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SELF-AUTHORSHIP AND THE EFFECTS OF REVERSE CULTURE SHOCK IN POST-STUDY ABROAD U.S. COLLEGE STUDENTS: STRANGERS IN THEIR OWN LAND

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By

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation and journey to my family by birth and my family by choice. My children and their spouses—David, Jennaca, Andrew, Melissa, Colton, and Alisabeth who self-author their own lives with wisdom and dignity—kept me on track. More than once, they reminded me that "Cottons don't quit" when I wanted to find another path. The stories of their travel experiences pressed me to understand the study abroad and post-study experience more deeply. My husband, Guy, stood by me unwaveringly as I followed my dream in the most challenging academic venture of my life. My mother, Patricia, encouraged me to get my doctorate for 40 years and was a huge cheerleader. My Gotelli and Cotton family—brothers, sisters, nephews, nieces, and cousins—supported my every step in countless ways. My family by choice—Don and Peggy—gave up countless weekly dinners so I could attend class, study, and write. "The Friends"—Kim and Louise—unconditionally loved me through chasing my dreams since the day we met at Pacific 47 years ago. Each one patiently listened to me lament about the ups and downs of this journey.

Finally, I dedicate this dissertation to two special men—my late father Alvin Joseph and my new grandson Asher Joseph. My dad taught me to love and work hard, lead by example, and have fun along the way. Asher, I pray you and all my future grandchildren find your own clarity in life. I hope I made you proud.

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Finally, thank you to my participants, Avery and Bryce. Your insight and perspective made writing this dissertation a joy. I pray you continue to follow your heart, see the best in life, and reach for your dreams.

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Abstract

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Traditionally, in our globally diverse and intertwined society, study abroad has served as a valuable, enriching, and life-changing aspect of college and university offerings and opportunities for students. Today, the lives of post-study abroad students will be defined by the ways they make sense of unexpected major events surrounding the history-changing COVID-19 pandemic and the contemporary protests against racism and social injustice. A large body of research exists on study abroad, culture shock, self-authorship, provocative moments, cross-cultural reentry, and reverse culture shock. A lack of research exists on what ways post-study abroad U.S. students make meaning of their experiences in emerging self-authorship, and research on post-study abroad students and the COVID-19 pandemic is rare. The overarching purpose of this exploratory inquiry was to describe in what ways, if any, that the post-study abroad experience facilitates the development of emerging self-authorship of U.S. college students. Self-authorship provided the theoretical framework for this inquiry. Clarke and Braun's reflexive thematic analysis was used to analyze the interviews and journals of two U.S. post-study abroad college students. The findings revealed that the post-study abroad experience facilitated the development of emerging self-authorship of U.S. college students through the themes of pain, partnerships, and perspective, with grief layered among each of these themes. The students eventually accepted their realities of post-study abroad, found meaning, and showed

signs of nudging ahead in emerging self-authorship. The implications from this inquiry provided

ways for stakeholders to support students through their post-study abroad experiences and

support emerging self-authorship.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

"There is no foreign land; it is the traveller only who is foreign, and now and again, by a flash of recollection, lights up the contrasts of the earth."
– Robert Louis Stevenson

Emerging self-authorship is a season in the life of young adults where they stand on the precipice between depending on long-held traditional voices of authority and embracing their destiny to follow the inner voice of their own heart. This critical time is not without cognitive, emotional, and social challenges. Young adults must hold the tension between equilibrium and disequilibrium while they weather the storm of provocative, meaningful, and even cathartic moments as they move toward emerging self-authorship.

In their first two years of college, the two young adults who were respondents in this exploratory inquiry experienced many such moments. To protect the confidentiality of participants and the university, the dual crises and traumas my participants experienced were not described here. However, it is worth noting that the experiences were in the local, state, and national news and covered for several weeks. On some level, my participants were affected by being abruptly sent home from study abroad mid-semester in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the contemporary protests against racism and social injustice, as well as countless other yet unspoken moments of challenge. Life, as they knew it, shifted and changed all around them. This group of post-study abroad students had a unique perspective on life as they navigated their seasons of emerging self-authorship. Today, the lives of post-study abroad students will be defined by the ways they make sense of unexpected major events surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic and contemporary protests against racism and social injustice.

This inquiry brought together the journey of emerging self-authorship and those experiences students had upon returning home from studying abroad. I hoped to give voice to the ways this unique group of students made meaning of experiences they saw as critical after studying abroad and how they saw themselves, others, and the world through their emerging self-authorship journey. Capturing the intersection of self-authorship and post-study abroad at this point in history will be important for future study abroad students, and those who influence their lives, to understand. To not capture this moment may cause important conversations and reflections by these young adults to be lost in the rush of life.

To be eligible for this study, participants needed to be enrolled at University of the West Coast (a pseudonym), have completed their study abroad experience during the 2019–2020 academic year, and be between 18 years of age and 24 years of age. Data collected for this inquiry were bounded by the 2019–2020 and 2020–2021 academic years during which University of the West Coast students were enrolled.

Traditionally, in our globally diverse and intertwined society, study abroad has served as a valuable, enriching, and life-changing aspect of college and university offerings and opportunities for students. An increasing number of U.S. college students elect to study abroad, making study abroad an important part of the college experience (Institute of International Education, 2019). Braskamp et al. (2009) referred to the value-added attractiveness of study abroad programs for higher education institutions. Study abroad experiences enriched the academic, behavioral, and cultural lives of college students on many levels (Cubillos & Ilvento, 2013; Dwyer, 2004; Ingraham & Peterson, 2004; King & Baxter Magolda, 2005; Paige et al., 2009; Rexeisen & Al-Khatib, 2009).

University of the West Coast program directors, faculty-in-residence, and limited local faculty (approved by academic deans at the home campus) taught all study abroad courses at the international campuses. As per The Forum on Education Abroad (2018), University of the West Coast met or exceeded Quality Improvement Program (QUIP) standards following an objective, independent review of all aspects of the university study abroad programs. As with study abroad students all over the world, these University of the West Coast students were sent home mid-semester of spring 2020 in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Within a few weeks, all University of the West Coast students were given mere days to move out of on-campus housing and transition to online/remote learning for the remainder of the spring 2020 semester. After a thorough examination of the current travel restrictions and quarantine requirements, all University of the West Coast undergraduate fall 2020 semester classes were delivered through online/remote instruction. All international programs for the fall 2020 semester were suspended. The university hoped to open housing for a very limited number of students who had a compelling hardship and needed to live on campus.

Overview of the Inquiry Dissertation

This inquiry dissertation is presented in five chapters. Chapter 1 offers an introduction to the research inquiry. Chapter 2 contains a review of the literature related to the topics of the inquiry. Chapter 3 specifies the methodology for the inquiry. Chapter 4 reiterates the research questions and offers findings, including the backstory and themes I generated from the collected data. Chapter 5 focuses on discussion of the inquiry. Together, these chapters capture in what ways, if any, the post-study abroad experience facilitated the development of emerging self-authorship of U.S. college students through representations of those experiences. The following section begins with an introduction to Chapter 1 of this five-chapter inquiry dissertation.

Overview of Chapter 1

Chapter 1 lays the groundwork for this inquiry. Beginning with an overview, Chapter 1 also gives important terms and details, the statement of the problem, the purpose, the research questions, and the significance of the inquiry. The chapter concludes with the summary of Chapter 1. The next section specifies important terms and details for the inquiry.

Important Terms and Details for the Inquiry

This section defines important terms and details regarding this inquiry, including explanations of study abroad; theoretical positions of two highly regarded self-authorship experts; in what ways reverse culture shock, equilibrium, and disequilibrium related to provocative moments which propelled students forward in self-authorship; and how meaning making helped students make sense of experiences.

Study abroad consisted of "a structured learning experience in which the student participants are required to live and learn in another country" (Goode, 2008, p. 150). The Forum on Education Abroad (2018) characterized study abroad as "off-campus study that takes place outside the country where the student's home institution is located … [and] excludes the pursuit of a full academic degree at a foreign institution" (S section, para. 12). Sobania and Braskamp (2009) identified study abroad as study away, which included a myriad of experiences students faced in international learning.

To properly frame this inquiry, it was appropriate to research the work of two experts recognized for their efforts in self-authorship—Robert Kegan and Marcia B. Baxter Magolda. Each contributed to the developmental theory of how young adults self-author. In his theory of adult development, former Harvard psychologist Robert Kegan (1994) portrayed self-authorship as:

an ideology, an internal identity, a *self-authorship* that can coordinate, integrate, act upon, or invent values, beliefs, convictions, generalizations, ideals, abstractions, interpersonal loyalties, and intrapersonal states. It is no longer *authored by* them, it *authors them* and thereby achieves a personal authority. (p. 185, italics in original)

This developmental theory incorporated three dimensions: primarily relying on external influences, relying on both internal and external influences, and primarily relying on internal influences (Kegan, 1994).

Miami University Ohio Distinguished Professor Emerita, Marcia B. Baxter Magolda (2004), researched the development of adults over the course of more than twenty years and described self-authorship as "the capacity to internally define their own beliefs, identity, and relationships" (p. xvi). Self-authorship provided a natural framework for identifying in what ways students made sense of their post-study abroad experiences. To construct a self-authored system, the internal voice of individuals must be present and interrelated in all three of the developmental dimensions: cognitive (epistemological), intrapersonal, and interpersonal (Kegan, 1994; Magolda, 2008). Students may or may not be aware of this relationship (Pizzolato et al., 2012). Having an internal orientation was critical for students to meet 21st century skill goals (Magolda, 2004).

During study abroad, students may have had a time of culture shock while adjusting to new and varied environments (Brown & Holloway, 2008). Oberg (1960) wrote that culture shock is caused "by the anxiety that results from losing all our familiar signs and symbols of social intercourse" (p. 177). Upon returning home from study abroad, some students experienced a kind of reverse culture shock (Hadis, 2005). In early research on reverse culture shock, Uehara (1986) defined reentry culture shock "as psychosocial difficulties (sometimes associated with physical problems) that a returnee experiences in the initial stage of the adjustment process at home after having lived abroad for some time" (p. 416). Students went

through "a number of 'provocative moments' in which they intentionally moved outside their comfort zones and explore new relationships, contexts, values, and perspectives that concomitantly stimulate growth and development" (Engberg & Jourian, 2015, p. 2).

Equilibrium encompassed "a state of adjustment between opposing or divergent influences or elements" (Merriam-Webster, 2020). Disequilibrium involved "loss or lack of equilibrium" (Merriam-Webster, 2020). Pizzolato (2006) framed self-authorship in epistemological terms for "orienting oneself toward provocative and uncomfortably disequilibriating situations in which the person recognizes (a) the contextual nature of knowledge and (b) balances this understanding with the development of his or her own internally defined goals and sense of self" (p. 32). Provocative moments propelled students forward in emerging self-authorship (Barber & King, 2014; Engberg & Jourian, 2015; Pizzolato, 2006). When support accompanied the adversity in provocative moments, students grew in emerging self-authorship (Baxter Magolda & King, 2007).

Meaning making became the vehicle for making sense of experiences. Kegan (1982) summed up meaning making as "no feeling, no experience, no thought, no perception, independent of a meaning-making context in which it *becomes* a feeling, an experience, a thought, a perception, because we *are* the meaning-making context" (p. 11, italics in original). These experiences prompted students to withdraw from dependence on authorities and engage in meaning making through emerging self-authorship (Magolda et al., 2012).

The important terms and details of this inquiry included explanations of study abroad; theoretical positions of two well-respected experts in self-authorship; culture shock, how reverse culture shock, equilibrium, and disequilibrium connected to provocative moments by propelling

students toward emerging self-authorship; and the ways meaning making supported students in making sense of experiences. The next section builds the case for the statement of the problem.

Statement of the Problem

In the past, study abroad served as a valuable, enriching, and life-changing aspect of college and university offerings and opportunities for students. Today, the lives of post-study abroad students will be defined by the ways they make sense of unexpected major events surrounding the history-changing COVID-19 pandemic and the contemporary protests against racism and social injustice. As students returned to their home country and adjusted to life at home, different themes emerged for making meaning and explaining the feelings and expectations students experienced; these themes formed the basis for the statement of the problem in this inquiry. When individuals returned home, some went through a time of socio-cultural readjustments from the foreign culture to their home culture (Adler, 1981; Sussman, 2002). This reentry transition presented itself as a distinct process (Butcher, 2002; Pitts, 2016). Reentry was characterized by equilibrium and disequilibrium (Barber et al., 2013).

Some students experienced reverse culture shock during reentry (Brown & Holloway, 2008). According to Gaw (2000), reverse culture shock involved "the process of readjusting, reacculturating, and reassimilating into one's own home culture after living in a different culture for a significant period of time" (p. 83). Growing evidence indicated the effects of reverse culture shock posed problems for some individuals upon returning home (Doyle, 2009; Gaw, 2000; Maultsby & Stutts, 2019; Sussman, 2002).

Ignelzi (2000) explained meaning making as "the process of how individuals make sense of knowledge, experience, relationships, and the self" (p. 5). Bringing students through the meaning making process may expedite their development epistemologically (Pizzolato et al.,

2012). When individuals analyzed and adopted expectations, theories, or notions of their own, they self-authored. Internal, rather than external, sources guided their meaning making. This was where enduring identity was constructed (Ignelzi, 2000). Taylor (2008) stressed that "when young adults reach the internally defined developmental point along their journey, they will likely have spent years questioning, exploring, reconciling, and clarifying who they are, how they know, and what types of relationships they want to have" (p. 231). Intentional reflection helped students make meaning of experiences abroad (Jones et al., 2012; Wielkiewicz & Turkowski, 2010).

Magolda et al. (2012) noted the developmental changes that occurred between year one and year two of college in meaning making structures "demonstrate[d] a gradual decrease in authority dependence over the first college year" (p. 431). Over two-thirds of all University of the West Coast undergraduate students study abroad during year two of college, thus providing an ideal time frame to understand the ways emerging self-authorship and post-study abroad intersect.

A large body of fundamental research exists on the attractiveness and benefits of study abroad (Engberg, 2013; Engberg & Jourian, 2015), study abroad and culture shock (Engberg & Jourian, 2015), self-authorship (Barber & King, 2014; Baxter Magolda & King, 2012; Engberg, 2013; Engberg & Jourian, 2015; King et al., 2009; Magolda, 2008), self-authorship transitions and provocative moments in study abroad (Arthur, 2003; Engberg & Jourian, 2015; Engberg et al., 2016; Pizzolato, 2005), cross-cultural reentry (Gray & Savicki, 2015), and post-study abroad reverse culture shock (Gaw, 2000; Gray & Savicki, 2015).

A lack of research exists on the ways post-study abroad students make meaning of their experiences (Kortegast & Boisfontaine, 2015). To date, research on post-study abroad students

and the COVID-19 pandemic is almost non-existent. In one inquiry, Fanari and Segrin (2021) studied 133 students who were sent home abruptly from study abroad in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Since this abrupt departure occurred at such an important transformational juncture in the development of these students, reentry affected their mental health more severely. More importantly, a gap in extant research persisted in the ways post-study abroad experiences facilitated the development of emerging self-authorship in key common milestones and the ways these key common milestones represented their time during their first-year post-study abroad in a pandemic.

Meaning making of experiences abroad posed a challenge to post-study students struggling to adjust to life back in their home country during the COVID-19 pandemic. In turn, describing post-study abroad experiences may facilitate understanding of emerging self-authorship, and this understanding pressed toward the purpose of this inquiry.

Purpose of the Inquiry

The overarching purpose of this inquiry was to describe in what ways, if any, the post-study abroad experience facilitated the development of emerging self-authorship of U.S. college students in their first-year post-study abroad. This inquiry explored five aspects of self-authorship.

The first aspect of this inquiry identified emerging self-authorship, which provided the theoretical framework for this inquiry (Magolda, 2004). The three elements of the self-authorship developmental theory comprised essential aspects of important structures of meaning making for college students: "trusting the internal voice, building an internal foundation, and securing internal commitments" (Magolda, 2008, p. 281).

The second aspect of this inquiry examined the ways key common milestones for college students in their first-year post-study abroad may be turning points in their experiences. Key common milestones equated to the provocative and unexpected experiences college students encountered with equilibrium and disequilibrium, which propelled them to progress in self-authorship (Barber et al., 2013).

The third aspect of this inquiry explored in what ways, if any, key common milestones for college students in their first-year post-study abroad connected to emerging self-authorship and were visible in certain identifiable key features in experiences. Magolda (2009) contended that three experiences, or key common milestones, combined at any phase to prompt emerging self-authorship: pain, partnerships, and perspective. Pain manifested through cognitive dissonance or some other uncomfortable experience that caused a reexamination of life or beliefs. Partnerships with "good partners (or internal support) … [aided individuals in] … thinking through their experiences" (Magolda, 2009, p. 216). Perspective was achieved through such reexamination.

The fourth aspect of this inquiry unpacked in what ways, if any, emerging self-authorship supported U.S. college students in making sense of unexpected major events. These events went beyond simple disruptions in the lives of post-study abroad students. An example of an unexpected major event would be abruptly returning home from studying abroad as a result of "troubling situations overseas, including health scares, natural disasters, and civil strife" (Fischer, 2009, para. 4). Today, the lives of study abroad students will be defined by the ways they made sense of unexpected major events surrounding the history-changing COVID-19 pandemic and contemporary protests against racism and social injustice. Meaning making of students was shaped by the ways they responded to experiences by:

increasing awareness, understanding, and openness to diversity … [;] exploring and establishing a basis for beliefs, choices, action … [;] developing a sense of identity to guide choices … [; and] awareness of and openness to responsibility for own learning. (King et al., 2009, p. 112)

The fifth aspect of this inquiry delved into the objects, if any, that gave voice to and represented emergent self-authorship for post-study abroad college students. For example, representative objects, which could be considered artifacts, could be analyzed and contrasted with answers to semi-structured interview questions and journal prompts (Patton, 2015).

The five aspects of this inquiry included emerging self-authorship, in what ways key common milestones could be turning points representing provocative moments in experiences, in what ways key common milestones may have linked to emerging self-authorship and manifested in certain identifiable key features in experiences, in what ways emerging self-authorship may have supported U.S. college students in making sense of unexpected major events, and in what ways representative objects gave voice to and represented emergent self-authorship in U.S. college students during their first-year post-study abroad. The five aspects connect to the following five research questions which focus this inquiry.

Research Questions

Five research questions drove and shaped this inquiry (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016):

1. In what ways, if any, does the post-study abroad experience facilitate the development of emerging self-authorship of U.S. college students?

    a) What are key common milestones for U.S. college students in their first-year post-study abroad?

    b) In what ways, if any, do key common milestones for U.S. college students connect to emerging self-authorship in their first-year post-study abroad?

    c) In what ways, if any, does emerging self-authorship support U.S. college students in making sense of unexpected major events in their first-year post-study abroad?

d) What objects, if any, give voice to and represent emerging self-authorship for U.S. college students in their first-year post-study abroad?

Research Question 1 is the primary, overarching research question my inquiry intends to answer. As secondary research questions, Research Questions a, b, c, and d are derived from Research Question 1 and serve as follow-up questions to probe for more specific information. Each question pointed to the next. The five research questions provided focus for the most critical factors in the inquiry. The research questions led to the significance of the inquiry.

Significance of the Inquiry

The significance of this inquiry was the identification of key common milestones linked to emerging self-authorship and in what ways U.S. college students made sense of unexpected major events in their first-year post-study abroad. First, this inquiry sought to understand in what ways, if any, the post-study abroad experience facilitated the development of emerging self-authorship of U.S. college students. Second, this inquiry sought to understand the key common milestones for U.S. college students in their first-year post-study abroad. Third, this inquiry sought to understand in what ways, if any, key common milestones for U.S. college students connected to emerging self-authorship in their first-year post-study abroad. Fourth, this inquiry sought to understand in what ways, if any, emerging self-authorship supported U.S. college students in making sense of unexpected major events in their first-year post-study abroad. Finally, this inquiry sought to understand what objects, if any, gave voice to and represented emerging self-authorship for U.S. college students in their first-year post-study abroad.

My research had personal significance for me because years ago, I became interested in issues surrounding college students who returned home from studying abroad. I observed the varied post-study abroad experiences of my own adult children, their friends, and dozens of our

seasonal college student employees. At the time, I was curious about how these young adults dealt with decision-making and responded to life post-study abroad. I wondered if these experiences were truly common experiences for post-study abroad students. While I had no idea that a framework like self-authorship existed, I suspected something cognitive or developmental was occurring with these students during this time.

This inquiry aimed to contribute to research on, and give voice to, key common milestones through post-study abroad representations. The gap in the extant research indicated a need to research this area further. The significance of this inquiry was found in identifying key common milestones related to emerging self-authorship, which correlated with the five research questions. The timeline for this inquiry outlined the process and provided a road map for the inquiry (Appendix A).

Summary

Chapter 1 presented an introduction to the inquiry. Chapter 2 details the review of the literature related to the topics of the inquiry. Chapter 3 includes the methodology for this inquiry. Chapter 4 restates the research questions and offers findings through the themes I crafted from data collected in this inquiry. Chapter 5 provides a discussion of the inquiry. Chapter 2, which follows next, references numerous studies that made up the review of literature for this inquiry.

CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

"Travel is fatal to prejudice, bigotry, and narrow-mindedness, and many of our people need it sorely on these accounts. Broad, wholesome, charitable views of men and things cannot be acquired by vegetating in one little corner of the earth all one's lifetime."
– Mark Twain

The term, adulting, represented the activities Generation Z undertook while moving into adulthood. "Adulting is an informal term to describe behavior that is seen as responsible and grown-up. This behavior often involves meeting the mundane demands of independent and professional living, such as paying bills and running errands" (Dictionary.com, 2018). Generation Z included individuals born between the "late 1990s and early 2000s" (Merriam-Webster, 2020). These were the students engaged for this inquiry. The intersection of the self-authorship framework and post-study abroad formed the basis for this inquiry as young adults made reflections and representations of their experiences during their first-year post-study abroad. Figure 1 depicted the intersections of self-authorship and study abroad with reflections and representations students made of their experiences during their first-year post-study abroad.
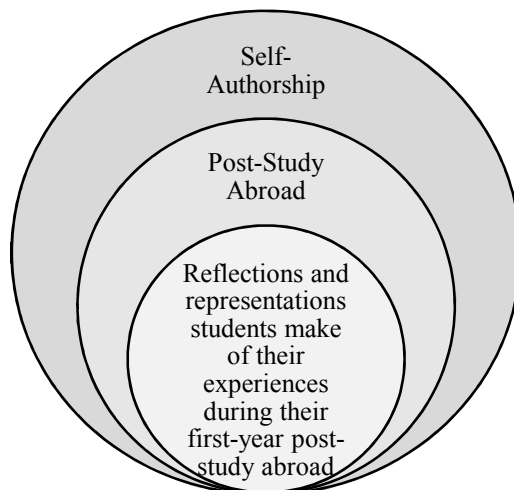
Figure 1. Intersections of self-authorship and post-study abroad with reflections and representations of post-study abroad students.

As a time of transition, moving into adulthood marked a critical stage in the lives of young people weaving their way through the changes they encountered, especially while in college. For U.S. college students living and learning outside their home country, countless international experiences made up study abroad (Sobania & Braskamp, 2009; The Forum on Education Abroad, 2018). After living abroad, students found the post-study abroad experience to be more difficult than the initial entry to the host country (Adler, 1981; Chamove & Soeterik, 2006; Sussman, 1986). The profound impact of study abroad and post-study abroad on the lives of college students continues to capture the curiosity of researchers.

