skilled at pacing the reflective process, and comfortable providing debriefing of the learning (Author, 2002). Facilitators also need to be skilled at debriefing negative experiences or dynamics between members of a group debriefing process. It is not expected that all learning will be positive. For that reason, guiding students to reflect on challenges and experiences that were less than positive may serve to uncover personal meaning attributed to these experiences. Within this space of reflection, there resides potential to illuminate possibilities for learning and future practice as a teacher.

### **Conclusion**

One of the strengths of this study was investigating a reflective process that was guided by the development of a hybrid model of reflection. To recap, the researchers tested three different models of reflection (Gibbs, 1998; Johns, 2010; Rolfe, et al. 2001) and created a hybrid model that captured key aspects of the reflection process. The resulting Cross-Cultural Reflective Model for Post-Sojourn Debriefing (Author, 2018) offers a “best of practice” example that requires further testing and refinement. However, we want to acknowledge that we may have received deeper reflections from more students with a different design and possibly one that included more explicit faculty-mediation (Gelfuso, 2016; Gelfuso & Dennis, 2014). In future

research, we recommend testing more intentional instruction regarding reflection to better understand the development of critical consciousness as emerging teachers. Student learners, including pre-service teachers, are going to enter study abroad programs at different stages of cross-cultural awareness, knowledge, and skills; there are opportunities for instructors to encourage deeper levels of reflection, regardless of their point of entry.

It would also be beneficial to test the model and reflective process with greater numbers of students. Additionally, the potential influences of prior travel and international experience on students' cross-cultural learning could be incorporated into the design of future research. It is also important to consider that pre-service teachers' experiences in cross-cultural learning may be influenced by cultural constructions of gender, race, social class, and/or the intersections of their identities. Exploration of personal worldview may be heightened when faced with contrasting information and interpersonal reactions during cross-cultural encounters that trigger a sense of disequilibrium. As this study illustrates, it is important to ground post-sojourn debriefing and reflective practice in the available literature and test new possibilities for enhancing the content and process of reflection by pre-service teachers.

Programming that is directed at the re-entry stage of sojourning can be informed by the available literature. Additionally, we encourage the sharing of best practices that promote ways to support students to make the most of their international learning experiences and transfer that learning to practices at home (Author, 2003). Last, we encourage educators and researchers to take a more holistic view of study abroad programming to be more inclusive of the longer-term implications for learning. The learning process for such experiences for pre-service teachers can begin prior to leaving home, can be supported while pre-service teachers are sojourns in another country, and debriefed when they return home. The results from the current study suggest that

reflective writing is a useful approach that can capture pre-service teachers' experiences post-sojourn in ways to deepen their learning in preparation for future professional roles. Researchers are also encouraged to consider longitudinal designs for research about reflective practice.

Beyond short-term reflection following a study abroad program for pre-service teachers, research could be designed to follow pre-service teachers through to their practice contexts. It may be that when pre-service teachers graduate and are immersed in their new roles as teachers, that they "bring home" important applications of their cross-cultural experiences.

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