Overview of Chapter 2

The ways college students and their study abroad, post-study abroad, and emerging self-authorship journeys closely intertwined and led to the often-unexpected facets of their experiences guided the organization of this review of literature. Summaries of literature, foundational to this exploratory inquiry using basic qualitative methodology, informed this review of literature (Roberts & Hyatt, 2019). I generalized sense and meaning into a compilation

of information on the topics for this inquiry (Schwandt, 2015). Chapter 2 begins with an

overview of the chapter and continues with reviews of research relevant to the attractiveness of

study abroad; benefits, challenges, and opportunities of study abroad; self-authorship; meaning

making and unexpected major events; reverse culture shock and post-study abroad; grief and

post-study abroad; and representations of common key milestones during post-study abroad. At

the end of each section, the impact of each area on this inquiry is noted. The chapter ends with a

summary.

The following research questions guided the review of literature:

1. In what ways, if any, does the post-study abroad experience facilitate the development of emerging self-authorship of U.S. college students?

   a) What are key common milestones for U.S. college students in their first-year post-study abroad?

   b) In what ways, if any, do key common milestones for U.S. college students connect to emerging self-authorship in their first-year post-study abroad?

   c) In what ways, if any, does emerging self-authorship support U.S. college students in making sense of unexpected major events in their first-year post-study abroad?

   d) What objects, if any, give voice to and represent emerging self-authorship for U.S. college students in their first-year post-study abroad?

The first section of Chapter 2 opens with a summary of the attractiveness study abroad had in

today's higher education.

Attractiveness of Study Abroad

This section begins with an overview of the attractiveness of study abroad not only as a

vital and important component of many college and university offerings but also for the value-

added feature it afforded these institutions in an increasingly global and pluralistic 21st century

society. As many as half of U.S. colleges and universities indicated they prioritized integrating a

global perspective and international education by including international education in their

institutional or organizational mission statement (The Forum on Education Abroad, 2018).

Educational institutions considered study abroad to be a value-added experience in their

offerings to prospective students (Braskamp et al., 2009).

Worldwide, 341,751 United States students studied abroad in the 2017–2018 school year.

Numbers of study abroad programs and participants increased steadily each year. As a region,

Europe hosted the highest percentage of students at 54.4% (Institute of International Education,

2019). Study abroad programs included class sessions, "lectures, discussions, and cultural

events" (p. 60), as well as educational field trips to other neighboring countries (Douglas &

Jones-Rikkers, 2001). In assessing study abroad, one in five institutions set learning outcomes

and assessments in areas other than discipline-specific knowledge (The Forum on Education

Abroad, 2018).

In a Hart Research Associates (2013) survey for the Association of American Colleges

and Universities, employers identified skills college students need for success in the 21st

century. Over 90% of employers responded that employees needed intercultural skills. More

than 75% indicated they would like higher education to emphasize critical thinking and complex

problem-solving. Study abroad provided students with opportunities to hone these skills.

The literature on the attractiveness of study abroad was important to understand for this

inquiry because it helped explain the dynamic and vital aspect of study abroad as a college

offering. As the attractiveness of study abroad increased for institutions of higher education, so

did the benefits, challenges, and opportunities for their 21st century global society students.

Benefits, Challenges, and Opportunities of Study Abroad

This section delineates the life-changing and wide range of benefits, challenges, and

opportunities of study abroad though an analysis of the cognitive (epistemological),

intrapersonal, and interpersonal dimensions of the experiences. Exposure to diverse people, as well as domestic and international matters, often resulted in growth and deep self-reflection while living and studying abroad (Doyle, 2009; Engberg, 2013).

Benefits of Study Abroad

As an important aspect of the college experience for many students, study abroad provided numerous benefits and a tremendously positive impact on their lives (Cubillos & Ilvento, 2013; Ingraham & Peterson, 2004; Paige et al., 2009; Van Hoof & Verbeeten, 2005). Three interrelated dimensions of student development—cognitive (epistemological), intrapersonal, and interpersonal—marked and shaped the advantages of study abroad for college-aged students.

In the cognitive (epistemological) dimension, benefits of study abroad included gains in cognitive sophistication and adaptability (Cushner & Mahon, 2002; Dwyer, 2004; Engberg, 2013; Lee et al., 2012; Vande Berg et al., 2009). Study abroad positively affected perceptions of self-efficacy in all the language subskills of reading, writing, listening, and speaking (Cubillos & Ilvento, 2013). Students who studied abroad came away with a deeper appreciation of the arts than students who did not study abroad (Chieffo & Griffiths, 2004). Study abroad enhanced innovative and original ideas, solutions, and creativity in students who studied abroad when compared to students who did not (Lee et al., 2012).

Additional cognitive dimension growth from living abroad included increased knowledge of cultures and cross-cultural awareness (Braskamp et al., 2009; Brubaker, 2007; Chieffo & Griffiths, 2004; Cisneros-Donahue et al., 2012; Engberg, 2013; Genkova, 2016; Jackson, 2011; Killick, 2012; Parker & Dautoff, 2007; Salisbury et al., 2013; Tonkin & Bourgault du Coudray, 2016; Vande Berg et al., 2009). Challenges to beliefs about stereotypes and their own and other

cultures, as well as global mindedness, precipitated cognitive growth in those who lived abroad (Chieffo & Griffiths, 2004; Cushner & Mahon, 2002; Dolby, 2004; Dwyer, 2004; Engberg, 2013; Genkova, 2016; Ingraham & Peterson, 2004; Jackson, 2011; Maharaja, 2018). Study abroad students developed more complex understanding of the world (Dolby, 2004; Paige et al., 2009) and differences in culture (Braskamp et al., 2009; Cushner & Mahon, 2002; Dwyer, 2004; Engberg, 2013; Fanari et al., 2021; Ingraham & Peterson, 2004; Maharaja, 2018; Tarrant et al., 2015; Tonkin & Bourgault du Coudray, 2016; Vande Berg et al., 2009; Van Hoof & Verbeeten, 2005). The contrast between the original culture of the student and the study abroad host culture positively impacted intercultural learning (Vande Berg et al., 2009) and world-mindedness (Chieffo & Griffiths, 2004; Douglas & Jones-Rikkers, 2001; Maharaja, 2018).

One study indicated a significant positive effect of study abroad on the subscale of intercultural competence and increased diversity of contact for students. However, study abroad only slightly influenced the two other subscales—comfort with difference subscale and relativistic appreciation subscale (Salisbury et al., 2013). Studying abroad improved student developmental constructs of cross-cultural growth and ethical attitudes about the physical environment after the study abroad experience, with female study abroad students making greater gains than male study abroad students (Rexeisen & Al□Khatib, 2009).

In a large study, Ingraham and Peterson (2004) learned that the longer the study abroad program, the more students gained in personal growth, intercultural awareness, and academic performance measures. Nonetheless, Rexeisen et al. (2008) noted that semester-long study abroad experiences afforded students with a positive, short-term impact on intercultural development; however, they questioned the long-term impact on intercultural development.

Even six weeklong study abroad experiences promoted "important academic, personal, career and intercultural development outcomes" Dwyer, 2004, p. 162).

In the intrapersonal dimension, benefits of study abroad involved enhanced identity, self-awareness, self-confidence, and self-efficacy (Arthur, 2001; Braskamp et al., 2009; Cushner & Mahon, 2002; Dwyer, 2004; Engberg, 2013; Ingraham & Peterson, 2004; Maharaja, 2018; Nash, 1976; Parker & Dautoff, 2007; Tarrant et al., 2015; Walling et al., 2006). Personal autonomy and expansion or differentiation of self significantly increased from the beginning to the end of the study abroad year as students learned to navigate two different cultures (Nash, 1976).

Study abroad gave students the chance to break out of the everyday campus bubble, cross boundaries into unfamiliar territory, personalize connections, develop authentic understandings, and then grapple with making sense of the entire experience in terms of their own lives and plans (Jones et al., 2012). In a study by Raschio (1987), post-study abroad students realized a new perspective on prioritizing values and goals, independence, and understanding of their individuality and ability to resist peer pressure by relying on their inner voice. Some students felt more confident in freely speaking their minds regardless of what others might think (Dettweiler et al., 2015). Students felt empowered and vowed to travel more in the future as they gained a sense of control over their own destiny (Allison et al., 2012; Dettweiler et al., 2015). Short-term missionary students "reported that their experiences inspired personal growth and gave them new perspectives about personal purpose, belonging and calling" (Walling et al., 2006, p. 160).

In their research of study abroad college students, Bathke and Kim (2016) argued that students generally had good mental health while abroad and cited that they had "emotional health, satisfaction with life, motivation and energy, physical health, and satisfaction with

academic performance" (p. 7). Students who studied abroad displayed substantially more agreeableness than students who did not (Zimmermann & Neyer, 2013).

In the interpersonal dimension, study abroad benefits provided students with deeper perceptions of relationships and empathy for others (Braskamp et al., 2009; Chieffo & Griffiths, 2004; Cushner & Mahon, 2002; Engberg, 2013; Maharaja, 2018). Individuals became more open-minded after studying abroad (Genkova, 2016; Hadis, 2005; Maharaja, 2018; Zimmermann & Neyer, 2013). Students felt more aware of others as individuals (Raschio, 1987). After studying or traveling abroad, individuals also self-identified as more tolerant, patient, understanding, compassionate, or comfortable with people unlike themselves (Allison et al., 2012; Braskamp et al., 2009; Chieffo & Griffiths, 2004; Cisneros-Donahue et al., 2012; Dettweiler et al., 2015; Douglas & Jones-Rikkers, 2001; Dwyer, 2004; Genkova, 2016; Hadis, 2005; Maharaja, 2018; Van Hoof & Verbeeten, 2005; Walling et al., 2006). In turn, study abroad students more readily developed friendships with diverse people (Dwyer, 2004; Ingraham & Peterson, 2004). Study abroad students embraced heightened awareness and connections to global responsibility and citizenship (Paige et al., 2009; Parker & Dautoff, 2007; Tarrant et al., 2015). Full-year study abroad students achieved a broader understanding of personal values and bias, sustained growth from interactions and friendships with people from diverse cultures, and formed a more sophisticated outlook on the world (Dwyer, 2004).

College students clearly identified the most important factors for why they did and did not elect to study abroad. Students who decided to study abroad cited relative advantage (because they could see the benefits of study abroad) and trialability (because they always knew they wanted to study abroad and had no desire to study abroad on a test basis) as the most important deciding factors. College students who elected not to study abroad cited complexity

(because they saw the study abroad process as too complicated with too many barriers) and compatibility (because they determined study abroad did not align with student plans) as their primary reasons (Spiering & Erickson, 2006). Business majors seemed to have different reasons for studying abroad than non-business majors. Rather than valuing the content of study abroad, business majors appeared to value the structure of study abroad. Content consisted of career and resume building, financial aid, and credit for course work (Toncar et al., 2006). Study abroad affected plans of business students as they were more open to including international experiences in their future career goals (Orahood et al., 2004).

Seeing the transformative and broad array of benefits of study abroad though an analysis of the cognitive (epistemological), intrapersonal, and interpersonal dimensions of the experiences helped frame the ways post-study abroad students in this inquiry saw their place in the world. In spite of the many life-changing experiences and benefits of living abroad, this time of excitement could be followed by challenges and opportunities.

Challenges and Opportunities of Study Abroad

This section shows that despite the benefits of study abroad, the literature identifies challenges and opportunities. The exciting and life-changing experience of transitioning to a study in a foreign country contrasted with the challenging negative by-products and diverse reactions of students to opportunities (Brown & Holloway, 2008). Many study abroad students transitioned to living in a new place and different country with relative ease; however, others encountered far more challenges in the transition (Alder, 1981). This cross-cultural entry, described as a time of excitement, may precede the disillusionment of culture shock and a period of positive adjustment (Adler, 1981; Brown & Holloway, 2008). Living abroad and the range of coping skills employed by individuals for dealing with culture shock resulted in an array of

responses, with some degree of adjustment expected in the transition (Adler, 1981). Other than culture shock, common challenges of study abroad involved difficulties with finances and having to study in a foreign language (Tamas, 2014).

Before and after their experiences, the manner in which study abroad students saw their own cultural identity through American constructions and diaspora potentially challenged identity of self (Jewett, 2010). When faced with challenges to their collective identity, study abroad students responded in different ways. These responses possibly affected self-esteem and well-being (Brown & Brown, 2013). Genkova (2016) concluded that "the confrontation with a foreign culture might, without thorough preparation, lead to a culture shock which, in turn, provokes emotional insecurity that cannot be overcome" (p. 7). Through the international experiences of living abroad, emotional stability may have been altered. In one inquiry, study abroad students maintained their connection to their home culture while briefly adopting a strong connection to their host culture. Spending more time with their home country classmates deterred from students' cultural experience and resulted in greater incidences of homesickness (Pedersen et al., 2011).

Despite overall good health, more than half of study abroad students felt normal homesickness and culture shock (Bathke & Kim, 2016). In a study of the effect of affect and how students reacted to stresses of study abroad, Savicki (2013) determined that psychologically well-adjusted, already outgoing, and emotionally flexible students adapted more efficiently to the disequilibrium of uncertainty and changes. Less psychologically well-adjusted and less satisfied with life students had more concerning affective responses and likely moved beyond experiencing simple disequilibrium during study abroad (Savicki, 2013). Students with mental health concerns before studying abroad were more likely to have mental health issues during

study abroad; most reported feelings of anxiety and depression. Unfortunately, over half of these students did not report the issue to the university (Bathke & Kim, 2016). In contrast to the opinion of some experts, who generally associated culture shock with internal, adaptation, affective, and cognitive (psychological adaptation) components, some study abroad students associated those difficulties with external behavioral and sociocultural environment (sociocultural adaptation) differences (Goldstein & Keller, 2015).

Research indicated that many students discovered opportunities in the challenges of study abroad. Even a short-term study abroad program potentially brought about transformational learning and meaning making. Self-determination softened culture shock and contributed to greater well-being and satisfaction of basic psychological needs for international students who studied in the United States (Yang et al., 2018). Study abroad students reported feeling concern in the culture shock categories of social isolation and communication, yet they saw the experience as a challenge and not as a threat, in spite of about one-third of those same students experienced feelings of depression or anxiety (Ryan & Twibell, 2000). Culture shock, with provocative moments during study abroad, pushed students toward emerging self-authorship. Students encountered diverse groups, cultures, and experiences that supported them in seeing different perspectives and reshaping their worldview, which helped them shift toward emerging self-authorship (Barber et al., 2013).

The literature on benefits, challenges, and opportunities of study abroad was important to understand because it provided clues to what many students went through before returning home, and it helped set up their post-study abroad experiences. Important aspects of self-authorship followed as college students navigated learning and made meaning of experiences.

Self-Authorship

This section reflects the ways self-authorship uniquely unfolds in the lives and development of college students. As an appropriate theoretical framework and developmental theory, self-authorship helped explain in what ways students responded to post-study abroad experiences. The next few sections cover three dimensions of development in self-authorship, four phases of the self-authorship journey, and three key assumptions of self-authorship.

Three Dimensions of Development

This section covers the three dimensions of student development in self-authorship. Magolda (2008) described self-authorship as the "internal capacity to define one's beliefs, identity, and social relations (p. 269). Magolda (2004) revealed three interrelated dimensions of student development—cognitive (epistemological), intrapersonal, and interpersonal. The cognitive dimension involved how individuals know and believe. This phase typically dominated the focus of college. It included ways individuals constructed views and made meaning based on knowledge and knowledge attainment. The intrapersonal dimension encompassed how individuals saw themselves. It involved individuals understanding personal beliefs, values, and sense of self and using choices and behaviors; however, it did not dominate the focus of college. The interpersonal dimension covered viewing of self in relationships with others, as well as interactions with views, values, and behaviors of others in social situations.

In self-authorship, developmentally mature students were better able to approach complex life tasks (Baxter Magolda & King, 2007; King & Baxter Magolda, 2005). Greater self-authorship capacity in students fostered their willingness to pursue developmentally effective experiences (DEEs), which led students to engage in even more challenging and meaningful college experiences (Bowman et al., 2019). Three interrelated dimensions of student

development spoke to the ways young adults faced life tasks and led to four phases of the journey toward self-authorship.

Four Phases of the Self-Authorship Journey

The following section describes the continuum for the self-authorship journey, which encompasses four phases where individuals shifted from depending on external figures and formulas to defining themselves internally. During the first phase, following external formulas, individuals relied on external authority figures and followed known formulas. Since most individuals lacked experience in listening to their own voice and thoughts, they borrowed from what they saw in the surrounding world. The second phase, the crossroads, usually occurred after college graduation due to individuals feeling tensions with, and questioning, this reliance. Individuals began to look inward for defining self. Throughout the third phase, becoming the author of one's life, individuals made an effort to choose what to believe, what identity to own, and how to interact with people they encountered. In the fourth and final phase, an internal foundation, individuals grounded themselves through employing power over external influence instead of external influences controlling them. The internal voice dictated meaning making. Individuals rarely attained this internal foundation before graduation or even as late as thirty years old (Magolda, 2004, 2008). Table 1 illustrated how the three dimensions intersected with the four phases of the journey toward self-authorship.

Table 1

Four Phases of the Journey toward Self-Authorship

	Following Formulas	Crossroads	Becoming the Author of One's Own Life	Internal Foundation
Epistemological dimension: How do I know?	Believe authority's plans; how "you" know	Question plans; see need for own vision	Choose own beliefs; how "I" know in context of external knowledge claims	Grounded in internal belief system
	→	→	→	
Intrapersonal dimension: Who am I?	Define self through external others	Realize dilemma of external definition; see need for internal identity	Choose own values, identity in context of external forces	Grounded in internal coherent sense of self
	→	→	→	
Interpersonal dimension: What relationships do I want with others?	Act in relationships to acquire approval	Realize dilemma of focusing on external approval; see need to bring self to relationship	Act in relationships to be true to self, mutually negotiating how needs are met	Grounded in mutuality
	→	→	→	

Note. Adapted from Magolda (2004, p. 40).

This broad, four-phase continuum divided further to ten more detailed positions to refine and describe meaning making (Barber, 2012; Baxter Magolda & King, 2012; Magolda, 2004). These ten developmental positions outlined the journey of self-authorship and the analysis for interview protocol (Barber, 2012). According to Baxter Magolda and King (2012), "development across this continuum is better characterized as undulating, cyclical, or wavelike than linear, more like a swiveling helix than a fixed, straight line" (p. 16). Three of the four phases of self-authorship—"trusting the internal voice, building an internal foundation, and securing internal commitments" (Magolda, 2008, p. 281)—made up essential components of important college learning outcomes for personal and social responsibility in 18- to 24-year-olds. Since the majority of study abroad students fit into this age range, self-authorship provided a suitable vehicle for considering in what ways students responded to and understood post-study abroad experiences (Savicki & Cooley, 2011).

Most University of the West students studied abroad during year two of college, so this became an appropriate time frame for understanding the intersection of self-authorship and post-study abroad. From year one to year two of college, a group of students studied by Magolda et al. (2012) moved from relying on external definitions of meaning making defined by others to less dependence on authority. The researchers noted the developmental changes that occurred between year one and year two of college in meaning making structures "demonstrate a gradual decrease in authority dependence over the first college year" (Magolda et al., 2012, p. 431). During year three of college, students made the most substantial shifts in emerging self-authorship by taking on roles which forced them to call on their inner voice during DEEs (Barber et al., 2013). Certain identifiable features in experiences promoted development of emerging self-authorship:

> increasing awareness, understanding, and openness to diversity … [;] exploring and establishing a basis for beliefs, choices, action … ;] developing a sense of identity to guide choices … [; and] awareness of and openness to responsibility for own learning. (King et al., 2009, p. 112)

By incorporating these features into educational practices, instructors promoted self-authorship and meaning making in students (King et al., 2009).

Magolda (2008) portrayed the evolving self in emerging self-authorship as cyclical, complex, and nuanced. Students took varied paths on the journey to self-authorship. Pizzolato (2004) saw self-authorship as more fluid, postulating that the choice to act in a self-authored manner depended on reasoning, how much support the student received, and ultimately how much opposition they encountered when acting on their internal foundations. The nuanced relationship between "self-authored reasoning and action" (Pizzolato, 2007, p. 37) bore consideration in the assessment of self-authorship. Pizzolato viewed the presence of reasoning, as well as action expressed publicly, as optimal for self-authorship.

Yet Pizzolato held that some students had to make decisions based on the context they were experiencing and the support they were receiving; therefore, she regarded self-authorship as situational. Magolda (2008) encapsulated the relationship with healthy and authentically interdependent "good partners" in supporting the emerging self-authorship journey:

> The longitudinal stories demonstrate that self-authorship refers to shifting the source of one's beliefs, identity, and social relations from the external world to the internal voice and foundation. Doing so initiates a reframing of relationships that become more authentic because they honor one's internal commitments. Connections based on these internal commitments result in interdependence in which parties to the relationship act authentically and support each other in doing so. Thus, self-authorship strengthens relationships and enduring ties with the external world. (p. 282).

As an essential aspect of this inquiry, the four-phase continuum provided the foundation for how the framework of emerging self-authorship unfolded. The four phases were apparent as young adults shifted on the continuum of the emerging self-authorship journey, from depending on internal self-definition to external formulas (Magolda, 2004, 2008). From here, three key assumptions promoted emerging self-authorship.

Three Key Assumptions

Three key assumptions for environments, which promoted emerging self-authorship, arose in interactions with others: "Knowledge as complex and socially constructed…, self is central to knowledge construction…, and authority and expertise were shared in mutual construction of knowledge among peers" (Magolda, 2004, p. *xx*). Table 2 illustrated the relationship between the three dimensions, key questions, and key assumptions of self-authorship.

Table 2

The Relationship Between the Three Dimensions, Key Questions, and Key Assumptions of Self-Authorship

Dimension:	Cognitive (Epistemological)	Intrapersonal	Interpersonal
Key Question:	How do I know?	Who am I?	How am I in relationships with others?
Key Assumption:	Knowledge is complex and socially constructed	Self is central to knowledge construction	Expertise is shared mutually in knowledge construction

Note. Adapted from Pizzolato et al. (2012, p. 656).

Throughout their twenties, individuals experienced diverse contexts. The three key assumptions were important conditions which existed in environments that promoted emerging self-authorship (Magolda, 2004).

The literature on self-authorship was important to understand for this inquiry because it was a driving dynamic in the lives and development of college students. To understand what they experienced during unexpected major events, young adults organized their meaning making.

Meaning Making and Unexpected Major Events

The following section provides a blueprint for viewing in what ways students made meaning of unexpected major events during their first-year post-study abroad. As college students faced these events, they sought to resolve the discomfort and cope of the disequilibrium in provocative moments (Pizzolato, 2005), made meaning, and plunged into emerging self-authorship (Barber & King, 2014).

The equilibration theory of cognitive structure and paradigm by Piaget supplied a theoretical framework for rationalizing the equilibrium and disequilibrium individuals experienced as they adapted and re-adapted to cultures (Christofi & Thompson, 2007). Kegan (1980) referred to meaning making as a "creative *activity* of personality" (p. 374, italics in

original) and "the development of our constructing" (p. 373). Kegan (1982) went on to explain that "human being is the composing of meaning, including, of course, the occasional inability to compose meaning, which we often experience as the loss of our own composure" (p. 11).

Drawing on the constructivist-developmental tradition, Baxter Magolda and King (2007) contended "that humans actively construct their perspectives by interpreting their experiences (i.e., constructivism) and that these constructions form meaning making structures that evolve over time (i.e., developmentalism)" (p. 495). In Baxter Magolda and King's (2012) view:

> A meaning-making perspective can also be thought of as a way of making sense of the world, such as figuring out what to believe, who to be, and how to act: it provides a guide for determining what to pay attention to, whose advice to listen to, what can be gleaned from a positive or negative experience, and in general how to navigate complex environments, including college campuses. (p. 4)

Meaning making became the vehicle for making sense of experiences. The way individuals organized meaning shaped experiences, and systems of meaning making provoked behavior.

Barber and King (2014) purported that, when exposed to new ideas, college students took two different developmental paths toward emerging self-authorship to resolve dissonance and make meaning of experiences. External meaning making, where students sought support and followed a prescribed plan, characterized one path. Crossroad meaning making, where students considered their own personal biases and used abstract formulas crossroads, characterized the other path. Each path toward emerging self-authorship depended on the developmental complexity of the students.

As DEEs for students, study abroad and post-study abroad provided provocative moments in unexpected major events for students inside and outside the classroom (Barber et al., 2013). Two elements of DEEs promoted self-authorship: adequate dissonance to capture the

attention of the student and openness to the possibility of changing approaches to meaning making (Magolda et al., 2012).

After a review of learning and development theories based on dissonance, Taylor and Baker (2019) reached three conclusions regarding how learning, development, and meaning making occur. First, when students with a history of trauma experienced certain physical and psychological triggers, "the discomfort associated with traumatic experiences is more likely to be harmful than educative" (p. 181). Second, for individuals to question their values and beliefs, the disequilibrium they experienced must be attributed to internal causes that were within their control. Third, for individuals to make meaning of disequilibrating experiences, they needed support in critical self-reflection and conversations with peers and members of the community.

Disequilibrium characterized the provocative moments and cultivated students' "capacity to define [their] beliefs, identity, and social relations" (Magolda, 2008, p. 269). Individuals organized meaning through utilizing structures or rules until a difference between the structure or rules and reality developed. This loss of composure in meaning making paralleled equilibrium and disequilibrium during unexpected major events (Magolda, 2009).

Disequilibrium resulted in significant learning as study abroad students ventured out beyond their comfort zones to interact with other cultures and traditions (Killick, 2012). For some students, the dissonance in provocative moments emerged when students became more aware of formulas they followed without question, had interactions with peers who did not hold the same beliefs, and had conflicts within relationships in their own community (Bryant, 2011). Students employed strategies to cope with this dissonance which moved them toward self-authorship (Baxter Magolda & King, 2007). From here, their meaning-making responses

depended on their emerging self-authorship developmental state (Barber & King, 2007; Barber & King, 2014).

Some students purposefully sought disequilibrium through intercultural wonderment (Engberg & Jourian, 2015; Engberg et al., 2016). Creating contexts for psychological interpersonal disequilibrium, where formulas for success were not readily available, propelled students to move toward emerging self-authorship (Bryant, 2011; Pizzolato & Ozaki, 2007). Kegan's (1994) three dimensions, as well as disequilibrium, consistently aligned with intercultural wonderment (Engberg & Jourian, 2015; Engberg et al., 2016). According to Engberg and Jourian (2015),

> [i]ntercultural wonderment is manifested as students intentionally push themselves outside their comfort zones, feel immersed in the culture of the host country, explore new habits and behaviors while abroad, and interact with individuals from the host country outside the classroom (p. 2).

These provocative moments sufficiently "disrupt[ed] automatic thinking patterns" (Engberg & Jourian, 2015, p. 14) and pressed students toward global learning and self-authorship in all three dimensions (Engberg & Jourian, 2015; Engberg et al., 2016). As intercultural wonderment levels increased, the ways in which study abroad students made meaning of experiences also increased. This directly affected scores of study abroad students in affect model, knowledge, and social responsibility (Engberg et al., 2016).

When study abroad students experienced identity negotiation in unfamiliar situations, with no prescribed formulas and contexts, self-image was threatened (Young et al., 2015). Interpersonal interactions drove students to question who they were and how they should construct knowledge (Pizzolato & Ozaki, 2007). This forced college students to look inward to search for definition of self (Engberg & Jourian, 2015), especially in decision-making (Christofi & Thompson, 2007; Pizzolato, 2005).

Jessup-Anger (2008) suggested that study abroad students authentically experienced cross-cultural understanding when they encountered opportunities to interact with their peers and considered, explored, and challenged those preconceived assumptions they brought to the study abroad experience. When they engaged in experiences with diverse others, college students experienced discomfort and disruption of their held beliefs or values. This dissonance in discomfort and disruption precipitated intercultural growth; however, additional support and encouragement assisted students in dealing with their emotional reactions and promoted their emerging intercultural maturity (King et al., 2011).

Novel cultural experiences interrupted what students expected, led to disequilibrium, and caused them to reflect to try to make sense of their experiences (Bowman & Brandenberger, 2012). Active reflection enabled students to make meaning of experiences, especially when they took a retrospective step back while considering those events and their emotions (King et al., 2011; Savicki & Price, 2015). After being exposed to diverse people and domestic and international matters through study abroad, students felt they had grown through deep self-reflection (Doyle, 2009; Engberg, 2013). Reflections on the distress students felt supported them in making sense of the experiences and understanding how their self-image was influenced (Doyle, 2009; King et al., 2011). Providing students with opportunities for reentry and post-study abroad reflection eased reentry adjustment and supported students in making meaning of the experiences they had abroad (Jones et al., 2012; Wielkiewicz & Turkowski, 2010). Bennett (2012) argued that students should be given opportunities to reflect and examine their study abroad experiences because "our experience of reality itself is a function of how we organize our perception" (p. 103). This research was supported by Engberg and Jourian (2015) who

concluded that intercultural wonderment was fostered for students "who shared [and] discussed their study abroad experiences with others (p. 13).

High-risk individuals, such as first-generation college students demonstrated a unique and greater capacity than other college students to self-author through life-changing catalytic events before graduation (Carpenter & Peña, 2017); the same conclusion was noted for college students of color (Wawrzynski & Pizzolato, 2006). According to Pizzolato (2003), high-risk students utilized self-authorship in constructing appropriate schemas to make sense of provocative moments through external influence (interactions with others) and internal processing (decision making related to their goals). Dissonance was critical to development; on the other hand, high privilege may circumvent dissonance. When the degree of support became so elevated it bordered on protectionism that denied individuals dissonance, development was suspended temporarily.

Meaning making of disorienting dilemmas helped build the case that disequilibrium presented opportunities for growth (Dunn et al., 2014), especially if colleges and universities recognized the need to support students in working through reentry shock. Faculty may assume an important role in supporting students with making meaning of study abroad and post-study abroad experiences, particularly when students encountered uncomfortable moments which eventually sparked developmental gains (Engberg et al., 2016). They may help returnees make meaning of their experiences by incorporating their emergent cultural identities and integrating their experiences in the new culture of their post-study abroad life. Faculty can help returning students maximize their emerging cultural identities and expertise by integrating these new strategies into life in their home country (Brubaker, 2007; Pritchard, 2011). Informing students of reentry shock helped them in mindfulness and recognition of personal change (Pitts, 2016).

Faculty may also help students untie the knots and safeness they relied on for routine self-understanding and expand their minds though embracing the countless possibilities in the unknown (Ellwood, 2011). Barber and King (2014) contended that educators should purposely provide students with DEEs such as uncomfortable moments. Goodman et al. (2011) researched practices for faculty to foster student learning and meaning making. Their recommendations included "academic challenge and high expectations, diversity experiences, and good teaching/high-quality interactions with educators" (p. 4). Students appreciated quality connections with supportive faculty and peers where they could find internal definition through conversations in safe environments.

Magolda and King (2008) recommend that during conversations and interviews with college students, the key was to empower students to make meaning of their experiences instead of an interviewer making meaning for them. Baxter Magolda and King (2007) emphasized that

> [f]or some participants, talking about their experiences offers a first opportunity to verbalize how they see the world, how they define themselves, and how they relate to others; for other participants, the interview is the stimulus for constructing meaning they haven't constructed before. In these ways (and as noted by several participants), the interview itself may be a significant learning experience. (p. 506)

By actively listening and giving their "full attention to understanding" (p. 62) the stories of post-study abroad students during phenomenological interviews, Christofi and Thompson (2007) unexpectedly provided their participants with support.

Fostering emerging self-authorship began with respecting the current level of student meaning making (Baxter Magolda & King, 2007). Yet while college instructors valued the constructs of emerging self-authorship and ownership, some lacked the knowledge or skills to facilitate these constructs in student outcomes (Stone & Surmitis, 2018). Through provocative

moments in unexpected major events, the ensuing disequilibrium and meaning making moved students toward unlocking emerging self-authorship (Barber et al., 2013; Magolda, 2008, 2009).

One focus of this inquiry was understanding in what ways students made meaning of unexpected major events in their first-year post-study abroad so, it was important to understand this literature. When post-study abroad college students reverted to their home country and faced a period of cross-cultural reentry and readjustment known as reverse culture shock, significant effects arose.

Reverse Culture Shock and Post-Study Abroad

This section reveals the varying, challenging, and even surprising effects of reverse culture shock in the post-study abroad journey. The inevitable reality of the study abroad experience coming to an end indicated that students again found themselves transitioning.

As students were sent home abruptly from their study abroad and reentered their home country culture, a cross-cultural reentry period of readjustment from the foreign culture back to the home culture typically followed. This reentry period marked the endpoint of the cultural transition cycle; it consisted of a time of socio-cultural readjustment from the host country culture back to the home country culture (Adler, 1981). According to Arthur (2003), "the nature of re-entry transition is better understood as a psychological process rather than physical relocation home" (p. 174). The immersion aspect of study abroad set it apart from other travel experiences, and thus set the stage for reverse culture shock, a sense of loss, adjustments to transitioning to life at home, and an overall combination of positive and negative feelings (Gray & Savicki, 2015).

Five themes characterized reverse culture shock: the internal conflict of feeling torn between two countries, idealizing expectations of home, having more freedom in the sojourn

country than at home, feeling as if their home country changed over time, and how individuals felt overall in each country (Christofi & Thompson, 2007). Most post-study abroad students experienced reverse culture shock; however, they gained independence in decision-making and learned about themselves and the world they discovered while studying abroad (Hadis, 2005).

When individuals returned to their home country, many were not prepared for the readjustment period of cross-cultural reentry experience (Adler, 1981; Sussman, 1986, 2001, 2002). After living abroad, returning home was more difficult than the initial entry to the host country (Adler, 1981; Chamove & Soeterik, 2006; Sussman, 1986). Different themes emerged for explaining the "'strange,' 'overwhelmed,' 'shocking,' 'weird,' and 'disoriented'" (Shannon-Baker, 2015, p. 44) feelings individuals experienced upon returning home from abroad. Students who did not want to return home faced especially challenging reentries (Butcher, 2002). The common thread of equilibrium and disequilibrium wove through these reentry experiences.

Students reported reentry experiences ranging from bitter to sweet, unlike the bitter findings usually reported in existing research (Kartoshkina, 2015). Findings in a study by Şahin (1990) pointed to higher depression and anxiety levels in students who studied abroad than students who studied in their home country. Fanari and Segrin (2021) noted that "both reentry shock and reacculturative stress predicted increased loneliness during the 6-month period of observation … suggesting that individuals can display considerable emotional distress as much as six months after their reentry" (p. 306). Some students experienced "psychological strain, a sense of loss, and a feeling of deprivation" upon returning home but eventually developed coping skills (Dettweiler et al., 2015, p. 86). In another study, Dykhouse and Bikos (2019) indicated that psychological well-being of returning sojourners decreased and reached a low point four months following their reentry. After this point, psychological well-being increased back to

baseline around 12 months after reentry. According to Rexeisen et al. (2008), developmental changes continued even four to five months after college students returned home from studying abroad. The complicated, unanticipated nature of these negative emotions exasperated reentry resolution (Butcher, 2002; Sussman, 2002).

According to Doyle (2009), universities often neglected the reentry aspect of study abroad and left students on their own to navigate and cope with transition challenges. Some students did well with the transition, but others struggled. Not being prepared for reentry played an important part in the level of subsequent distress experienced by returnees (Chamove & Soeterik, 2006; Sussman, 2001, 2002). The negative emotions, and absence of preparation of reentry felt by post-study abroad students, contrasted with the positive emotions and preparation felt by study abroad students (Butcher, 2002).

Limited speculation existed in the literature regarding the deculturalization aspect of reverse culture shock. Findings from a study of returned Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints missionaries did not support deculturalization. Most (85%) of the missionaries did not unlearn their home culture; rather, they integrated their collective experiences (Callahan, 2010).

Sussman (2002) noted that the relationship between cultural adaptation and cultural reentry remained complicated. The Cultural Identity Model assumed that reentry, where individuals felt increased estrangement (subtractive) from their home culture or more association with the host culture (additive) upon returning from a sojourn, correlated with high distress and disequilibrium. A relationship existed between reentry experience and cultural identity shifts; however, no direct association between adaptation abroad and reentry experience seemed to exist. Instead, strength in home culture identity inversely predicted distress in returnees; those returnees who experienced high distress had weak cultural identity. The more a global identity

shift was experienced by repatriates, the higher the life satisfaction. The effects of culture shock and reverse culture shock in study abroad students may diminish by using the capabilities of cultural intelligence as a moderating mechanism (Presbitero, 2016). Generally, Wilkinson (1998) reasoned that "the process of adapting to foreign linguistic and cultural norms was far from a linear progression toward fluency and deep cultural understanding" (p. 34).

Adaptation back to the home environment for post-study abroad students depended on their reception at home, their capacity to express their newly acquired sense of self, and their capacity to connect with others who have also been abroad (Fanari et al., 2021; Pitts, 2016). When many students returned from studying abroad, the perceived quality of their relationships with parents, siblings, and friends changed (Butcher, 2002; Christofi & Thompson, 2007; Fanari et al., 2021; Martin, 1986; Pitts, 2016). Findings in another study indicated that returning students were most concerned about role conflicts professionally and with peer and family groups (Bochner et al., 1980). During post-study abroad, students realized their expectations and worldview profoundly differed from that of their parents (Butcher, 2002). In Chamove and Soeterik's (2006) study of returnees, almost half struggled with relating to friends and almost one-quarter struggled with relating to parents. Unfortunately, some returnees encountered indifferent family, friends (Dettweiler et al., 2015; Fanari et al., 2021; Kartoshkina, 2015; Raschio, 1987; Sussman, 1986; Toncar et al., 2006) and instructors (Fanari et al., 2021; Sussman, 1986; Toncar et al., 2006).

Savicki and Cooley (2011) disclosed that, even with disruptions to their American identity commitments when studying abroad, some students exhibited positive well-being compared to students who did not study abroad. Rohrlich and Martin (1991) concluded that females had significantly higher life satisfaction upon returning home from study abroad. In a

study of Asian reentry students, Pritchard (2011) added that while most returnees experienced smooth psychological reentry experiences, a few had changed so much, they had trouble adapting.

Reverse culture shock influenced self-reported severity of problems with personal adjustment in reentry students, as well as shyness concerns; however, the level of reverse culture shock did not connect to the willingness of reentry students to seek counseling. As their reverse culture shock scores increased, student use of support services decreased. Students not seeking support services risked developing academic and developmental issues (Gaw, 2000).

As study abroad disrupted achieved American identity, students discovered that familiar American actions, events, and objects differed, or completely lacked, in their host countries. This disruption produced changes in attitudes toward the culture at home. Students often noted they had new values and beliefs that did not align with their home country; this resulted in stress and anxiety (Fanari et al., 2021; Wielkiewicz & Turkowski, 2010). Post-study abroad students experienced personal conflict when they used their new perspectives to compare physical and cultural aspects of their study abroad host country to their home country. Further, Walling et al. (2006) held that students reacted negatively to their home culture and their reactions "were emotionally intense, reflecting personal anger, criticism and guilt" (p. 158). Their new perspective changed the students personally, and it heightened their awareness of worldwide issues and how the U. S. factored into these issues (Raschio 1987; Uehara,1986).

Students who experienced reverse culture shock longed for respect and needed to make their voices heard (Christofi & Thompson, 2007; Fanari et al., 2021). They yearned to unpack and share with others their cathartic experiences and what they learned (Allison et al., 2012; Kortegast & Boisfontaine, 2015; Pitts, 2016; Raschio, 1987). Some students struggled to

verbalize and explain learnings from their study abroad experiences (Brubaker, 2007; Kortegast & Boisfontaine, 2015; Lee, 2011; Thomas & Kerstetter, 2020). Students with problems communicating their experiences felt torn between personal expression and the expectations of listeners (Fanari et al., 2021; Pitts, 2016). Returnees felt frustrated because others could not relate to their experiences (Allison et al., 2012; Kartoshkina, 2015; Pitts, 2016; Raschio, 1987). Some returnees from abroad saw their experience as so unique, they could not adequately explain it or process it (Allison et al., 2012; Dunn et al., 2014; Kartoshkina, 2015; Pitts, 2016).

Being heard, supported, and understood by others who shared this common experience helped alleviate the frustration and isolation post-study abroad students felt and led to a new sense of self-awareness (Raschio, 1987). In their sharing, students discovered "supportive, meaningful, and fulfilling communication that was lacking from much of their home network" (Pitts, 2016; p. 433). Instead of reentry being an independent journey for students, Chang (2009) explained that reentry stress could be reduced through effective communication in a joint process between post-study abroad students and their significant others. Programs to manage and discuss psychological and socio-cultural effects of reverse culture shock supported individuals as they returned to their home countries (Presbitero, 2016; Sussman, 1986; Wielkiewicz & Turkowski, 2010).

> Post-study abroad students
>
> did not experience the full impact of their new perspective and experiences until they began to make comparisons on personal, social, and cultural levels. They believed that the conflict was internal and personal, one that they viewed as constructive and necessary. (Raschio, 1987, p. 159)

Furthermore, post-study abroad students also spoke of seeing themselves in a new light because of their experiences back home (Christofi & Thompson, 2007). According to Jones et al. (2012), "many participants returned with a new perspective on what was important in the world" (p.

212). The new perspective influenced decision-making for post-study abroad students as they tried make themselves "different but better" (Raschio, 1987, p. 159). In one study, Southeast Asian post-study abroad students attributed their hope and optimism in the future to their reentry reverse culture shock experiences (Le & LaCost, 2017). The greatest change for post-study abroad college students was something most missed—"the change in themselves" (Butcher, 2002, p. 364).

The literature on reverse culture shock and post-study abroad was important to understand for this inquiry because it clarified the varying, challenging, and even surprising effects. In addition to these effects, grief layered itself throughout unexpected major events during post-study abroad.

Grief and Post-Study Abroad

Beautiful, excruciating grief wound its way through the post-study abroad literature. Kessler (2019) described the stages of grief as denial, anger, bargaining, depression, acceptance, and meaning. Kessler was the protégé of and co-writer with renowned grief researcher Elisabeth Kübler-Ross, who first identified the five stages of grief. After Kübler-Ross' death, and with the blessing of the Elisabeth Kübler-Ross Family and Elisabeth Kübler-Ross Foundation, Kessler added a sixth stage, meaning, to the stages of grief.

Gaw (2000) stated that specific reentry reverse culture shock problems some students experienced included:

> depression, alienation, isolation, loneliness, general anxiety, speech anxiety, friendship difficulties, shyness concerns, and feelings of inferiority. This student may also experience academic problems, such as trouble studying, academic performance concerns, concerns about a career match, and adjustment to the college environment. (p. 101)

In a study by Saviski and Price (2017), sadness spiked in study abroad students preparing to return home and peaked upon reentry. Allison et al. (2012) emphasized loneliness and isolation during reentry which led to the experiencing "a sense of loss and grief" (p. 495). Returnees in a Dettweiler et al. (2015) study spoke of isolation and "the feeling of loss and solitude" (p. 80).

Students also experienced "disenfranchised" grief and a need to belong associated with reentry after study abroad (Allison et al., 2012; Butcher, 2002). This period included grieving if individuals experienced a time of mourning for personal relationships, different experiences, and the established lifestyle in the host country (Butcher, 2002; Gray & Savicki, 2015; Pitts, 2016). When students felt loneliness and anxiety, it

> seem[ed] to be connected to some kind of loss related to the experiences, people, and environment students encountered while abroad and feelings of loss, frustration, and anger appear to be a result of the inability to comprehend, accept, or deal with such loss. (Kartoshkina, 2015, p. 39)

Grief symptoms suffered by many students, who had not prepared and contended with difficulties in returning home, mirrored bereavement symptoms. Grief was highest for those post-study abroad students who did not feel prepared to return and had a hard time returning (Chamove & Soeterik, 2006). Students had "a sense of denial and grief that the experience was ending" (Pitts, 2016, p. 428). This grieving process defied the typical societal perception of grief because no individual passed away. After the death of an individual, society typically called for a grieving ritual for the expression of emotions; however, no such ritual applied to study abroad reentry grief. Not only did this grief encompass a loss of the host country friendships and experiences but also a readjustment to expectations and relationships when study abroad students returned home. When they returned home from studying abroad, many students found that not only had their worldview shifted but their place in the world had been altered; understanding this perspective may lessen the effects felt during the grieving process (Butcher, 2002). Some post-

study abroad students wondered "whether or not they will ever feel at home again" (Arthur, 2003, p. 175).

Another area of consideration in this inquiry was the sixth stage of grief, meaning making. Post-study abroad students struggled with meaning making as they faced reverse culture shock due to unexpected major events such as being abruptly sent home and the changes in their lives when they returned home. The unexpected ending to study abroad disrupted their relationships so "[i]t is understandable that in a sample of emerging adults … where goals to establish relationships and intimacy are so salient, social disruptions are particularly consequential to well-being" (Zimmer-Gembeck & Petherick, 2006, as cited in Fanari & Segrin, 2021, p. 306). In a year-long study of 18- to 25-year-olds, Segrin et al. (2017) saw the psychological distress of stress and loneliness increase as these emerging adults experienced the instability of unexpected transitions. During COVID-19, returning students felt "isolated, unable to reconnect with their loved ones, visit their favorite places, or do the things they missed the most" (Fanari & Segrin, 2021, p. 306). Post-study abroad students struggled make meaning of their experiences as they looked to the future. Ultimately, these students felt empowered to move past the negativity of reentry to positively reframe their post-study abroad experience. Students vowed to connect with humanity and make a difference in the world (Pitts, 2016).

The literature on grief and post-study abroad was important to understand for this inquiry because the stages of grief were an integral aspect of students' experiences. Reflecting on and representing common key milestones of study abroad and post-study abroad may be one strategy to help college students in making sense of their experiences.

Representations of Common Key Milestones During Post-Study Abroad

This section analyzes the strategy of representations of common key milestones for college students for post-study abroad. Scant literature was found in the extant body of studies on giving voice to and representing the deeper levels of emergent self-authorship in college students as they made meaning of transitions through representations of common key milestones in their first-year post-study abroad.

Even though they lacked formal reentry opportunities to link their understandings to university outcomes for learning, reentry study abroad students discovered meaning through informal opportunities to discuss experiences, practices in simplifying experiences to others, naming and producing meanings, and developing explanations of meaning. Students made meaning in their experiences through developing and discussing explanations of the meaning in common key milestones (Kortegast & Boisfontaine, 2015).

Objects, such as photographs, helped students connect study abroad to home by giving them an opportunity to share the most significant aspects of experiences with listeners (Kortegast & Boisfontaine, 2015). In an overview of photo elicitation, Harper (2002) noted that "images evoke deeper elements of human consciousness than do words; exchanges based on words alone utilize less of the brain's capacity than do exchanges in which the brain is processing images as well as words" (p. 13).

The literature on representations of common key milestones during post-study abroad was important to understand for this inquiry because reflecting on and representing common key milestones in post-study abroad may be one strategy to help college students in this process and pertinent to this inquiry.

Summary

Finally, this chapter tied together literature in seven areas in the study abroad, post-study abroad, and self-authorship journey for college students. The efforts of this literature review area lay in examining the large body of research in seven distinct areas including attractiveness of study abroad; benefits, challenges, and opportunities of study abroad; self-authorship; meaning making and unexpected major events; reverse culture shock and post-study abroad; grief and post-study abroad; and representations of common key milestones during post-study abroad. Most of the research focused on identifying culture shock in study abroad and reverse culture shock in post-study abroad as inevitable to some degree, as well as the need for provocative moments to edge students toward self-authorship. However, less attention in research focused on giving voice to and representing the deeper levels of emergent self-authorship in post-study abroad college students as they made meaning of transitions through representations of common key milestones. This inquiry aimed to contribute to research on, and give voice to, the common milestones representing the deeper levels of emergent self-authorship during post-study abroad. Reviewing of the literature continued throughout the inquiry period. Chapter 2 laid the foundation for this inquiry by assembling the sections of the review of literature on the seven areas related to study abroad students on their journey toward emerging self-authorship. Chapter 3 provides explanations of the methodology to be applied to this inquiry.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

"And, now that life had so much human promise in it, they resolved to go back to their own land; because the years after all, have a kind of emptiness, when we spend too many of them on a foreign shore."
– Nathaniel Hawthorne

Overview of Chapter 3

The overarching purpose of this study was to describe in what ways, if any, the post-study abroad experience facilitates the development of emerging self-authorship of U.S. college students. Chapter 3 contains descriptions of the methodology for this inquiry. The descriptions begin with a chapter overview and cover the research design, participant selection, data collection, and data analysis. In addition, I discuss my role as the researcher, as well as researcher bias, limitations, and trustworthiness. The chapter concludes a summary.

Research Design

This section provides an overview of the research design for this inquiry—an exploratory inquiry using basic qualitative methodology. I originally planned to conduct a collective case study but with two participants, I knew I needed to change my methodology. I transitioned to an exploratory inquiry using basic qualitative methodology, which helped me respond to the unpredictable and changing COVID-19 pandemic environment. Constructivism underlays basic qualitative methodology and the "purpose is to *understand* how people make sense of their lives and their experiences" (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 24, italics in original). Basic qualitative research better aligned with my belief that "knowledge is constructed by people in an ongoing fashion as they engage in and make meaning of an activity, experience, or phenomenon" (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 23). Since my qualitative inquiry did not fit the common

qualitative categories, basic qualitative inquiry was appropriate. This inquiry focused on the real-world, post-study abroad experiences and reflections of participants (Percy et al., 2015). In this inquiry, I used rich descriptions to contribute to research on those milestones representing emergent self-authorship during post-study abroad.

Five research questions drove and shaped this inquiry, as well as the methods for data collection, analysis, and findings (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016):

1. In what ways, if any, does the post-study abroad experience facilitate the development of emerging self-authorship of U.S. college students?

   a) What are key common milestones for U.S. college students in their first-year post-study abroad?

   b) In what ways, if any, do key common milestones for U.S. college students connect to emerging self-authorship in their first-year post-study abroad?

   c) In what ways, if any, does emerging self-authorship support U.S. college students in making sense of unexpected major events in their first-year post-study abroad?

   d) What objects, if any, give voice to and represent emerging self-authorship for U.S. college students in their first-year post-study abroad?

The next section outlines participant selection.

Participant Selection

I designed the participant selection procedures to inform the research questions. Every step in data collection took place against the backdrop of the COVID-19 pandemic and the contemporary protests against racism and social injustice. This section describes participant selection criteria, participant recruitment, and influences on participant recruitment. Participant selection criteria made up the first area of focus.

Participant Selection Criteria

I chose the developmental theory of self-authorship (Magolda, 2008) to inform participant selection criteria for this inquiry. The three elements of self-authorship

developmental theory—trusting the internal voice, building an internal foundation, and securing

internal commitments—comprised essential aspects of important college learning outcomes for

personal and social responsibility in 18- to 24-year-olds. Study abroad students typically fell

into this age range (Savicki & Cooley, 2011). Self-authorship provided me with a natural

framework for identifying in what ways students in this age range made sense of their

experiences, such as key common milestones or unexpected major events, after studying abroad.

To be eligible for this inquiry, participants needed to be enrolled at University of the West Coast

(a pseudonym), have completed their study abroad experience during the 2019–2020 academic

year, and be between 18 years of age and 24 years of age.

Participant Recruitment

The COVID-19 pandemic posed substantial challenges in relation to participant

recruitment. To identify and recruit participants, I used purposeful sampling (Patton, 2015). I

created a detailed timeline to chronicle this process (Appendix B).

It should be noted that I spoke informally with the University of the West Coast Dean of

Students concerning study abroad students in 2017. I also spoke informally with the University

of the West Coast Vice-President of Student Life in 2018, late 2019, and early 2020 regarding

the idea of studying post-study abroad students at the university. These early inquiries helped to

confirm that West Coast University could be a site for this study. The university's robust study

abroad program led me to conclude that several students could potentially meet the criteria for

inclusion in this study.

After receiving approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) Research at the

University of the Pacific in August 2020 (Appendix C), I contacted the University of the West

Coast Vice President of Student Life to confirm the process for obtaining approval to conduct the

study at the University of the West Coast. The Vice President recommended I email the Director

of International Programs regarding the idea of studying post-study abroad students at the

university. The Director of International Programs emailed me back to say my research sounded

interesting and suggested I reach out to of Office of Institutional Effectiveness. From here, the

Director of the Office of Institutional Effectiveness emailed to inform me of the required

documentation to supply and to advise me that the dean had postponed all research until October

or November 2020 at the earliest. I submitted my research proposal to the Office of Institutional

Effectives on September 4, 2020. I received approval from the University of the West Coast

Office of Institutional Effectiveness on September 23, 2020; however, the director asked me to

wait until mid-October 2020 to begin participant recruitment. The notice of approval was not

included in the appendix section to protect confidentiality of the study site and participants.

In mid-October 2020, I spoke with the Director of International Programs who agreed to

personally send my recruitment email (Appendix D) to the 165 students who met my

qualification guidelines. Although the Director of International Programs sent the email on my

behalf, the person was not informed of any students who agreed or did not agree to participate in

the study. The recruitment email offered University of the West Coast post-study abroad

students the opportunity to volunteer to possibly participate in my inquiry. It contained links to

the inquiry interest form (Appendix E), recruitment flyer (Appendix F), and recruitment video

(Appendix G). The Director of International Programs sent, to all prospective participants, the

original recruitment email on October 19, 2020 and the reminder recruitment email on November

10, 2020.

I initially anticipated recruiting 16 participants and expected that through attrition, the

final group would be no more than eight. However, due the pandemic, it was difficult to recruit

16 participants. One student did indicate that students were feeling overwhelmed in fall 2020 both because of the way their study abroad experiences unfolded and the challenges of adjusting to online/remote learning that semester. Ten students initially responded to these emails and completed the screening form. I followed up with an email to remind these students to sign the Research Subject's Consent to Participate in Research Form (Appendix H) (informed consent document). Of the 10 individuals who completed the inquiry interest form, four signed the informed consent document. The remaining six individuals received three reminders each but did not respond. Of the four who completed the informed consent document, two elected to participate in the study. These two participants then completed the demographic questionnaire (Appendix I) and the semi-structured interview (Appendix J). During the semi-structured interview, I asked the participants if they could think of any other students that might be interested in participating in the inquiry to encourage them to contact me. This attempt at snowball sampling (Patton, 2015) did not yield additional participants.

Influences on Participant Recruitment

The COVID-19 pandemic likely played a role in why more post-study abroad students did not volunteer to participate in this inquiry. First, the abrupt return home was a disappointing experience for these students. Known for their excellent study abroad program, the University of the West Coast boasted that over two-thirds of its students studied abroad during year two of college. As a value-added program for the university, study abroad was something everyone discussed, and the students looked forward to going abroad. Students may not have been ready to talk about the disappointing moment in their lives when they were abruptly sent home from study abroad. Second, participants spoke of their busyness with online/remote learning. At the time I looked for participants, this study could have been one more thing to inundate their

already busy online schedules. The feeling of being overwhelmed definitely manifested with my participants. This section focused on selection criteria, participant recruitment, and influences on participant recruitment. These factors affected data collection.

Data Collection

In this section on data collection, alignment with research questions, data sources, and influences on data collection and data are discussed. Due to COVID-19 pandemic restrictions at both my home university, as well as the University of the West Coast, data were approved to be collected remotely in online settings through a cloud platform and Google Forms. The selection criteria I used determined participant recruitment; these critical factors determined the data collection sources and procedures I planned in Chapter 3. I conducted the research in the U.S. and in English. Alignment with research questions was discussed in the following section.

Alignment with Research Questions

I began data collection from the two confirmed participants in November 2020 and completed data collection in December 2020. During this time, the Director of International Programs sent out the reminder email on my behalf to the students who met the qualification guidelines. Roberts and Hyatt (2019) suggested aligning data collection instruments to inform the research questions. I set up a detailed matrix of the dates and purpose for the data collection process documents (Appendix K). This inquiry aimed to develop an in-depth understanding of the post-study abroad experiences of participants through collecting multiple forms of qualitative data (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Patton (2015) described qualitative data as "words, stories, observations, and documents" (p. 24). According to Creswell and Poth (2018), data in qualitative analysis grouped into four areas: interviews, observations, documents, and audiovisual materials. Data collection included "interviews, observations, or document

analysis" (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 24). In this inquiry, data collection focused on what happened "to individuals in a setting and how individuals are affected by the setting" (Patton, 2015, p. 261). For Merriam and Tisdell (2016), "data collection is about asking, watching, and reviewing" (p. 106). Creswell and Poth (2018) indicated that using "new and creative data collection methods" (p. 161) should be considered when designing qualitative studies.

I collected data at different points in the post-study abroad experience of participants to capture the range of in what ways they made meaning of their experiences (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Patton, 2015). According to Savicki and Price (2017), students may be most open psychologically before departing and after returning from studying abroad when they reflected on feeling powerfully conflicting emotions. Sobie (1986) found that unfortunately, some returnees may not fully comprehend the impact and prospective of newly-acquired experiences, attitudes, and strategies for coping. During this time, "reflection is pivotal to the process of meaning making" (Savicki & Price, 2017, p. 51). Creswell and Poth (2018) recommended the use of a data collection matrix "in all approaches of inquiry to convey the depth and multiple forms of data collection" (p. 162). The matrix in Table 3 delineates the sequence and alignment of multiple forms of data sources with the research questions of this inquiry.

Table 3

Data Source Sequence and Alignment with Research Questions

Research Question:	1. In what ways, if any, does the post-study abroad experience facilitate the development of emerging self-authorship of U.S. college students?	a) What are key common milestones for U.S. college students in their first-year post-study abroad?	b) In what ways, if any, do key common milestones for U.S. college students connect to emerging self-authorship in their first-year post-study abroad?	c) In what ways, if any, does emerging self-authorship support U.S. college students in making sense of unexpected major events in their first-year post-study abroad?	d) What objects, if any, give voice to and represent emerging self-authorship for U.S. college students in their first-year post-study abroad?
Demographic Questionnaire, November 2020 (approximately 10 minutes) • asked basic demographic questions • gave deeper insights into how participants saw selves • enabled me to describe participants better • provided context for other data I gathered • aligned with research questions	✓				
Semi-Structured Interview, November 2020 (approximately 60 minutes) • gave participants the opportunity to tell the story of their post-study abroad experience, how they made sense of this, and how they grew personally • provided diverse expression options • aligned with research questions	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Journal 1, November 2020 (approximately 30 minutes) • elicited deeper reflection from participants by asking them to respond to prompts and share an object representing a post-study abroad peak meaningful experience or provocative moment • provided diverse expression options • aligned with research questions	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Journal 2, December 2020 (approximately 30 minutes) • peeled back layers of meaning making behind experiences participants described with their representative object and elicited deeper reflection on how they saw themselves, others, and the world, as well as their decision-making • provided diverse expression options • aligned with research questions	✓	✓	✓	✓	

This research supported the importance of giving voice to the experiences of post-study abroad students through multiple data sources.

Data Sources

For this inquiry, data were selected to best help me understand experiences of post-study abroad students and strategies they used to make meaning of their experiences upon returning home (Pizzolato & Ozaki, 2007). The expected rich depth and breadth of the data offset the small number of participants (Roberts & Hyatt, 2019). In turn, this depth and breadth of multiple data sources depended upon their relevance to the research questions, and it allowed the inquiry to be designed to support the research questions and provide triangulation (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Roberts & Hyatt, 2019). Data triangulation furthered the strengths of each form of data to compensate for the weakness in others (Patton, 2015). The multiple, in-depth data collection sources included a demographic questionnaire, the recorded semi-structured interview, Journal 1 (Appendix L) with a representative object, and Journal 2 (Appendix M) (Creswell & Poth, 2018). As in all other aspects of this inquiry, I took steps to respect and keep confidentiality of participants (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Patton, 2015). The first data source used was demographic questionnaires.

D**emographic questionnaires.** Patton (2015) suggested that surveying, through a demographic questionnaire, afforded a quick way to gather information. As with all the other data sources, the demographic questionnaire questions aligned with the research questions. The sample became illustrative of the post-study abroad experience but not definitive. Survey results from the online demographic questionnaires augmented data from semi-structured interviews which "provide meaningful additional detail to help make sense of and interpret survey results" (Patton, 2015, p. 230).

I collected demographic questionnaire data remotely through the online setting of Google Forms. In November 2020, I sent to participants the email with a link to the demographic questionnaire (Appendix N). This questionnaire gave participants the chance to answer basic demographic questions before I asked them to unpack the layers of their post-study abroad experiences. The demographic questionnaire items surveyed participants' name, gender, ethnicity, age upon returning from study abroad, year in college during study abroad, first-generation college student status, study abroad location, and major(s) during study abroad, whether they traveled outside the United States before studying abroad, and the location and with whom they lived most of the time upon returning home from studying abroad. Participants had the option of not answering any item in the questionnaire (Patton, 2015). The link for the demographic questionnaire was resent to participants who did not respond within a week. Both participants completed every question on the demographic questionnaire, and their answers helped me gain deeper insights into how they saw themselves, enabled me to describe the participants better, and provided context for the other data I gathered. The second data source involved semi-structured interviews.

Semi-structured interviews. Patton (2015) described the purpose of interviews as allowing "us to enter into the other person's perspective" (p. 426). Further, Patton (2015) contended that "the fundamental principle of qualitative interviewing is to provide a framework within which the respondents can express *their own* understandings in their own terms" (p. 442, italics in original). Magolda et al. (2012) promoted interviews to explore the experiences students revealed as important. My challenge was to create the opportunity to bring myself into the perspective and world of the interviewees (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Patton, 2015).

In a study including blogs and interviews with study abroad students, Tonkin and Bourgault du Coudray (2016) observed that "the process of being interviewed had the unanticipated effect of providing students with a new framework for thinking about what could be learned through the experience of living abroad" (p. 112). Post-study abroad students often found their worldview shifting and their place in the world changing (Pritchard, 2011). Numerous studies indicated that many study abroad students lacked the skills and tools to explain their feelings and thoughts, so they did not benefit as deeply as possible from their study abroad experience (Brubaker, 2007; Lee, 2011; Thomas & Kerstetter, 2020; Tonkin & Bourgault du Coudray, 2016). For interviews and conversations with college students, Magolda and King (2008) maintained that the key was to empower students to make meaning of their experiences instead of the interviewer making meaning for them. Allowing post-study abroad students time to think and respond to questions and prompts helped them to explore, unpack, articulate, and not oversimplify descriptions of unique and often cathartic study abroad experiences and what they learned (Kortegast & Boisfontaine, 2015). Study abroad students who discussed experiences realized significant and positive effects in the areas of identity, affect, and responsibility (Engberg & Jourian, 2015). Providing students with opportunities for reentry and post-departure reflection eased reentry adjustment and supported students in making meaning of their experiences abroad (Jones et al., 2012; Wielkiewicz & Turkowski, 2010).

The semi-structured interviews included descriptive, open-ended questions to draw out the complexity and rich nature of the experiences of students through avoiding dichotomous questions. Answers to open-ended questions were explored by emerging inquiry questions (Patton, 2015). "Probing is a skill that comes from knowing what to look for in the interview, listening carefully to what is said, and being sensitive to the feedback needs of the person being

interviewed" (Patton, 2015, p. 466). Gentle probes helped students clarify and explain responses (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Probing helped participants make meaning of their experiences through reflecting, providing descriptions, and freely expressing important concerns (Baxter Magolda & King, 2007).

I considered the added constraint of conducting these interviews online due to the COVID-19 pandemic and used Salmons' (2011) suggestions for organizing my approach to using online interviews. Recent literature promoted the positive features of video conferencing, provided suggestions for establishing report during video conferencing, and advised that it should not be considered inferior to face-to-face interviewing. Video conferencing provided a sense of ease because researchers and participants located themselves in safe settings instead of each other's personal space (Deakin & Wakefield, 2014; Gray et al., 2020; Hanna, 2012; Irani, 2019; Seitz, 2016; Weller, 2017).

Due to the uncertainty of the COVID-19 pandemic and need for social distancing the University of the Pacific, my home university, required that I conduct the interviews on a cloud platform. I originally planned to interview participants face-to-face but quickly changed to the cloud platform during the COVID-19 pandemic. In November 2020, I sent participants an email with acceptance and link to schedule semi-structured interview (Appendix O). The link led them to Google Calendar Appointment Slots to schedule interviews. I resent the email, with their acceptance and the link to schedule interviews, to participants who did not respond within a week.

I conducted the approximately one-hour long recorded interviews remotely via a cloud platform in November 2020. The philosophical orientation for interviews in this inquiry was social constructivist interviewing (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Patton, 2015). For interviews,

Magolda et al. (2012) employed constructivist assumptions and contended "that self-authorship development is socially constructed and context-bound, that it takes multiple forms, and that our ability to understand interviewees' development is shaped by the interaction of the interviewer and interviewee" (p. 420). As with all other data sources, the recorded semi-structured interview questions aligned with the research questions (Castillo-Montoya, 2016) and the goal was to "elicit students' characteristics, the nature of the educational experiences they viewed as significant, and how they made sense of those experiences" (Baxter Magolda & King, 2007, p. 500). Reflecting on these experiences and why they were beneficial helped participants analyze their assumptions regarding the world, other people, and themselves. This interactive and reflective process promoted emerging self-authorship and supported the internal voices of participants (Magolda, 2008; Magolda & King, 2008).

Obtaining quality information from an interview depended on my skills as an interviewer (Patton, 2015). In this inquiry I bracketed or set aside, as far as possible, any potential biases from personal experience with this topic (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Tufford & Newman, 2012). Subsequent member checking assured me that I authentically heard and reflected what Avery said (Patton, 2015). Adopting a position that evoked non-judgement, sensitivity, and respect toward participants was necessary for me as I drew out data (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). I hoped to give students the chance to lean in to the ways their experiences influenced them in finding their own voice through personal growth in emerging self-authorship. These interviews added to the diverse ways students expressed themselves in this inquiry.

From the logistics of never meeting my participants face-to-face for the interviews to the collection of Journal 1 with a representative object to Journal 2, I knew I had to establish as much rapport as possible with Avery and Bryce. Before each interview, I reminded myself:

Be ready to really listen.

Embrace the awkward silence.

Look for deep, rich descriptions by giving each of my participants time to gather their thoughts, memories, and feelings.

These stories ache to be told.

Honor this.

For the semi-structured interviews, I contacted the participants via a cloud platform from my home, and it appeared that the participants also participated from their homes. As planned, I opened our cloud platform time together with a few minutes of small talk to establish a bit of rapport with my participants before moving on to discussing the details of the interview. I thanked them for volunteering for this inquiry and told them how much I appreciated them taking the time to talk to me. I acknowledged that they had busy schedules and promised to respect their time. After I thanked them for reading and signing the informed consent document using HelloSign, I asked if they had any problems signing it. Neither participant had any issues with signing it. I let them know I would keep copies of the signed informed consent documents in a locked cabinet, I would store all digital data on my password protected devices, and no one would know they participated in this inquiry unless they told them. I reminded them that my inquiry sought to understand in what ways the post-study abroad experience facilitated the development of emerging self-authorship of U.S. college students. I told them the interview would last about an hour, and I would ask them questions about when they left their study

abroad program and when they returned home from studying abroad. Both Avery and Bryce looked directly into the camera and voiced gratitude and enthusiasm about our interviews.

I asked participants if they had any questions for me and both participants asked me similar questions about the purpose of this inquiry. These students saw their class as a unique group, not only in light of the circumstances under which they abruptly returned from study abroad their sophomore year, but also all the crises and trauma they had gone through up to that point. As previously noted, to protect the confidentiality of participants and the university, the dual crises and traumas they experienced were not described here. However, it was worth noting that the experiences were in the local, state, and national news and covered for several weeks. Both participants asked if I chose their particular group for this inquiry because of all they had been through. Avery wondered "if there was a specific reason why you chose this year's group because our … study abroad got cut short because of COVID. So, is that … involved or … is it part of the study or …?" Bryce also asked if this inquiry involved looking into how self-authorship would change through studying with professors and classmates through online/remote learning. I let Avery and Bryce know I had gone through a couple of years of planning for this inquiry to focus on post-study abroad students and only by chance did the inquiry coincide with the pandemic.

After answering the pre-interview questions from participants, I informed each that if at any time they felt uncomfortable about answering any question, they could just let me know and I would immediately stop the interview (Castillo-Montoya, 2016). I pre-assigned them a pseudonym to keep their identity confidential, and they both responded that the pseudonym worked for them. I told them their name and any identifying information would not be associated with any of their direct quotes, therefore lowering the ability of others to link them

with their responses. I had the email address and phone number of the university counseling center on hand for any participant who presented an issue calling for assistance or referrals (Patton, 2015). In spite of the uncertainty of the COVID-19 pandemic and on-going protests against racism and social injustice, neither participant demonstrated any behaviors or made statements that indicated they needed assistance or a referral to counseling services.

I used a voice recording app on my cell phone, as well as the recording capability on the cloud platform, to digitally record our interviews (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Permission to record and use the recordings was included the informed consent document (Roberts & Hyatt, 2019). The digital recordings were transcribed by Rev.com. While using a transcriber enabled me to concentrate on data analysis, I listened to the digital recordings myself to make certain every word was transcribed (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). After each interview, I summarized any notes and began preparing thick, rich descriptions (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

As I learned through the interviews, Avery and Bryce took parallel but uniquely personal journeys to their eventual post-study abroad lived experience and they provided clues to what meant the most to them. Avery often prefaced her answers to my questions with the words: "It's interesting" and Bryce often took long pauses to gather his thoughts. I noted that Avery and Bryce used these cues to signal they had something important to share. Fortunately, I quickly learned to pay attention to these cues and gave Avery and Bryce time to gather their thoughts. I usually followed up with probes to give them a chance to elaborate and clarify their answers. In turn, the comments that followed ultimately added deep insight or critical details to this inquiry. The third data source included journals.

Journals. Journals offered these post-study abroad students a way to keep a record of thoughts, feelings, and emerging self-authorship journey. As an outlet for listening to and

trusting the internal voice and working through personal beliefs, journals built internal foundations (Magolda, 2009). Taking a step back from experiences produced a shift in perspective as students looked "back at it from a different time, or by virtue of having recorded it in some medium (e.g., a journal or a photo) that allows the event to be encapsulated in time rather than ongoing" (Savicki & Price, 2017, p. 52). Upon review of end-of-year study abroad education evaluation forms, Engle (2013) suggested that answering probing questions about their study abroad experiences possibly helped students connect to and remember their experiences abroad. Completing journal responses two different times secured reactions and perceptions at diverse points (Patton, 2015).

Merriam and Tisdell (2016) asserted that the researcher, as the primary data gathering instrument, must rely on intuition and skills for selecting and interpreting document data. Primary sources consisted of firsthand recollections of experiences by the document author. Secondary sources entailed the secondhand knowledge of experiences by the document author. Personal documents elicited perspectives and meaning making from the experiences of participants. These documents included "diaries, letters, home videos, … scrapbooks and photo albums, calendars, autobiographies, travel logs, and personal blogs … and other ubiquitous material" (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 166). Objects, such as photographs, helped students to connect study abroad to home by giving them an opportunity to share the most significant aspects of experiences with listeners (Kortegast & Boisfontaine, 2015). In an overview of photo elicitation, Harper (2002) noted that "images evoke deeper elements of human consciousness that do words; exchanges based on words alone utilize less of the brain's capacity than do exchanges in which the brain is processing images as well as words" (p. 13). While highly subjective, representative objects helped explain what participants deemed as important from

their personal perspective (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Representative objects reflected the important "attitudes, beliefs, and view of the world" (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 166) of the participants and at the same time, provided deeper meaning making for everyday events. The objects, considered artifacts, provided insight into unobservable things such as "aspirations, arrangements, tensions, relationships, and decisions" (Patton, 2015, p. 276). Representative objects offered analysis to contrast with what was shared in other data sources such as interviews and journals (Patton, 2015).

My original plan included participants each completing two journals. As with all my other data sources, the journal prompts aligned with my research questions. Online data collection presented ways to connect with hard-to-reach groups, such as post-study abroad students who returned from abroad but had not yet returned to the home campus (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Both journals included research question-based prompts and were designed to take about 30 minutes to complete. The journals allowed me to triangulate data and corroborate findings.

In November 2020, I sent participants an email with a link to Journal 1 with a representative object on Google Forms (Appendix P). Journal 1 was designed to collect data on in what ways a post-study abroad peak meaningful experience effected the ways participants saw themselves and others, and it asked them to share a representative object related to this experience. I had Journal 1 follow the semi-structured interview to elicit deeper reflection from participants by asking them to respond to research question-based prompts. Participants could respond to Journal 1 with a written, audio, or video response. They could be as creative as they wanted as long as they responded to the prompts and presented a representative object. They were asked to share an object that represented a peak meaningful experience they had since

returning home from studying abroad and what resonated with them about the object. The

representative object could be any physical artifact (such as a piece of clothing, pottery, or a

painting) or a digital artifact (such as a photo, an audio or video recording, a postcard, a blog

post, or a social media post) that represented their peak meaningful experience. The response

options provided students with diverse ways to express themselves. Their experiences provided

clues for key common milestones and in what ways they connected to emerging self-authorship.

After participants uploaded responses to Google Forms, I downloaded the responses to my

computer to retain this data (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). I resent the email with the link for

Journal 1 to participants who did not respond within a week.

In December 2020, I sent participants an email with a link to Journal 2 on Google Forms

(Appendix Q). I asked participants to complete Journal 2 to peel back the layers of the meaning

making behind experiences of students upon returning home from studying abroad. I designed

Journal 2 to collect data on meaning making, internal and external struggles in decision-making

and respecting authority figures, impact of major events and the ways they saw the world in

light of those events, their hopes and dreams, and advice to future post-study abroad students.

In Journal 2, participants self-reflected on how they saw themselves, others, and the world, as

well as their decision-making strategies. They identified situations that pushed them to listen to

that "little voice in their head," the strategies they used for decision-making in new situations,

and the ways the strategies may have changed since during post-study abroad. I also asked

them to unravel what internal and external struggles, if any, came when they chose between

respecting and honoring traditional authorities and following their intuition or internal voice. I

asked participants to reflect on the impact of major events on their college experience and how

being home from their study abroad experience affected how they saw the world. Finally, I

asked them to lean into the ways these experiences were shaping their hopes and dreams and what advice they had for future post-study abroad students to help them with their transition home. As with Journal 1, participants could respond to Journal 2 with a written, audio, or video response. After participants uploaded responses to Google Forms, I downloaded the responses to my computer to retain this data (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016. I resent the email with the link for Journal 2 to participants who did not respond within a week.

Avery completed both journal entries, while Bryce did not complete either journal. Once I received her completed Journal 2, I emailed a $30 Amazon gift card to Avery as thank you for participating. The data were collected during the fall 2020 term which was a time of upheaval and confusion for the students at University of the West Coast because of challenges associated with online/remote learning.

Although I did not reach my desired number of participants, I collected rich, deep stories of in what ways my participants interpreted, constructed, and made sense of their life experiences (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Overall, these rich, deep stories aligned with a qualitative approach. According to Clarke and Braun (2014), "[reflexive thematic analysis] can be used for both smaller and larger datasets" (p. 4). Percy et al. (2015) stated that "occasionally, a small, non-representative, but highly informed sample can provide rich information about the topic" (p. 79). Qualitative studies, as evidenced in Cain and Velasco (2020), have been employed to gather "rich, consistent, in-depth representation[s]" (p. 16) to examine the story of just one participant. In another qualitative study, Burbank et al. (2012) collected data from two participants and "unearthed interesting findings," as well as significant discrepancies between the two participants (Findings and Discussion section, para. 1). The data presented "a rich qualitative view of the participants' thinking as it developed and changed" (Implications section, para. 9).

Costello (2015) interviewed only two post-study abroad participants and the findings "reveal[ed] unique, yet common experiences" (p. 55). These areas, combined with the persistent uncertainty of the pandemic influenced data collection and data are discussed next.

Influences on Data Collection and Data

Several critical issues influenced data collection and participant data. Mandated delays for data collection, online restrictions for settings of interviews, and the trauma and disequilibrium each participant experienced influenced data collection conditions and participant data.

Mandated delays. Delays mandated by the University of the West Coast, and the requirement to use remote online locations, impacted the conditions for data collection. In August 2020, the University of the West Coast informed me that the dean postponed all research until October or November 2020 at the earliest. This decision was made due to a high number of requests to conduct research on the campus. University officials wanted to protect the students during a stressful, uncertain period in their lives, and thus, moved to limit research until they could determine how to best meet students' needs. Fortunately, I finally received approval from both universities and proceeded with data collection in late October 2020. Nevertheless, this unexpected delay impacted the timing and conditions for data collection. In our small talk before the interviews, Avery and Bryce mentioned that they were busy with homework and numerous forms they needed to fill out for school. In addition to the mandated delays, the requirement from my home university and University of the West Coast to use remote online locations for the interviews impacted the conditions for data collection.

Online semi-structured interview requirements. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic and health concerns, my home university required all research to be conducted

remotely and online. I had originally hoped to conduct face-to-face, interviews at the University

of the West Coast home campus, but I overcame this challenge and adapted to the online

interview requirements. The University of the West Coast already transitioned to online/remote

learning in March of 2020. While not providing the most ideal setting for data collection, the

cloud platform offered a comfortable and familiar venue for participants and for me to conduct

our interviews. This added to the sense of rapport I built with participants in spite of not meeting

face-to-face as I had hoped. Using the cloud platform gave me and participants the flexibility to

choose our preferred remote online locations for the interviews. In a small way, this added to the

comfort level between me and each participant. For maximum confidentiality and to eliminate

interruptions, I dedicated a room in my home for the hour-long interviews on the cloud platform.

For these interviews, both participants sat in settings that looked like bedrooms. Avery

emphasized the fact she sat in her high school bedroom for our interview on the cloud platform.

She expressed gratitude that, even though she told her mother to go ahead and use Avery's high

school bedroom however she wanted, her mother had not changed her bedroom since high

school. Bryce did not specify the location of his interview on the cloud platform. The

interviews took place without interruptions from outsiders. As the online requirements and the

cloud platform ultimately influenced the setting, the trauma and disequilibrium participants

experienced affected the data I collected from them.

   Trauma and disequilibrium. In their first three years of college, participants each

experienced trauma and disequilibrium which influenced the data. This group of students had a

unique perspective on life as they navigated their seasons of emerging self-authorship;

ultimately, their responses and this inquiry reflected it. In their first two years of college, Avery

and Bryce experienced many moments of trauma and disequilibrium. The story of these lived

experiences rolled out long before their first-year post-study abroad experience. It began with a group of college freshman who just settled in to their first semester. To protect the confidentiality of participants and the university, the dual crises and traumas they experienced were not described here. However, it was worth noting that the experiences were in the local, state, and national news and covered for several weeks. The trauma from these back-to-back crises left the students reeling. Sophomore year, these students embarked on what they hoped would revitalize and highlight their college experience—study abroad. Not long after returning abroad from the winter break, the students started to hear about a virus in China. At this point, participants encountered another crisis—the unexpected plot twist of study abroad abruptly cut short by the history-changing COVID-19 pandemic and the transition to online/remote learning. Junior year, they continued with online/remote learning through the uncertainty of the COVID-19 pandemic while contemporary protests against racial and social injustice, and countless other yet unspoken moments of challenge, unfolded. Life, as they knew it, shifted and changed all around these students. On some level, they were affected by the trauma and disequilibrium, and they carried this knowledge to our interviews. This section focused on alignment with research questions, data sources, and influences on data collection and data. During data collection, I gathered thick, rich data and moved on to data analysis.

Data Analysis

Areas highlighted in this section included data systems, reflexive thematic analysis, and emerging self-authorship analysis. Before proceeding with data analysis, I set up data systems.

Data Systems

The data systems I used to keep track of data included Word, Excel, and Rev.com on my password protected devices, as well as handwritten notes. I used Word or Excel for the inquiry

timeline, participant demographic information, recruitment activities and dates, interview

transcriptions, and my understandings as they emerged by pseudonym and dates of all. I wrote

out reflections by hand after each interview and throughout the inquiry. After having the

recorded interviews transcribed by Rev.com, I transferred the conversations line-by-line from a

Word document to an Excel spreadsheet. Once I established the data systems, I focused on

reflexive thematic analysis of data.

Reflexive Thematic Analysis

As I considered reflexive thematic analysis, I read a Braun and Clarke (2019) pearl of

wisdom that opened my mind to the possibilities for data analysis: "qualitative research is about

fun, play and creativity" (p. 591). It reminded me that formulas and recipes did not align with

the study design and final data analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2019). To understand in what ways

participants made meaning in their experiences, I first needed to make meaning within my own

data analysis.

I relied on Braun and Clarke's (2006) reflexive thematic analysis approach for data

analysis. This method lent itself well to this inquiry because it helped me meet the purpose and

answer the research questions, and it also gave me the flexibility to identify codes and ultimately

themes in a fluid, iterative way (Braun & Clarke, 2019; Terry et al., 2017). This flexibility

allowed me to code and analyze using inductive and deductive data coding and analysis (Braun

& Clarke, 2012). Using an inductive framework, I developed codes and themes based on their

importance to participants and their experiences. Using a deductive framework, I based the

research questions on self-authorship, so I ultimately drew from this lens. Throughout the

process, I continually reflected on my developing analysis by revisiting "A 15-point checklist of

criteria for good thematic analysis" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 96) (Appendix R). This checklist

circled through the process from transcription to coding to analysis to overall to written report (Braun & Clarke, 2006). In one study, Bryant (2011) noted "journaling and interview/observation memos ensured greater self-awareness by revealing personal biases, tensions, and subjective reactions to the data" (p. 20). As much as possible, I bracketed and set aside any potential biases from personal experience with this topic (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Tufford & Newman, 2012).

The reflexive process of data analysis included six fluid and iterative phases (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2012, 2020; Braun et al., 2014; Clarke & Braun, 2014; Terry et al., 2017). During every phase, I used my password protected devices to store detailed descriptions of procedures, details, and timelines, as well as reasons for theoretical, methodological, and reflexive analytical choices (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016) (Appendix S). The following summarized how I used these phases along the data analysis journey:

Phase 1 in reflexive data analysis: Familiarized myself with the data. I acquainted myself with, and immersed myself in, the raw interview and journal data from the different data collection modes. I considered my research questions and any obvious elements, took notes, and preliminarily organized the data into short codes on Excel spreadsheets.

Phase 2 in reflexive data analysis: Coded the data. I coded the data that had analytic relevance and noted it in the Excel *Code* column, organized the data, and checked for consistency. With my research questions in mind, I decided which aspects of the coded data set might be interesting enough to later form the basis of themes and noted this in the Excel *Notes* column. I noticed that quite a few of the codes fit the stages of grief: denial, anger, bargaining, depression, acceptance, and meaning (Kessler, 2019) and placed those codes separately at top of list. I repeated this process for each item in the data set.

Phase 3 in reflexive data analysis: Generated initial themes from the codes. I shifted

from generating codes to constructing potential themes. I created a thematic map and code

coversheet for each participant. I collapsed codes into initial themes and developed short,

representative phrases for each initial themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Phase 4 in reflexive data analysis: Reviewed themes against dataset and research

questions. As I thought about my coded extracts in terms of generating themes, I recursively

revisited my research questions. I considered how to best express these codes by initial themes

to answer my research questions and how to eventually fold the initial themes into final themes.

Phase 5 in reflexive data analysis: Named and defined themes. I continued analysis

of my final themes and generated theme definitions and names. I refined the specifics of my

initial themes and abbreviated themes on the Excel spreadsheets. I made certain the theme

names best represented the topics and checked grammatical consistency (Clarke & Braun, 2014).

Phase 6 in reflexive data analysis: Wrote my analysis. In finishing my analysis, I used

vivid and compelling quotes to answer my research questions through the story of the data. I

double-checked times, and I adjusted and rearranged sequences of themes and subthemes. To

best represent data and capture "the essence of the theme" (Braun et al., 2014, p. 194), I

recursively revisited and revised subthemes. I used member checking by sending to participants

an email with a link to the option to read and respond to the Chapter 4 outline draft on Google

Forms (Appendix T) within ten days (Patton, 2015). To check each step of thematic analysis, I

used "A 15-point checklist of criteria for good thematic analysis" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 96).

Emerging Self-Authorship Analysis

Existing frameworks were used to analyze data through deductive analysis (Patton,

2015). To analyze data and determine the emerging self-authorship level of participants,

Magolda et al. (2012) broke down ten developmental positions: "three variations of *external* meaning making, Ea, Eb, Ec; two variations of *predominantly external* meaning making, E(I), E-I; two variations of *predominantly internal* meaning making, I-E, II; and three variations of *internal* meaning making (i.e., self-authorship), Ia, Ib, Ic." (p. 421). I determined the approximate developmental position of emerging self-authorship for each participant by using deductive analysis and applying the ten developmental positions. I analyzed why students interpreted and made meaning of experiences in particular ways which helped me uncover the cognitive (epistemological), intrapersonal, and interpersonal assumptions of the students. I kept in mind that student interpretations and assumptions may have been retained or modified over time. Important to note was the tension many students in the Magolda et al. (2012) study felt from depending on those external sources (such as parents, professors, the media) as they moved from the Ea position to the Eb. This tension caused students to question their previously unquestioned reliances and propelled them to see the value of using internal sources. Table 4 depicted the journey of self-authorship and ten developmental positions of analysis for interview protocol.

Table 4

Journey toward Self-Authorship

EXTERNAL	CROSSROADS	INTERNAL
Ea: Consistently and unquestioningly rely on external sources *without recognizing* possible shortcomings of this approach. **Eb:** Consistently rely on external sources, but *experience tensions* in doing so, particularly if external sources conflict. **Ec:** Continue to rely on external sources but *recognize shortcomings* of this approach.	**Predominantly External** **E(I):** Continue to rely on external sources despite *awareness of the need* for an internal voice. Realize the dilemma of external meaning making yet are unsure how to proceed. **E-I:** Begin to *actively work on constructing* a new way of meaning making yet "lean back" to earlier external positions. **Predominantly Internal** **I-E:** Begin to *listen carefully* to internal voice, which now edges out external sources. External sources still strong, making it hard to maintain the internal voice consistently. **I(E):** Actively work to *cultivate* the internal voice, which mediates most external sources. Consciously work to not slip back into former tendency to allow others' points of view to subsume own point of view.	**Ia:** *Trust* the internal voice sufficiently to refine beliefs, values, identities, and relationships. Use internal voice to shape reactions and manage external sources. **Ib:** Trust internal voice sufficiently to craft commitments into a *philosophy of life* to react to guide how to react to external sources. **Ic:** Solidify philosophy of life as the *core of one's being;* living it becomes second nature.

Note. Adapted from Magolda et al. (2012, p. 422).

Different factors, including constructivist-developmental assumptions, complicated

assessment of emerging self-authorship (Baxter Magolda & King, 2012; Kegan, 1994).

Assessment of self-authorship "requires understanding *how* people make meaning (or the

structure of meaning making) instead of *what* they believe (or the content)" (Welkener &

Magolda, 2014, p. 581). To explore the experiences that students revealed as important,

Magolda et al. (2012) promoted interviews. In the past, in-depth, semi-structured interviews

dominated assessment in self-authorship data collection in qualitative studies. To accommodate

the intersections of these factors, Welkener and Magolda (2014) suggested exploration of new

avenues to assess self-authorship. In this inquiry, journaling with representative objects was one such new avenue to connect emerging self-authorship to the data

This section focused on data analysis pieces that included data systems, reflexive thematic analysis, and emerging self-authorship analysis. The next section will explore my role as the researcher.

Role of the Researcher

As I reflected on my role as the researcher and because of my upbringing on our family ranch, I was drawn to the metaphor of the researcher being a gardener who plants seeds for interviewees (Salmons, 2011). Once the seeds were planted, the researcher cultivated by asking follow-up questions meant to grow into stories and perceptions shared by interviewees throughout data collection. This metaphor helped me more clearly see and define my role as a qualitative researcher.

Patton (2015) portrayed the role of qualitative researchers as being active, involved, and close to what was studied. Years ago, I became interested in issues surrounding college students who returned home from studying abroad by observing the varied experiences of my own children, their friends, and dozens of our seasonal college student employees.

At the time, I was curious about the ways these young adults dealt with decision-making and responded to life post-study abroad. I wondered if these experiences were truly common experiences for post-study abroad students. While I had no idea that a framework like self-authorship existed, I suspected something cognitive or developmental was occurring with these students during this time. Fortunately, a professor encouraged me to investigate Baxter Magolda, and the self-authorship framework became the Rosetta Stone moment to propel my inquiry forward.

As the researcher, I planned and completed the inquiry and acted with the highest ethical behavior possible (Roberts & Hyatt, 2019). I took reasonable steps in keeping confidential any information acquired in this inquiry that might be identified with the participants and used pseudonyms for the participants (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Roberts & Hyatt, 2019). Moreover, I saw the beauty and necessity of drawing out and cultivating the unique stories of participants— the two young adults who studied abroad and unexpectedly returned home. I practiced empathic neutrality and mindfulness while treating participants with respect. Authentically connecting with participants meant communicating empathic neutrality by demonstrating understanding without judgement. Mindfulness meant I was present, completely focused, and immersed in the moment. If I was to truly cultivate and hear the unique stories of my participants and describe them with thick, rich detail, I resigned myself to listen with mindfulness and empathic neutrality (Patton, 2015; Salmons, 2011). My role as the researcher tied deeply to the possibilities of researcher bias, which I described in the next section.

Researcher Bias

From the onset of this research project, I balanced the tension between any researcher bias that could affect the research process and my drive to understand the topic on a deeper level. I adopted a position that evoked non-judgement, sensitivity, and respect toward participants (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). I tried to maintain the highest possible ethical standards, while avoiding responses or gestures that indicated any judgement (Patton, 2015).

During all phases, I purposefully and strategically bracketed, any possible unacknowledged biases or preconceived ideas from my personal experiences that could taint the research process (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Tufford & Newman, 2012). I began by acknowledging my countless conversations with numerous faculty, parents, students,

peers, and my own children regarding study abroad and post-study abroad over the years (Tufford & Newman, 2012). Since I had visited many of the study abroad campuses, I acknowledged my familiarity with these locations (Hanson, 1994). Finally, I acknowledged I had certain preconceived theories (Tufford & Newman, 2012) about post-study abroad, reverse culture shock, and the theoretical framework of self-authorship (Magolda, 2004) but wanted to give my participants an open, safe place to give voice to their unique and important experiences. To stay self-aware, I kept these factors in my mind but also posted them in my office with my research questions.

As I created my interview questions, I kept an informal reflective journal to document my process and any unconscious preconceptions, as well as to remind me to maintain a reflexive stance. During interviews, I memoed nuances and cues in participants' body language. I stayed engaged to make certain my desire to obtain deep, rich data did not come at the cost of my participants' comfort. This was especially important as I gently prompted the participants to dig deeper into some wonderful memories but also some difficult memories of crises and trauma (Tufford & Newman, 2012). I committed to avoiding predispositions in including or excluding any critical data or data analysis based on biases inherent in the self-authorship theoretical framework (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Throughout data analysis, I consciously maintained a balance between staying open to possibilities, themes, and subthemes that would best capture the participants' experiences and voices. I wrote notes to myself that I read before each interview to stay open and focused on good listening (Tufford & Newman, 2012). As I wrote my findings and discussion, I "look[ed] for data that support[ed] alternative explanations" (Patton, 2015, p. 653). I kept in mind the importance of bringing my participants' voices to life and honoring their stories as I answered my research questions (Tufford & Newman, 2012).

Roberts and Hyatt (2019) described assumptions as "what you take for granted relative to your study" (p. 111). My assumptions included: a) participants sincerely wanted to take part in the inquiry, b) participants responded and reflected candidly and truthfully, with their best recollections and opinions, c) participants may not have remembered some facts due to passing of time (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016), d) perspectives of participants changed as they progressed in emerging self-authorship, and e) including two participants provided two different perspectives. The researcher bias section led to the limitations of this inquiry.

Limitations

The first limitation of this inquiry was that the participants were two students from one university on the west coast of the United States. In this inquiry the rich descriptions, inherent in qualitative research, were woven through the stories of the participants. The expected rich depth and breadth of the multiple data sources offset the limited number of participants (Patton, 2015; Roberts & Hyatt, 2019). Working with two participants provided the opportunity to collect in-depth stories that led to substantial data. The second limitation was the regional and cultural differences in study abroad countries and the array of locations the participants scattered to upon returning when their study abroad experiences were cut short by the COVID-19 pandemic. These two aspects may have appeared to be limiting because I could not control unknown conditions or factors in those locations that might have biased participant responses (Roberts & Hyatt, 2019). In response, I hoped to highlight these potential conditions and factors to compare and contrast the experiences of the participants. The third limitation was that while having two participants generated more than one viewpoint, all possible viewpoints and reflections could not be included. The importance of trustworthiness of the inquiry is discussed next.

Trustworthiness

The importance of trustworthiness and credibility in this inquiry could not be understated. Trustworthiness involved the quality of the inquiry (Schwandt, 2015). Trustworthiness also included conducting the inquiry rigorously and ethically (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Nowell et al. (2017) specifically addressed trustworthiness in thematic analysis by stating:

> To be accepted as trustworthy, qualitative researchers must demonstrate that data analysis has been conducted in a precise, consistent, and exhaustive manner through recording, systematizing, and disclosing the methods of analysis with enough detail to enable the reader to determine whether the process is credible. (p.1)

The reader must be cognizant of how the researchers analyzed the data and what assumptions informed this analysis (Nowell et al., 2017).

Establishing Trustworthiness in Reflexive Thematic Analysis

For the purposes of this inquiry, I initially planned to use Merriam and Tisdell's (2016) three constructivist worldview strategy areas to establish trustworthiness. However, when I began researching reflexive thematic analysis, it made more sense to explain how I incorporated trustworthiness into the six phases of thematic analysis as outlined by Nowell et al. (2017). During every phase, I used my password protected devices to store detailed descriptions of procedures, details, and timelines, as well as reasons for theoretical, methodological, and reflexive analytical choices (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). I created a detailed outline for establishing trustworthiness in each phase of thematic analysis (Appendix U). The following summarized how I established trustworthiness throughout this process:

Phase 1 in reflexive data analysis: Familiarized myself with the data—Establishing trustworthiness. For triangulation, I used different data collection modes and recursively familiarized myself with the raw data (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Roberts & Hyatt, 2019). From a constructivist viewpoint, this helped me "capture and report multiple

perspectives rather than seek a singular truth" (Patton, 2015, p. 684). I documented my theoretical and reflective thoughts through note making, asking myself questions, verifying the accuracy of the transcriptions in (Braun & Clark, 2012). I deliberately searched "for negative cases" (Patton, 2015, p. 684), as well as unexpected, patterns in the data. I bracketed or set aside, as far as possible, any potential biases from personal experience with this topic (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Tufford & Newman, 2012). Subsequent member checking assured me that I authentically heard and reflected what Avery said and wrote in her journal (Patton, 2015). Adopting a position that evoked non-judgement, sensitivity, and respect toward participants was necessary for me as I drew out data (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Phase 2 in reflexive data analysis: Coded the data—Establishing trustworthiness. With my research questions in mind, I recursively and systematically analyzed and organized all important information in the data set into a coding framework; journaled reflections; and added, combined, or eliminated codes with analytic relevance (Braun & Clarke, 2012). I checked appropriateness and consistency of all codes within and across the data sets of both participants.

Phase 3 in reflexive data analysis: Generated initial themes from the codes—Establishing trustworthiness. I kept detailed notes on how I shifted from generating codes to constructing potential themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Braun et al., 2014). I drew a rough initial thematic map to help me organize, connect, and see the codes from another perspective and created lists of potential themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2012; Braun et al., 2014; Clarke & Braun, 2014; Terry et al., 2017).

Phase 4 in reflexive data analysis: Reviewed themes against dataset and research questions—Establishing trustworthiness. I revisited my raw data and research questions and

considered how to best express these codes by initial themes and answer my research questions (Clarke & Braun, 2014). I collapsed, broke down, or eliminated some themes.

Phase 5 in reflexive data analysis: Named and defined themes—Establishing trustworthiness. I continued analysis of my final themes, and I documented generation of clear theme definitions and names, confirmed they best represented each topic, and checked for grammatical consistency (Clarke & Braun, 2014).

Phase 6 in reflexive data analysis: Wrote my analysis—Establishing trustworthiness. I provided in-depth analysis and sequential, thick, rich descriptions of the nature of the findings and used vivid and compelling quotes to answer my research questions through the story of my data (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). I captured the essence of the post-study abroad experience, and emerging self-authorship journey of each participant, by ultimately checking each step of my thematic analysis against "A 15-point checklist of criteria for good thematic analysis" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 96). I used member checking to increase credibility by having "those who were studied review the findings" (Patton, 2015, p. 668). According to Patton (2015), "[r]esearchers and evaluators can learn a great deal about the accuracy, completeness, fairness, and perceived validity of their data analysis by having the people described in that analysis react to what is described and concluded" (p. 668). For member checking, I sent to participants an email with a link to the option to read and respond to the Chapter 4 outline draft on Google Forms within ten days (Patton, 2015). While both participants responded, only Avery read and provided feedback.

Summary

This chapter included descriptions of the methodology for this inquiry. The descriptions reviewed the specific research design, data collection, and data analysis. My role as the

researcher was detailed, as well as researcher bias, assumptions, limitations, and procedures for ensuring trustworthiness. The chapter ended with a summary. Chapter 4, which followed next, reviewed the findings of this inquiry.

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

"All that is gold does not glitter,
Not all those who wander are lost."
– J.R.R. Tolkien

Overview of Chapter 4

This chapter reviews the findings of this exploratory inquiry using basic qualitative methodology and reflective thematic analysis. The overarching purpose of this inquiry was to describe in what ways, if any, the post-study abroad experience facilitates the development of emerging self-authorship of U.S. college students. Avery and Bryce found it difficult to make meaning of their experiences as they struggled to adjust to life back in the U.S. during a pandemic that followed their abbreviated study abroad experience. In turn, their descriptions of their post-study abroad experiences facilitated my understanding of their emerging self-authorship, and this understanding pressed toward the purpose of this inquiry. This chapter begins with an in-depth introduction of the participants followed by an overview of the three themes I identified from the data.

Participant Information

Participant information for this inquiry emerged from participants' selection criteria, responses on the demographic questionnaire, self-characterizations, and backstory derived from the interviews. Each provided me with insight into participants before I asked them to unpack the layers of their post-study abroad experiences.

Selection Criteria

Avery and Bryce were post-study abroad students from the U.S., were enrolled at University of the West Coast (a pseudonym), completed their study abroad experience during the 2019–2020 academic year, and were between 18 years of age and 24 years of age. Throughout this inquiry, I obscured identifying information regarding participants by generalizing details or characteristics that might identify them.

Demographics

Before I interviewed them, Avery and Bryce filled out the demographic questionnaire on Google Forms to answer basic demographic questions. Results from this demographic questionnaire helped me gain deeper insights into how participants saw themselves, enabled me to describe the participants better, and provided context for the other data I gathered. To protect the confidentiality of participants, I used general terms to describe characteristics such as their majors and university roles. Even though their choice of majors affected their worldviews and how they perceived and described their personal experiences, I ultimately decided that disclosing more specific information might compromise confidentiality. Table 5 illustrated the demographics for Avery and Bryce that related to the inquiry and included only gender, ethnicity, age upon returning from study abroad, year in college while studying abroad, whether they were a first-generation college student, whether they had traveled outside the United States before studying abroad, and where they lived most of the time during post-study abroad.

Table 5

Participant Demographics

Demographic Questionnaire Question:	Response, Avery:	Response, Bryce:
My gender is:	Female	Male
My ethnicity is:	White	White
When I returned from studying abroad in 2020, my age was:	20 years	20 years
The year I studied abroad, I was a:	Sophomore	Sophomore
I am a first-generation college student:	No	No
I traveled outside the United States before studying abroad:	Yes	No
When I returned home from studying abroad, most of the time I lived:	with my family in our primary residence—apartment, townhouse, condo, or home	with my family in our primary residence—apartment, townhouse, condo, or home

Self-Characterizations—Biographical Statement

At the beginning of our interviews, I asked participants to tell me a bit about themselves. Both Avery and Bryce told me about their majors and leadership positions at the University of the West Coast. Avery described herself as currently a junior. She mentioned one of her lifelong favorite things to do—travel "to new places and just experiencing new things." Avery referred to how this worked out well because she could meld her major with her love of travel. Bryce characterized himself as "a 21-year-old heterosexual male as the demographic questionnaire has also proven." He talked about his siblings and where he was raised. Bryce pointed out how different the move to the west coast was when he went away to college, which "sparked a lot of formative moments for [him] in the past few years." Bryce spoke resolutely of holding many convictions, which aligned with his calling to find a fulfilling vocation through helping people. Not only did these initial descriptions tell me a bit about participants, but their comments also provided clues to what mattered most in their lives. It should be noted that the backstory participants revealed during data collection held even more critical clues for framing and understanding what brought them to their post-study abroad experiences.

The Backstory

The backstory of how study abroad pivoted abruptly into post-study abroad for Avery and Bryce helped me understand in what ways, if any, the post-study abroad experience facilitated the development of emerging self-authorship of U.S. college students. This section described events that led up to Avery and Bryce's transition from study abroad to post-study abroad. This life-changing moment, and the unexpected events that followed, created considerable disequilibrium that drove Avery and Bryce toward emerging self-authorship. The freedom and autonomy of studying abroad contrasted starkly with the constraints of the COVID-19 pandemic. Avery and Bryce sustained trauma before study abroad, lived their best lives, ignored the obvious signs, and endured uncertainty during 2020. The following section contained an important piece of the backstory, which included the trauma sustained by participants before study abroad.

Sustained trauma before study abroad. The common thread of the pain and disequilibrium of trauma wove its way through the stories of the lived experiences that Avery and Bryce chose to share with me. Both before and after study abroad, trauma profoundly affected how they viewed life and what mattered most to them. Bryce summed up the trauma he, Avery, and their classmates sustained during their first two years of college. He described freshman year as marked by what Bryce called "a very difficult experience for me honestly. That was a very, very strange time and very hard." That year, Bryce felt separated from his familiar community at home and thrust into a new and unfamiliar community at college. He quipped: "My tongue in cheek response … has been that the study abroad experience for me started when I went from [home state] to [university state]." During freshman year Bryce, Avery, and their classmates also suffered the impacts of dual crises and trauma. To protect the

confidentiality of participants and the university, the dual crises and traumas they experienced were not described here. However, it was worth noting that the experiences were in the local, state, and national news and covered for several weeks. Friends had invited Bryce to join them at the location where one of the incidents ended up taking place, but he had declined their invitation. Later that same day, he met with those friends to relive the disturbing event details with them. The following day, Bryce and his fellow University of the West Coast classmates endured yet another disturbing and traumatic incident. These dual crises gave Bryce "a lot of very … intense … memories." In contrast to the pain and disequilibrium of the crises and trauma they sustained before study abroad, participants lived their best lives during study abroad.

Lived their best lives. Sophomore year signified a huge break for Avery and Bryce as they lived their best lives and fulfilled their dreams of studying abroad with the University of the West Coast. While they lived in different international program host cities, Avery and Bryce each spent their time studying in and exploring their host cities, as well as planning and taking weekend trips to new countries in Africa and Europe. Avery prided herself in her penchant for planning trips and traveling, and she thrived on finding travel deals. She viewed it as a matter of "flipping a coin" to decide which exotic country she would make plans to visit next. Every weekend afforded each of them with freedom and held the hope of new adventures as they each enjoyed the cultures of the diverse countries they visited. Avery remembered "we were just college students just enjoying our time" in their host countries.

> None of us were really worried about COVID or there wasn't any, like, big … world, impending … things that were coming in [host country]. It was just kind of like basically most people's lives before 2020 because we … weren't concerned about really anything … happening.

As student leaders for the University of the West Coast, *normal* for Avery and Bryce included enriching the study abroad experience by connecting their peers to community service

opportunities and also sharing current events with their peers. For Bryce, this enrichment went beyond just stating the facts about the news.

> We were encouraged … to stay in the know with … current events happening around the globe. And I had a small responsibility to share those particular … news events or just current events with our program, so we could continue to encourage that … sort of awareness and … wisdom—knowledge, I guess I should say.

Considering his return to study abroad after the winter break, Bryce confidently described his student leader position.

> [It was] a very fulfilling role. And so … especially coming back … to spend that time studying abroad again, I felt very confident about what skills I was bringing and what skills I hoped to grow and hoped to … develop … while being in a very formative place with … a very … encouraging community and a very encouraging and influential team that I worked with.

Bryce had grown exceptionally close to his study abroad community and enjoyed the influential role he had with his classmates as a student leader. He thrived on the "encouraging community and a very encouraging and influential team that I worked with." Bryce paused and emphasized that he "did feel very safe." The world was their oyster; yet they ignored obvious signs that COVID-19 threatened their living their best lives.

Ignored the obvious signs. Even though signs along the way indicated that COVID-19 loomed, denial and uncertainty pervaded Avery and Bryce's view of the possibility of the university suspending their study abroad program and sending them home. Avery recalled that no one "really worried about COVID" in her group, and they "weren't concerned about really anything … happening." Before COVID-19 ever affected them, Bryce recalled: "a classmate, the director of the program, and I were examining … this new virus that had shown up … in the southern China region … and we were slowly updating our classmates." Worldwide news focused on Australian wildfires burning far from their host cities. For Avery, suddenly, "2020 hit," and uncertainty followed in the world. One by one, other universities across the world

suspended their international programs, but this made sense to Avery considering those countries "[were] where [COVID-19] was all happening". She was not concerned "due to how far away COVID seemed and the fact that it truly didn't seem like a pressing issue at the time."

Even when the first University of the West Coast international program sent students home due to COVID-19 concerns, Avery felt like it would not happen to their program. In spite of her first inklings of fear, Avery mused "maybe that just means … we can't travel as much as we normally do" and "maybe we just can't travel". Bryce went a step beyond and used compelling descriptors to explain the level of uncertainty he and his peers felt when they "were hit with the news that" the second University of the West Coast international program sent students home in response to COVID-19 concerns.

Ultimately, the University of the West Coast suspended all their international programs in response to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Most recently, the University of the West Coast permanently closed their campus in Asia. This backstory laid the groundwork for the three themes I constructed for understanding in what ways, if any, the post-study abroad experience facilitated the development of emerging self-authorship of U.S. college students. Participant information for this inquiry emerged from participants' selection criteria; responses on the demographic questionnaire; and self-characterizations, backstory, and other details derived from the interviews.

Themes

I saw themes as Braun and Clarke (2019) described them: "as stories about particular patterns of shared meaning across the dataset" (p. 592). Braun and Clarke (2019) explained themes and the role of the researcher in reflexive thematic analysis as the following:

> Themes are creative and interpretive stories about the data, produced at the intersection of the researcher's theoretical assumptions, their analytic resources and skill, and the data

themselves. Quality reflexive [thematic analysis] is not about following procedures 'correctly' (or about 'accurate' and 'reliable' coding, or achieving consensus between coders), but about the researcher's reflective and thoughtful engagement with their data and their reflexive and thoughtful engagement with the analytic process. (p. 594)

As I looked at the data, I crafted three themes from the data set: pain in key common milestones and/or unexpected major events, partnerships in key common milestones and/or unexpected major events, and perspective in key common milestones and/or unexpected major events in their first-year post-study abroad. Beautiful, excruciating grief also layered itself among each of the themes and sub-themes. Self-authorship provided the framework for every step Avery and Bryce took as they faced key common milestones, as well as unexpected major events in their first-year post-study abroad. Figure 2 illustrates the three themes of pain in key common milestones and/or unexpected major events, partnerships in key common milestones and/or unexpected major events, and perspective in key common milestones and/or unexpected major events, as well as their subthemes and grief. Details for each of the three themes and subthemes follow in Figure 2.
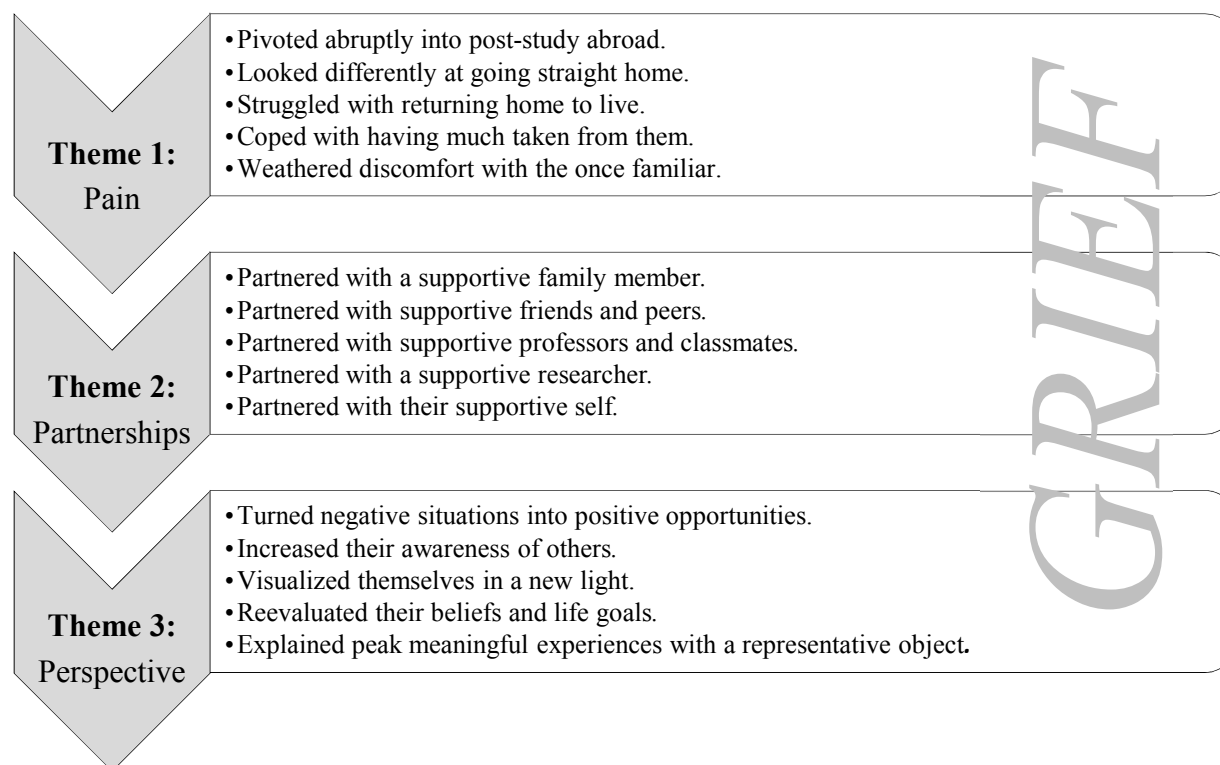
Figure 2. The three themes and subthemes

Theme 1: Pain in Key Common Milestones and/or Unexpected Major Events

In the first theme, pain, participants encountered cognitive disequilibrium when tension developed between the external formulas they had followed and the key common milestones and/or unexpected major events in their first-year post-study abroad. This pain connected to self-authorship and the stages of grief layered within and between the subthemes. In the following section, I discuss the subthemes I generated for pain as Avery and Bryce pivoted abruptly into post-study abroad, looked differently at going straight home, struggled with returning home to live, coped with having much taken from them, and weathered discomfort with the once familiar in their first-year post-study abroad.

Pivoted abruptly into post-study abroad. Avery and Bryce felt the pain of cognitive disequilibrium as they pivoted abruptly into post-study abroad in the midst of the growing

COVID-19 pandemic in their first-year post-study abroad. In this subtheme, they heard the

unbelievable, life-changing news; rushed to depart; and handled disequilibrium in contrasting

ways in their first-year post-study abroad.

   Heard the unbelievable, life-changing news. Even when Avery and Bryce heard the

unbelievable, life-changing news that the university decided to suspend their study abroad

program and send the students home due to COVID-19 concerns, it still felt unreal and

unexpected on many levels. Avery vividly recalled the exact moment she heard the news that

the university decided to send them home, and they pivoted into their post-study abroad

experience:

> It was like I was asleep and then my roommate … I think she had her phone on just in case because we knew it was a possibility, but we, we didn't think it was gonna happen … then she woke us up and she was like, *"Oh, my God! We're leaving. They just emailed us now"* [emphasis added]. And so, I immediately woke up and I … was like, "There's no way. They wouldn't email us at 3:00 AM. That's, why would they do that?"

This rude awakening did not make sense to Avery as "it was such a … weird … time to do it for

us. I mean, I guess it was … a different time in America, but it's still just a little weird." She just

could not believe what she heard. Even though she had clues along the way that this might

happen, it felt completely devastating and out of the blue to Avery. In her denial, Avery almost

indignantly questioned what the email stated about them needing to go home. She wondered

"What do you mean we're going home [shook head negatively and laughed through home]? *No

one told us that was going to happen* [emphasis added]." Avery's mind could only handle so

much, and she naturally paced her feelings surrounding the news of the university deciding to

send them home.

   After receiving the email in the middle of the night, Avery and her sleepy international

program classmates gathered in places like the library. Processing the news of the university

deciding to send them home created a difficult moment for Avery. She reluctantly recognized this moment as an unexpected major event in her life, and she remembered many tears as she and her international program classmates tried to absorb and feel the emotions of the unbelievable, life-changing news. As she slowly took in the reality of the university deciding to send them home, she recalled thinking "there were so many people just crying … then, it finally hit me. And I was like, *oh, we're leaving*" [emphasis added]. Avery did not fully embrace the reality of this moment, and her use of the word *hit* seemed appropriate for how it must have felt to consider this reality. In the thick of the emotions in this unexpected major event in her life, something else occurred to Avery.

As the emotions and ramifications of returning home barraged her mind, Avery kept thinking back to her perception that her class seemed cursed and questioned why. Avery whispered to herself: "*Why? Why are we being taken out* [emphasis added]?" She said: "it felt like, it was like a joke … that my sophomore class was *cursed* [air quoted with fingers, emphasis added]" because of the dual crises they experienced freshman year. The opportunity to study and travel abroad sophomore year felt like a huge break to Avery but "then *COVID* [emphasis added] happened and we're like, okay, what's going to happen our *junior* [emphasis added] year, you know?" It angered Avery that the university decided to send them home and at first in her denial, she rationalized that her class appeared cursed. Her unexpected response contrasted greatly with Bryce's response. At the same time Avery angrily asked why and denied other aspects of the university sending them home, Bryce presented a different perspective on how he dealt with the unbelievable, life-changing news.

Despite feeling caught off guard and frustrated by the unbelievable, life-changing news and abrupt ending to studying abroad, Bryce knew exactly what he needed to do. While warning

signs arose along the way, it felt like an abrupt ending to Bryce. On a Sunday evening, after spending what became their final weekend in the countryside near their host city, Bryce gathered with his international program classmates. Due to concerns about COVID-19, the university announced the suspension of their international program and the plan for them all to leave on either Tuesday or Wednesday flights. He remembered shock, gasps, and tears from others.

The unbelievable, life-changing news held an element of surprise for Bryce, and this frustrated him, but he responded by taking action to come alongside others. Bryce recollected that the minute he heard the news, he was resolute: "I knew what I was going to try and do with … the time we had left … as much as I felt hurt or at risk, … I was still ready to act." Not stunned or shocked, Bryce's student leader training taught him not to freeze. He focused on others and tried to "make that difference for how people would begin to see the experience that they have had and the experience that they were having in that minute of uncertainty or of fear or of sadness and frustration." This focus sparked Bryce's acceptance of the situation. In spite of the news casting them both into pain and disequilibrium, Avery saw her class as cursed and Bryce embraced his need to respond. Hearing the unbelievable, life-changing news forced Bryce and Avery into quick action.

Rushed to depart. The urgent news that they had only two short days until they would fly home threw Avery and Bryce into the pain of cognitive disequilibrium, and they quickly readied themselves to leave. The compressed window of time meant both Avery and Bryce had no choice but to hurriedly prepare to return home with little time left for anything else. They each rushed about in their host cities preparing to return home. Feeling a sense of urgency, they quickly made departure plans, ran up to their rooms to pack, recorded passport information, set out into the city and bought suitcases, canceled phone plans, and wrapped up relationships.

Bryce encapsulated it when he spoke of "wrapping up affairs and relationships with our program and with our community in the span of" a couple of days. Avery and Bryce reluctantly resigned themselves to the reality of the difficult tasks they needed to quickly accomplish so they could return home. Amazingly, in the throes of Avery and Bryce busily preparing to return home, both their international programs managed to set aside social events for closure in the middle of all the emotions and chaos.

In those two days before they flew home from their international program host cities, Avery and Bryce quickly completed necessary tasks but made time to attend final social events with their professors and classmates. Both looked back fondly on the "end of the semester gala type of thing" that culminated their time abroad. This transitional closing ritual stood out in Avery and Bryce's memories an important moment during the frenzied process of departing. As Avery and Bryce hastily tended to the departure details and attended closing events, little time remained for processing what happened.

Handled disequilibrium in contrasting ways. With much to do and little time to do it, amid all this, Avery and Bryce processed the pain of cognitive disequilibrium in markedly different ways. With all she needed to do for preparing to return home, Avery found processing and making sense of all the disequilibrium almost impossible. As she made preparations to return home from her host city, Avery recounted that "You didn't have time to process everything … It was just go, go, go." Avery felt unprepared for this news and the upheaval of preparing to return home, and she acknowledged, "I wasn't mentally prepared for going home." As she rushed about, Avery recalled sustaining a kind of emotional paralysis when she tried to process all she felt. On the other hand, Bryce approached the disequilibrium of preparing to return home much differently.

Bryce saw this abrupt ending to study abroad as achingly unexpected; however, he chose to focus on the opportunity to manage, as best he could, what he termed as a crisis. He saw the process of shifting to a post-study abroad student as: "another crisis to be managed…and just another sudden event different to be in, which I would step in and act on … and again do my best." Bryce did not hesitate to follow his internal voice, and he concentrated on diligently responding to what he perceived as a crisis. After feeling the pain of cognitive disequilibrium as they pivoted into post-study abroad, participants had dissimilar ways of looking at whether or not to go straight home.

Looked differently at going straight home. Avery and Bryce felt the pain of cognitive disequilibrium and looked at things much differently during the two short days they had to prepare to return home. In this subtheme, they either tried to avoid going straight home or did not try to avoid going straight home for their first-year post-study abroad.

Tried to avoid going straight home. Pressed by the time restraints and turmoil of rushing to depart, Avery could not accept the fact the university decided to send the students home, so she looked for ways to stay in her host city. When she heard the life-changing news and considered her options for where to live, the first thing that ran through Avery's head was to avoid going straight home. She tried figuring out how she could get an apartment and just stay with friends in her host city. Avery imagined that they would study online, and at least, still travel around Europe.

> I was emailing a bunch of, like, the IP [International Programs], and a bunch of people trying to figure out, okay, I can stay, I can be online, and I could just travel around Europe because I didn't think anything was going to be shut down … that wasn't even a possibility.

Avery seemingly flipped between accepting and bargaining as she gained clarity that study abroad had transitioned to post-study abroad. Avery searched for ways to hold onto study abroad, yet she ultimately gave in to what she had little control of during post-study abroad.

After thoroughly examining her possibilities and options, Avery ultimately saw she had no control over the choice to stay in her host city or to avoid going straight home. Avery saw museums and public places shutting down in her host country, so her prospects dwindled. She explained: "My thought originally was to get an apartment with my friends, but money-wise and the fact that museums were starting to shut down in [host country], it seemed like [host country] was going to be shut down." In her desperate search for ways to hold onto study abroad, Avery eventually attributed her lack of control in the situation to the COVID-19 pandemic changing everything. With regret, Avery told me that evidently other options existed to avoid going straight home, which other international program classmates found.

In hindsight, even though Avery fought going straight home from her study abroad experience and made quick and thoughtful decisions, she regretted not finding a way to avoid it. She wished she had done what other students had figured out to do—go to a vacation destination before flying home:

> I wish I would've figured this out. Some kids figured it out. [████████████████] was going to give you a ticket to wherever you said your address was. So, like some kids were like, 'My address is [*a Polynesian island*]' [emphasis added]. And so [laughed] I didn't know, I don't know why I did not think of it. I really should've, but … It was just like a one-way ticket there, and then they could get their ticket to wherever their home address was after that for themselves.

With the benefit of hindsight on the conflict she experienced, Avery fondly applauded how other classmates handled the situation and felt sadness about going straight home. In contrast to Avery, Bryce did not hesitate to fly anywhere other than straight home.

Did not try to avoid going straight home. More accepting than Avery of the news that the university decided to send them home, Bryce considered moving home as his best option. All along, Bryce continually updated his family on COVID-19 in his host city and country, and he did not mention considering anything other than flying straight home: "I had never really considered another option, at least in March." Bryce spent time walking me through his thought process of how to best meet his needs upon returning home; yet he circled back to thinking: "I don't think I felt like there was much of a decision to be made" and that it was "not so much a decision-making process of where will I go? Or … what option is best … I felt like I had one best option all along." Accepting this one best option probably amounted to the easiest aspect of the disequilibrium Bryce felt when he transitioned to post-study abroad. Amid feeling the pain of cognitive disequilibrium and looking differently at going straight home, Avery and Bryce struggled with how returning home to live would actually look in their first-year post-study abroad.

Struggled with returning home to live. Avery and Bryce felt the pain of cognitive disequilibrium as they struggled with, and voiced concerns about, moving back home in their first-year post-study abroad. In this subtheme, they both sensed things would be different living at home and wrestled with mixed emotions about living at home in their first-year post-study abroad.

Sensed things would be different living at home. As the reality of having to go home hit, something deep within warned Avery and Bryce that regardless of having supportive families at home, post-study abroad might differ entirely from study abroad. Avery described her family as supportive, but nonetheless voiced her concerns and her sense that things at home could differ from before. As they planned the logistics of her return home, Avery kept telling her mother:

"It's going to be *different*" [emphasis added]. In spite of Avery contending "I have such a good relationship with my parents that it was like … we're best friends … and I have a little sister and we're best friends," she still suspected that the dynamics at home would differ from before she studied abroad. Her internal voice told her everything would change, and Avery alluded to the potential struggles she could face. While Avery expressed her concerns, Bryce also struggled with the feeling that things could differ when he returned home to live.

In those first few days before returning home, Bryce echoed Avery's insight that things at home might be different than before. Bryce described "grappling with that decision and grappling with that change was still different and still anxious, I guess, sometimes in those first few moments and those first few days." Since Bryce also listened to his subtle internal voice, he felt a bit apprehensive about what the future would hold at home. The insight, that their post-study abroad life at home would differ strikingly with the study abroad life they came to love, preceded Avery and Bryce's emotional struggle over returning home to live.

Wrestled with mixed emotions about living at home.Avery and Bryce wrestled with mixed emotions surrounding living at home during post-study abroad. The mixed emotions about returning home to live struck Avery even though she recognized that she had a family she loved and had always supported her. Avery had a great relationship with her family, and spoke of her sister as her best friend, but she recognized that she felt many unexpected and adverse emotions. Startled by all her "emotions within it," Avery confessed "Honestly, I was very, very shocked by how much I dreaded going home, in a sense." Avery expressed surprise at the disequilibrium and discomfort that erupted between her beliefs about loyalty to her family and her loss of all she loved about studying abroad. Bryce also felt conflicting emotions about returning home to live in their first-year post-study abroad.

At first, Bryce downplayed his response to his emotions about returning home to live, but the more he dug into it, the more he struggled and voiced the concerns in the back of his mind:

> I did have a sort of reaction to … coming to terms with the decision that I had made with my family to come straight home to … my home state … and to live at home for the remainder of the semester.

Bryce accepted having to return home to live but started formulating his own view and questioned what could happen upon returning home. Loyalty to family, intersecting with the loss of study abroad, propelled Bryce to feel conflicted about his outlook on returning home for post-study abroad.

Bryce expressed gratitude toward his super supportive and trustworthy family but still felt mixed emotions about the dynamics of returning home to live. He wondered about the situation:

> [Bryce's parents were] trustworthy people who have supported me so much through this. So, in that sense, when the decision came to me to confirm with the university that my home airport was … my [home state], I didn't have any hesitation after communicating about it with my family and deciding that this would be the best place for me … to get back up off my feet again, or to continue the spring semester virtually as unexpected … I don't think I felt like there was much of a decision to be made, but I did have a sort of reaction … to coming to terms with the decision that I had made with my family to come straight home … to my [home state] and to live at home for the remainder of the semester … especially after, after sitting in [university state] and not spending, not really living at home for an extended period of time since I began university.

Situated between the sense of independence he felt living away from home, as well as the thought of living back at home with his family, Bryce surged into disequilibrium. The more he thought about the situation, the more words Bryce found to articulate his trepidations.

Bryce knew intuitively that moving home involved complex dynamics. He even mentioned his struggles and concerns privately to a friend:

> I was not excited about that at first … I did voice some private frustrations to a friend or just some anxieties about I'm really not excited to live at home again with my family. I don't know how I'm going to handle that. That's going to be so stressful and bring a lot of anxiety, and it's so different than what we've been doing, and I really enjoyed what we've been doing.

Bryce felt a bit threatened by the unknowns in his future and struggled with the decision to return

home to live for post-study abroad. He admitted:

> I was grappling with how am I going to respond to this new change? How … am I going
> to, to take care of myself through this? How am I going to … stay connected to … retain
> the elements that have been really meaningful to me?

As mentioned earlier, Bryce wrestled with the reality that he lacked excitement about returning

home to live because he had not lived "at home for an extended period of time since I began

university." This comment harkened back to when Bryce initially asked me "What self-

authorship … initiatives and incentives would be changed or thrown off by an online semester,

studying with professors and classmates?" It seemed that Bryce felt conflicted between the self

he had come to be abroad and who he would be at home. Besides wrestling with mixed

emotions surrounding returning home to live, Avery and Bryce quickly found themselves coping

with what they thought was taken from them.

Coped with having much taken from them. Avery and Bryce felt the pain of cognitive

disequilibrium as they coped with what they thought was taken from them in their first-year post-

study abroad. In this subtheme, they lost the choice to stay abroad or return home, gave up once-

in-a-lifetime opportunities and relationships, and forfeited the autonomy they knew in their first-

year post-study abroad.

Lost the choice to stay abroad or return home. Avery and Bryce believed they lost the

chance to choose to stay abroad or return home, and it brought out a host of emotions. In her

initial belief that the chance to choose whether to stay abroad or return home had been taken

from her, Avery grew angry. She used forms of the word *take* many times to describe her anger

about the university taking away their choice to stay in their host city or to return home. Avery

acknowledged her anger: "There, it was a part of me that was like I was so mad that we had to be

taken from [host country]." When Avery heard the news that the university decided to send them home, she remembered whispering to herself, "*Why? Why are we being taken out* [emphasis added]?" Avery "felt like something was taken away from me even though we only had a month and a half left." Avery uttered "it was just so devastating because it just all happened at *once* [emphasis added]. It was just kind of out of the blue that everything happened." As Avery strongly sensed that control of her choices had been taken from her and her classmates, she repeatedly summed up her anger with the use of the word *take*. In addition to using forms of the word *take*, Bryce referred to their disappointment and devastation over being *sent home* by the university.

Bryce believed the university had taken control of their choice to stay in their host city or return home and his frustration and disappointment lasted for many months. In light of the COVID-19 pandemic, instead of giving students the choice to stay abroad or return home, the university ultimately made the decision to send them home from each host city and quickly purchased return flight tickets for them. Bryce commented that he "knew … immediately from receiving some of the news from our university, that their concern was to … help us return home" but then described this transition as "out of our control." Bryce recalled that "even as much as we were expecting it, *we were so very disappointed*" [emphasis added]. Months later, Bryce still spoke of "frustrations and disappointments … since returning home in that way." Bryce instinctively and slowly worked through his perception that he lacked control of how he returned home. On top of working through their emotions of believing they lost the choice to stay abroad or return home, Avery and Bryce faced giving up once-in-a-lifetime opportunities and relationships.

Gave up once-in-a-lifetime opportunities and relationships. During their post-study abroad experience, Avery and Bryce had no choice but to walk away from the once-in-a-lifetime opportunities and relationships they had during study abroad. They took similar yet different paths. Avery recognized the life-changing magnitude of the opportunities and relationships taken from her when she transitioned to post-study abroad. She told me what surprised her most about this intense loss and again summed it up using the word *taken*.

> I knew I was gonna miss Europe when it was my time to go home, but it just, it felt like something was *taken* [emphasis added] away from me even though we only had a month and a half left, it was like something was, like, you know. These trips, these opportunities. It was like I realized I'm never gonna have that type of thing in my life again. Like, I'm never going to live in a [house] with fifty college students who all wanna travel like I do.

The loss of control of these irretrievable moments in time brought on more distress than Avery ever imagined. Bryce went a step further than Avery and detailed how deeply the loss of opportunities and relationships affected him as he transitioned to post-study abroad.

Bryce reflected deeply on his grief and the loss of the opportunities and relationships once he transitioned to post-study abroad. I asked him how he managed the tension between his need to encourage himself and others while feeling like his study abroad time was at risk. He looked up and took a long moment to pause before he shook his head affirmatively and told me he felt caught off guard. Yet at the same time he realized he grieved the life and community into which he invested so much of himself. With everything moving and changing so quickly, the reality of everything Bryce had denied weighed heavily on him, and he named it grief:

> Reflecting on the ways that I felt caught off guard especially … and … I suppose the ways I began to grieve that we were losing … the community we had worked very hard to develop and bring about … And to grieve some of the experiences that we had planned and would not … follow through with, or … some of the … things that we had … come to be very familiar with and … to know and love very well, even if that was just living in [our host city] for us … to see that weekend and to anticipate a very abrupt end to that experience … It made us feel at risk or for me personally, it made me feel at risk because

that was such a fulfilling experience … It was very formative for me, and I had learned so much … studying and working under some incredible mentors who have remained such, I'm very thankful to say … and having an influential role among my peers, that I was able to really grow close to. I felt at risk because all of those things were put at risk.

Bryce's self-reflection, on feeling caught off guard on many levels, evolved into his understanding of the brevity of his grief for lost opportunities in community, familiarity, experiences, relationships, and friendships. All these things were put at risk, and then they were lost. Not only did Avery and Bryce relinquish once-in-a-lifetime opportunities and relationships, but they also surrendered the autonomy they had known during study abroad.

Forfeited the autonomy they knew. Avery and Bryce forfeited the autonomy they knew, and this especially frustrated them after having so much freedom while living, studying, and traveling abroad. This resulted in one more way they felt the pain of cognitive disequilibrium as they coped with what they believed had been taken from them. A great divide existed between the autonomy Avery cherished during her study abroad adventure and the life Avery led through moving back home with her family and into her high school bedroom during the COVID-19 pandemic. Avery's first-year post-study abroad high school bedroom contrasted dramatically with the study abroad world she had come to love. During our interview, Avery had said "You know, my room's my high school room, it's all, *everything's the same*" [emphasis added, laughed as she gestured and looked back all around her room]. Understanding the context dynamics of moving back into her unchanged high school room presented an important element in the familiarity and frustration Avery experienced. Moving back to her old bedroom exaggerated other contrasting factors for Avery in her first-year post-study abroad.

During post-study abroad the COVID-19 limitations frustrated Avery, especially considering the life she led planning trips and traveling the world during study abroad. The irony was not lost on her. COVID-19 restrictions annoyed Avery during post-study abroad and

she lamented "And then there was also a bunch of like, what am I supposed to do? I can't even like meet up with my friends from home [forced laughter] without it being a whole thing." After traveling to exotic places all over the world, control and choice about a simple event like going out with friends felt complicated and limiting, and it layered on even more disequilibrium for Avery during post-study abroad. Just as Avery saw the irony of the limitations during post-study abroad, Bryce also echoed similar frustrations.

The COVID-19 limitations on making and carrying out plans during post-study abroad discouraged Bryce and he observed:

> a lot of summer plans that were canceled and then a lot of new summer plans that were canceled … because of the pandemic. And … home had served as a very frustrating place … for me in the months that had followed coming back from studying abroad.

Not having the freedom to make and carry through with plans, as he done while abroad, resulted in painful disequilibrium for Bryce during the prolonged period of post-study abroad. Both Avery and Bryce walked through a time where it felt as if their plans to travel and write their own life stories abroad had paused. Besides the pain of forfeiting the autonomy they knew during study abroad, Bryce and Avery weathered discomfort with the once familiar.

Weathered discomfort with the once familiar. Avery and Bryce felt the pain of cognitive disequilibrium as they weathered discomfort with the once familiar in their first-year post-study abroad. In this subtheme, in spite of having great relationships with supportive families, Bryce and Avery held the tension between status quo and new realities, felt trapped and stuck, and compared the U.S. to Europe in their first-year post-study abroad.

Held the tension between status quo and new realities. Avery and Bryce contended with discomfort as they held the tension between status quo and new realities. Avery's discomfort with the familiar unfolded with overwhelming sadness as her homeward bound plane

descended into the U.S. airport after the university sent them home from study abroad. As a

seasoned traveler, Avery had landed in countless cities over the course of her life, but this time it

felt deeply sad and different:

> when the airplane dropped down … cuz it dropped down in [major U.S. city] first, it was just like, like this wave [used hands to gesture from top of head down] of sadness hit me cuz I was like, *"Oh, I'm back* [emphasis added, paused]."

As she spoke, Avery gestured by pressing on her head and compared the plane dropping down

into [major U.S. city] to the weight of how down and sad she felt. In this moment, Avery

reflected the physical and emotional sadness and discomfort she experienced doing something

she had done many times in her life—landed at a U.S. airport. Her new reality collided with the

status quo she had come to know. The COVID-19 pandemic shutdown intensified and

exacerbated this deep sadness.

Even in the face of staying in her loving home, this prolonged and deep sadness

intensified for Avery with the COVID-19 pandemic shutdown. As a matter of fact, it stayed with

Avery for months, and it so obviously challenged her that her family noticed:

> It was just, it was just so much *sadness* [emphasis added] of coming home. And my parents could definitely tell. Um, [laughed] yeah, it was not easy for the first, I'd say until mid-June. Wow, that's a long time. I think it's because then America got shut down. Uh, if we weren't shut down, I think I would have bounced back a lot quicker.

Avery again dealt with the disequilibrium resulting from the tension between her ease with her

life abroad and the reality of her sadness about living at home during the continuing pandemic

shutdown. She navigated how to reconcile the loss of the comfortable and familiar with her new

realities. In addition to the tension of feeling deep sadness in a familiar place like home, Avery

also felt anger about being home during post-study abroad.

Avery, disturbed about her unease and anger about being home, persisted in describing

her family as loving and supportive. While it did not manifest itself toward any one person, the

anger Avery felt about being home disturbed her. Avery knew she needed to internally figure

out why she felt this:

> It was weird because … I felt like this, this anger towards being home. And like, it wasn't directed at any one person, but it was just like, it was something that I had to, like, deal with internally, just figure out why am I feeling like this.

Unsure of the source of her anger at being in her familiar home, Avery chose to self-reflect and

rethink her internal viewpoint. Avery addressed her anger at being home but also lacked the

comfort and drive to do what she loved during post-study abroad. At the beginning of our

interview, Avery told me that traveling ranked as her number one passion and why it meant so

much to her:

> I grew up traveling … *my favorite thing to do is just travel around the world* [emphasis added]. I've been to all 50 states, 36 countries … *I love going to new places and just experiencing new things* [emphasis added] … my, like, … big [passion has] been *traveling* [emphasis added, held up one finger] … literally ever since I could remember.

Yet for a while during post-study abroad, Avery felt discomfort in pursuing her familiar and

lifelong passion—looking for deals on, planning, and taking trips—and had briefly and

knowingly set it aside.

> I, like, look at it all the time … and I wasn't doin' that for a while cuz that's just who I am. You know, I'm like, "Oooh, where do I want to go to next? What do I want to do next?"

Avery knew her inner self well enough to admit to the oddness of her lack of enthusiasm for the

familiar. Avery described her deep sadness and anger; meanwhile, Bryce felt a great deal of

frustration.

Bryce and his supportive family felt frustrated and unfulfilled when he attempted to share

his personal and cultural study abroad experiences. He saw his time studying abroad as an

intensively meaningful experience but could not adequately share it with his family:

And my family found it frustrating to deal with me emoting and sharing *so* [emphasis added] much from the experience that they, they have had *no* [emphasis added] reference for. And I'm the only one in my family who's ever been to that part of the world and has ever studied at university in that way … and has ever worked or traveled in that way. And it being a very meaningful experience, I wanted to share it, but I didn't really have those people here, … so there was a lot of frustration through that.

Frustrations existed on both sides. Bryce lacked adequate language to share his emotions and study abroad experiences, and his supportive family lacked a frame of reference for his experiences. In addition to feeling deep sadness, anger, and frustration, Avery and Bryce also felt trapped and stuck during post-study abroad.

Felt limited, trapped, and stuck. During post-study abroad, Avery and Bryce felt limited, trapped, and stuck as unexpected major events compounded. Avery spoke in deeply sad, almost hopeless, terms of the long-term effects, weirdness, and reality of the compounding unexpected major events in her post-study abroad life. Avery struggled with wrapping her brain around the restrictions during post-study abroad: "I don't think I, like, I fully registered everything until I was, like, home. And I was like, '*Oh, I'm not going back for a while*' [emphasis added]. It was, it just it was so weird." Avery remembered:

> It was weird because normally *I'm* very *good* with that type of thing (emphasis by participant). And like, okay yeah, that [being sent home] passed, and now something great's gonna come, but then it just felt … like what, what great thing can come after this? … And so it, especially as soon as we shut down, it was like, *oh, my God* [emphasis added, laughed]!"

She lowered her voice and shook her head. Avery bore the weight of her deep sadness due to the limitations of the COVID-19 pandemic shutdown and not knowing when she could get back abroad. The limitations of post-study abroad troubled Avery, but she also felt trapped and stuck at home.

Avery related her discomfort with how trapped and stuck she felt living at home, even with her loving family: "But then, it just all, it was like I was trapped [gestured by pushing down with hands]." Despite her love for her family, she felt stuck.

> But even though I love my family, it was just like I felt like, okay, now I'm stuck here, you know, and I can't get back … to Europe for who knows how long. Um, definitely didn't think it was going to be this long.

The lack of choice and control, over her once familiar life, made Avery think that feeling trapped and stuck would never end. Bryce also felt stuck in his familiar surroundings.

Initially, Bryce felt limited and pessimistic about returning home from study abroad, but he later expressed hope. Bryce admitted he had not felt this way in the moment:

> I do not believe that that necessarily is the end all be all for our study abroad experience or for our community, … and it's easier to say that in hindsight than I think it would be in the moment.

Bryce looked back on his perceptions of feeling limited and pessimistic about returning home from study abroad, but he felt hopeful. While Avery and Bryce felt limited, trapped, and stuck, Avery also compared the familiar U.S. to what she had come to love in Europe.

Compared the U.S. to Europe. The pull to compare the once familiar in the U.S. to Europe seemed uncharacteristic for Avery. Avery, feeling the uncomfortable tension of reverse culture shock, compared everyone and everything in the U.S. to the places in Europe she discovered in her travels. Avery described the reverse culture shock she experienced and thought: "It was just so weird just seeing … the differences." She described it as:

> Weird. It was like reverse culture shock … that [laughed through the word *that*] I was experiencing. Um, cuz I noticed right away, I was like, oh, they don't have, you know, America doesn't have pretty monuments or like things like that, that, you know, Europe does. Our buildings aren't as nice.

Having dinner at a local restaurant chain and watching outspoken Americans pushed Avery to

ascribe her unease with the familiar and her reverse culture shock to lack of preparation for post-

study abroad:

> I was in Europe for a while, but … I think it was just because I wasn't mentally prepared
> for going home that I … was all of a sudden comparing Europe to America and the
> people of Europe to the people of America, and I just, I was thoroughly unimpressed
> [laughed].

Torn between the U.S. and Europe, Avery critically observed her own home country and culture.

This internal conflict surprised her.

I asked Avery to think about her experience of living at home during post-study abroad.

She looked up, away from her computer, and replied "It's been very, very different." Then, after

a pause, she finally looked back at her computer. The unexpected conflicting loyalties Avery felt

between the U.S. and Europe overflowed into a source of pain and disequilibrium for her. Not

only did Avery and Bryce experience pain, but they also found supportive partnerships in key

common milestones and/or unexpected major events in their first-year post-study abroad.

Theme 2: Partnerships in Key Common Milestones and/or Unexpected Major Events

In the second theme, partnerships, participants found good company in figuring out

things for themselves through healthy, interdependent, and supportive relationships in common

key common milestones and/or unexpected major events in their lives in their first-year post-

study abroad. The good company in these partnerships connected to self-authorship, and the

stages of grief layered within and between the subthemes. In the following section, I discuss the

subthemes I generated for partnerships as Avery and Bryce partnered with a supportive family

member, partnered with supportive friends and peers, partnered with supportive professors and

classmates, partnered with a supportive researcher, and partnered with their supportive self in

their first-year post-study abroad.

Partnered with a supportive family member. Avery and Bryce partnered with a supportive family member to make meaning of the cognitive disequilibrium in key common milestones and/or unexpected major events in their first-year post-study abroad. In this subtheme, they decided quickly where to live for post-study abroad, and they pressed for help in managing time and setting priorities for themselves in their first-year post-study abroad.

Decided quickly where to live for post-study abroad. With the urgency of COVID-19 swiftly developing into a pandemic, participants and their respective and supportive families made quick decisions as to where Avery and Bryce would live during post-study abroad. Having good company in partnerships with supportive parents, and safe homes to return to during post-study abroad, made the decision for where to live relatively easy. As a result, neither Avery nor Bryce spent time worrying about finding a place to live for post-study abroad.

Avery told me that after quickly looking at her options and considering not much would go into her returning home, she decided on her own to move home. Based on her confidence that her family would welcome her back into their family home, the decision to move home for post-study abroad provided the most logical course for Avery to follow. After making the decision on her own to return to their family home, Avery called her mother right away.

> As soon as I found out, I called my mom and I said, "Hey, looks like I'm coming home sooner than we thought." The good thing is my room, she didn't wanna, I told her freshman year, I was like you can just turn it into whatever you want. It's not like I'm going to live here for, you know. And she decided not to, which is good for me now [emphasis added, laughed].

Fortunately, her mother left everything in her room the same as when Avery left for college. Avery knew she would return home to live at some point. She just did not think it would happen so soon:

> It was just weird cuz I wasn't expecting to be back this soon, but everything was … you know, my room's my high school room, it's all, *everything's the same* [emphasis added,

laughed as she gestured and looked back all around her room]. There wasn't much that had to go into me returning home because I already knew I was going to be here in the summer anyways.

Earlier, Avery mentioned "I have such a good relationship with my parents that it was like … we're best friends." Avery relied on her mother for good company as a partner to simplify the decision-making process. Her mother supported Avery in choosing to move home, but at the time, neither Avery nor her mother expected Avery to live at home for so long. While Avery made the quick decision on her own with the support of her mother, Bryce did not think much went into the decision he and his family made for him to move home for post-study abroad.

Bryce told me not much thought preceded the quick decision to return home to live with his supportive family. At first, Bryce denied the strong possibility the university would send them home. Although, he recalled keeping in touch his family: "Though we didn't have too much reason to think that … we would definitely be sent home the following week." Bryce voiced appreciation for the many levels of support from his family and knew they would immediately welcome him home to live as he finished the semester:

> I am thankful and really appreciative that my … family has supported me a lot through university … financially and with other things. I knew that they were open, and I knew that they would be able to support me if I was soon to be sent home from Europe, … with plans to finish out the semester virtually and so on.

When he made the decision to move home, Bryce did not anticipate the far-reaching scope or longevity of the COVID-19 pandemic. He made the decision to move home and he expected:

> to get back up off my feet again pretty quickly … just not really understanding the scope … of the pandemic as it is now. I knew that going home would be an easy way to land on my feet … to be … taken care of, to have everything I'd need, … and to be able to continue my studies as much as I had expected to … in the spring semester.

Even with the disequilibrium of returning home, Bryce realized what good company his supportive parents offered as partners when he decided where to live for post-study abroad.

Bryce acknowledged that not having to worry about where he would go upon being sent home freed him to continue his focus on serving his study abroad community as they rushed to depart. It helped that he had kept his family in the loop all along:

> With there being trust and support from my family, [I could] … also continue to serve our community in those last few days in another way … [and] not worry about me while I could still step into … the trust and support I had gained in and shared with my community studying abroad. So, it was another matter I didn't have to take care of in other words. And I knew that my family would be able to support me … upon a sudden return home.

The healthy and authentically interdependent relationship between Bryce and his supportive family helped Bryce make sense of the disequilibrium of being sent home. As both participants made decisions to return home to live with supportive families, Avery went on to mention how she had good company as she partnered with her mother during the stressful times of post-study abroad.

Pressed for help in managing time and setting priorities for self. As she partnered with her mother, Avery used self-informed strategies to manage her time and set priorities for herself during post-study abroad. Avery decisively took responsibility to seek help and partner with her supportive and encouraging mother to manage her own time and set priorities for herself. When Avery felt overwhelmed, she had good company as she partnered with her mother. Her mother supported Avery in making her own game plan and encouraged her to use planning strategies. Avery described this meaningful and interdependent partnership in terms of *we*: "And, like, my mom, she's great with, like, if I'm ever overwhelmed, she's like, 'Okay, let's sit down. Let's see what you have to do, and let's discuss how we're gonna do it. Like, let's make a game plan.'" As good company and partner, Avery's mother came alongside her asking the right questions so Avery could discover what strategies made the most sense. Not only did Avery find a good

partner in her mother to help with managing time and setting priorities, the strategies they used also helped Avery listen to her internal voice.

Partnering with her mother in determining strategies to listen to her internal voice freed Avery to breathe, find clarity, and clearly determine her own best path. Avery found support for, and honored, her internal voice through partnering with her mother thanks to their healthy and authentically interdependent relationship. Her mother supported her in figuring out how to balance all the competing responsibilities in life. Avery placed high value on having her mother nearby and the support a good partner like her mother provided:

> It's like having … people who are here to just be like, "Okay, you're, you're gonna be okay and let's figure it out," is everything. Which it's so nice too, cuz it's easier that she's here and I don't have to like FaceTime her and say, "Mom, there is so much I have to do [laughed]."

Support from a partner like her mother in providing good company in determining strategies to listen to her internal voice freed Avery to take a deep breath, realize clarity, and purposefully determine her best plan. Avery and Bryce found all-important good partners in their supportive families to make the transition to post-study abroad smooth, but they also found good partners in supportive friends in their first-year post-study abroad.

Partnered with supportive friends and peers. Avery and Bryce partnered with friends and peers to make meaning of the cognitive disequilibrium in key common milestones and/or unexpected major events in their first-year post-study abroad. These relationships stood at the forefront of their minds during post-study abroad. The shared key common milestones of study abroad seemed to bind Avery and Bryce to their study abroad classmates. In this subtheme, they voiced sad, quick goodbyes upon transitioning to post-study abroad; valued relationships and community with supportive friends and peers; and attempted to stay connected with friends and peers in their first-year post-study abroad.

Voiced sad, quick goodbyes upon transitioning to post-study abroad. Avery and Bryce recognized the importance of closure as post-study abroad began, but this meant sad and hurried goodbyes. It seemed as if they could sense the drastic change ahead and wanted to hold on to their time before they all went separate ways. Bryce whole-heartedly invested much of himself into building and drawing support from his relationships; therefore, he had a difficult time saying goodbye. Before he left his host city, Bryce worked to quickly wrap "up affairs and relationships with our program and with our community in the span" of a couple of days. Bryce grew particularly close to his study abroad community and enjoyed the influential role he had with his classmates in his position as student leader. He thrived on the "encouraging community and a very encouraging and influential team that I worked with." Bryce explained his rush to pack and take care of business before departing, but he resolutely emphasized his need to find closure for those important and healthy relationships he had established in his community. Bryce underscored the importance of having the closure of wrapping up relationships, and he and Avery appreciated the final social events at their international program residence.

The important final social event provided a bit of closure for Avery, Bryce, and the community each of them found with their study abroad friends and peers, and they spoke of it. Bryce briefly touched on the final social events; nevertheless, they stood out in his memories of the rushed, hectic transition to post-study abroad. Bryce noted: "With our community we were also able to throw together a final social event and a few final dinners and things to, to wrap up our semester together, even though it was very unexpected in a way." Avery made certain to mention those moments of closure as significant to her in the middle of rushing to leave her host country. She simply described it as an "end of the semester gala type of thing." Although these events were thrown together quickly, they provided rites of closure for Avery, Bryce, and their

international program community. The last sad and hasty goodbyes meant a great deal to Avery

and Bryce as they transitioned to post-study abroad; moreover, they valued the support they

received from the community they found with their friends and peers.

       Valued relationships and community with supportive friends and peers.Avery and

Bryce valued the important relationships and community they cultivated with friends and peers,

as well as the closeness they felt during study abroad and post-study abroad. Avery treasured the

good company and closeness of friends and peers who reached out to her. Avery spoke of "the

relationships we built [abroad], cuz we were such a *close, close group*" [emphasis added]. Avery

appreciated having people reach out and listen to her: "I've had people reach out to me saying,

'I'm here for you if you need to talk, even though we're on [online platform].'" This had a huge

impact on Avery. Close relationships with partners like friends and peers, who came along as

good company, stood out as critical for Avery. Like Avery, Bryce saw the importance of good

company in supportive friends and peers.

       Bryce deeply cherished the good company he found in partnerships with his supportive

community and the relationships he built. He described how deeply he felt about those

relationships and his role as a student leader:

> [It was] a very fulfilling role. And so … especially coming back [from winter break] …
> to spend that time studying abroad again, I felt very confident about what skills I was
> bringing and what skills I hoped to grow and hoped to … develop … while being in a
> very formative place with … a very … encouraging community and a very encouraging
> and influential team that I worked with.

Bryce understood the value of good company by building partnerships and relationships with

supportive friends and peers as he moved through his life. In addition to relationships and

support, Bryce thrived on encouragement from partnerships and good company with friends and

peers.

Bryce drew strength and support from how supportive friends handled being sent home. When he saw how positively his friends and peers faced being sent home from study abroad, Bryce grinned, "I was encouraged in the ways that my friends and peers did do that." As good company, his friends and peers inspired Bryce in ways that encouraged him. Encouraged by the good company his friends provided, Bryce also missed partnerships with others who could identify with his experiences.

During post-study abroad, Bryce missed the good company he found in his friends and peers who related to his experiences. He observed the absence of the good company he had in partnerships with his friends and peers. It frustrated Bryce to not have classmates near him who shared his experiences and could understand and support his feelings. Given the crises and trauma they had experienced during college, Bryce valued forming relationships with others who shared this history. He did not refer to his family as factors in this healing process but rather mentioned his professor and classmates. Since they deeply appreciated their partnerships with supportive friends and peers, Avery and Bryce tried to find ways to stay connected with those communities.

Attempted to stay connected with friends and peers. Throughout post-study abroad, Avery and Bryce yearned to stay in touch with their study abroad peers. As she transitioned to post-study abroad, Avery mentioned canceling her study abroad phone plan, and getting a new domestic phone plan, three times. As she prepared to return home, Avery told her mother, "I was just like I'm coming home … if you can prepare … your side. It was just getting all of the logistics planned out. This is when my flight gets here. I'm gonna need a new phone plan." It seemed as if her phone gave Avery a kind of lifeline for staying connected to friends and peers. As Avery worked on her phone plan, Bryce also looked for ways to stay connected to his friends.

Bryce enjoyed the influence his supportive friends had in his life and tried to figure out how to hold onto this. He told me he wanted to focus on staying connected and keeping his important relationships. Bryce asked himself: "How am I going to … stay connected … to retain the elements that have been really meaningful to me in my study abroad environment, in my work community or residential community?" Bryce listened to his internal voice that compelled him to stay connected to those partnerships with friends and peers that provided him with good company. While Avery and Bryce did their best to stay connected to their friends and peers during post-study abroad, the pandemic changed everything.

The COVID-19 pandemic and the lockdown complicated any plans Avery tried making to get together with supportive friends during post-study abroad. Avery unsuccessfully tried to arrange:

> for everyone to come visit me … and just kind of like figuring out how are we all gonna meet up because we knew we couldn't go back to [████████ home campus] for two weeks because of … a mandatory quarantine.

With an edge in her voice, Avery had previously noted: "And then there was also a bunch of, like, what am I supposed to do? I can't even like meet up with my friends from home [forced laughter] without it being a whole thing." At this point, I thanked Avery for walking me through this. She did not say a word. She nodded her head affirmatively. Her eyes smiled but her lips turned down. COVID-19 restrictions thwarted her plans for face-to-face gatherings with her supportive friends. Surprisingly, Avery and Bryce both spoke not only of finding good partners and support from friends and peers but also from professors and classmates in their first-year post-study abroad.

Partnered with supportive professors and classmates. Avery and Bryce partnered with supportive professors and classmates to make meaning of the cognitive disequilibrium in

key common milestones and/or unexpected major events in their first-year post-study abroad. At first, Avery and Bryce had to fend for themselves in making meaning of their post-study abroad experience, but their peak meaningful experience encounters with University of the West Coast professors and classmates in online/remote learning classes changed everything in their first-year post-study abroad. In this subtheme, they had a supportive professor reach out over their online platform, felt heartened by the staff grieving with them as they transitioned to post-study abroad, and participated in a transformational course with a supportive professor and classmates. Both participants placed great value on relationships where they felt supported and heard by professors and classmates who represented good company in their first-year post-study abroad.

Had a supportive professor reach out over their online platform. The post-study abroad peak meaningful experience for Avery came quite unexpectedly when a University of the West Coast online/remote learning professor reached out to her. At one point during post-study abroad, Avery took on three jobs and made good money, but she paid a mental toll. As previously mentioned, for a while during her first-year post-study abroad, Avery uncharacteristically did not even look at flights. Once able to rattle off "how much it cost to go almost anywhere in the world from the top of my head," Avery atypically stopped making plans for trips and this troubled her. Avery shared a peak meaningful experience that helped her turn this attitude around during post-study abroad. One day, as she sat in an online/remote learning class during post-study abroad, Avery felt completely overwhelmed. In spite of the contrast between the online/remote learning platform and face-to-face learning, the professor somehow knew to reach out to Avery:

> But it's like I've just, I think the most meaningful thing is … when my professor, she didn't even have to do this, and I don't even know how she could tell through [online platform], was just like, "Are you doing okay? Is there anything I can do? And I'm here if you just want to talk."

As a supportive partner, this professor said four words that completely touched Avery: "Are you doing okay?" The professor came alongside Avery as good company, and this had a profound effect on her. The compassionate actions of her caring professor, who took the time to reach out, amazed Avery and she identified this as a peak meaningful experience during her first-year post-study abroad time.

When I asked Avery for one word to encapsulate that peak meaningful experience, she looked up to the ceiling as if searching for the word:

> Oh, gosh! Um [laughed]. I don't know if the word's overwhelming. It's just [paused], I don't even know what the word would be for, like, not overwhelming, but just a lot. Like it's just, it's so [paused] it's, it's just like … a word for this … the closest thing I could say is *overwhelming* [emphasis added], but not overwhelming in a, in a *bad* [emphasis added] sense.

Avery told me with a metered voice that, as a turning point in her life, this peak meaningful experience "was just so … appreciated." This almost indescribable moment felt overwhelming but signified a distinctly special moment in her post-study abroad experience. Having this professor reach out to her changed everything for Avery, and she uttered deep gratitude for the good company. This peak meaningful experience meant a great deal to Avery, and Bryce ended up having similar positive encounters with University of the West Coast professors and classmates.

Felt heartened by the staff grieving with them as they transitioned to post-study abroad. Bryce told me the response of their University of the West Coast staff uplifted him when they all abruptly transitioned to post-study abroad. As supportive partners, the University of the West Coast staff grieved with Bryce and his international program classmates through their loss of study abroad. Bryce felt "encouraged in the way that our faculty and staff … grieved and supported us in that, too." Since the University of the West Coast staff supported Bryce through

the disequilibrium and grief he felt upon transitioning to post-study abroad, they demonstrated

good company as partners with him. Bryce defined this positive encounter with professors and

staff as significant, and he further described his post-study abroad peak meaningful experience

involving a University of the West Coast professor and classmates.

Participated in a transformational course with a supportive professor and classmates.

For Bryce, the peak meaningful experience during post-study abroad came through a University

of the West Coast professor and classmates in an online/remote learning course. After I asked

him to tell me about a peak meaningful experience that contributed to his growth as a person

since returning home, Bryce told me: "I may need to think on that for a moment but yes" and

then paused for almost 30 seconds. Typically, when Bryce paused, he took time to word detailed

answers.

Previously, Bryce explained that trying to talk about his study abroad experiences had

frustrated and angered him, and this had isolated him from his usually supportive family during

post-study abroad:

> And my family found it frustrating to deal with me emoting and sharing *so* [emphasis added] much from the experience that they, they have had *no* [emphasis added] reference for. And I'm the only one in my family who's ever been to that part of the world and has ever studied at university in that way … and has ever worked or traveled in that way. And it being a very meaningful experience, I wanted to share it, but I didn't really have those people here … so there was a lot of frustration through that.

Intuitively, Bryce longed to be understood and missed his relationships with others who had

experienced not only the personal and intercultural study abroad experience but also the trauma

he and his class had encountered during college. Whether he realized it or not, Bryce searched

for good company to share his experiences and for a way to make meaning of his anger and

frustration over his past disequilibrium and trauma. A turning point for Bryce's search for

meaning came during a University of the West Coast online/remote learning course.

Bryce shared that during post-study abroad, he happened to take a short, intensive, graduate-level, online/remote learning course focused on ministry during crises. Throughout this course, exploring the authentic aspect of his faith added an important facet for Bryce as he worked through traumatic events:

> With [⬛⬛⬛⬛⬛⬛], of course, and my studies, there was a great faith element to it … The conversations produced out of that very specific environment, and that very specific community … were very, very enriching to me … and formative because they were related around the experience of being a [⬛⬛⬛⬛⬛⬛] student … which is naturally … digging into your faith a little bit more past the surface or, … discussing intercultural experiences … and since my time freshman year, with a lot of hard events that happened … also discussing those events … In that sense, too, there … were conversations and relationships being formed that were all aware of those things.

Bryce gently tied digging deeper into his faith to discuss not only intercultural study abroad experiences but also the "hard events" that had happened since their freshman year. His faith, as well as settling in and finding his place in community, grounded Bryce. During post-study abroad, he longed for the community he found in his relationships with his study abroad classmates.

The need to examine his faith, make meaning, and find community intersected with Bryce taking a University of the West Coast online/remote learning course. The course came at a critical juncture for Bryce, and it contributed to this peak meaningful experience during post-study abroad. The course "came at a really great time where I could begin to … internalize and understand more of the language to describe the good and the bad of, of experiences like that." Bryce grasped the importance of the crucial timing of this course because:

> It came at a time when, when I really needed a positive experience like that, a positive community like that, that had some more understanding of … what my life as a student at [⬛⬛⬛⬛⬛⬛], has been, or what my life as … an individual who travels and sees a lot of different things. It was very pivotal in that sense.

For Bryce, this course "was a turning point, an exciting thing for me because it was the first thing I'd been able to follow through with … since being at home" from study abroad. The timing resonated perfectly for Bryce as did returning to class with fellow University of the West Coast classmates.

It meant a great deal to Bryce to gather online with his professor and classmates, and they became partners and good company for him:

> So … seeing my classmates, even though I hadn't known them, seeing classmates was really special … and the conversations produced out of that very specific environment, and that very specific community … were … very, very enriching to me.

Bryce emphasized that he did not know anyone, except for one classmate and a few of the visiting speakers, in the class. Bryce was "surrounded by a lot of very incredible classmates and … a great professor, great professors who visited to speak to us those weeks." Yet it did not matter if he had previously known any of them. They still became good company and partners for Bryce. He explained the encouraging community he found through this course: "a very positive experience was returning … in a small way to our … my [███████████████] community." Back with the community that meant so much to Bryce, he found a way to use the conversations in this course as catalysts to make meaning of the disequilibrium he felt.

When I asked Bryce for one word to encapsulate his peak meaningful experience, he circled back to the word *formative*. Earlier in our interview, Bryce used the word *formative* to describe the "encouraging community and a very encouraging and influential team" that he had worked with as a University of the West Coast student leader.

> The study itself was very, very formative for me, too … and the conversations that came up from that space of meaning-making and understanding … talking about times of crisis for a lot of different experiences and a lot of different communities and individuals … and it didn't have any specific content … for a study abroad student at [██████████████████] necessarily for … a college student moving home. But it

was very applicable to that. It was very relatable. I began to learn more about, I guess, my frustrations and disappointments … since returning home in that way.

Bryce portrayed this practical course as formative, and it almost providentially facilitated his healing from the frustrations and disappointments of the past three years. He used the moment to make meaning with good partners in a supportive professor and classmates. Through his meaning making, Bryce self-reflected and healed. The partnership Bryce found with his professor and classmates developed into an integral and essential piece of the healing Bryce embraced in his peak meaningful experience.

This professor provided a safe learning environment and setting where Bryce and his classmates could come together and learn to support others wrestling with crises by supporting each other: "The classroom environment itself … was very, it was structured very purposefully around processing … a lot of tension-filled, emotional experiences with other people, … which is the nature of the study in itself."

Again, Bryce found an encouraging community.

I was able … to join that environment with a lot … of very empathetic, very caring, and very creative, fun, fun classmates … and a very kind professor who was ready and prepared to walk us through our study, but also to walk with us through … the crisis we've all experienced since the beginning of this year and also … the crises that we each bring … to the table as students, as individual people, too. It was a very aware environment in that sense, and it came at, it came at a really great time where I could begin to … internalize and understand more of the language to describe the good and the bad of … experiences like that.

Somehow, this professor crafted this short course to offer a haven safe enough for Bryce and his classmates to build strong connections with supportive others, mutually construct knowledge, and process their own trauma. As good company, the professor skillfully orchestrated the course by partnering with Bryce and his classmates to help them learn to help others by helping

themselves first. Bryce and his classmates participated in a community of respect and validation as they learned and found meaning in their distinct traumas and crises.

Finding and appreciating the language to describe his experiences and tying it to what he saw as a calling, or vocation, intersected as a critical aspect of Bryce's formative peak meaningful experience. Bryce explained that this peak meaningful experience gave him the voice he lacked and "a lot of language to describe the experiences I've had and … the vocation I feel like I'm stepping into." Bryce actually framed this peak meaningful experience as a win: "And that was still, that was still a highlight. That was kind of a win for the first time since being sent home." By the end of this course, Bryce found good company by partnering with his professor and classmates and felt comfortable enough to process much of the trauma from his own crises. In addition to finding support from professors and classmates, Avery and Bryce found support from talking to a supportive researcher in their first-year post-study abroad.

Partnered with a supportive researcher. Avery and Bryce partnered with a supportive researcher to make meaning of the cognitive disequilibrium in key common milestones and/or unexpected major events in their first-year post-study abroad. They expressed gratitude for the chance to share their experiences with me, so in a way as a researcher, I became a supportive partner to them for making sense of the cognitive disequilibrium in key common milestones and/or unexpected major events in their first-year post-study abroad. In this subtheme, they appreciated the opportunity to speak with a supportive researcher in their first-year post-study abroad.

Appreciated the opportunity to speak with a supportive researcher. Avery and Bryce let me know they appreciated me asking them to unpack their first-year post-study abroad experiences and patiently listening to their responses during our interview. Avery thanked me

for giving her the chance to reflect on her post-study abroad year. As previously noted, Avery told me: "It is just so interesting just, like, reflecting on it. Thank you [laughed] for that" and added that a great deal had happened in just a year: "Honestly, it's been interesting just going back and thinking of everything." In her gratitude, Avery saw the value of reviewing with me all she faced during her first-year post-study abroad. Just as Avery spoke of her appreciation, Bryce did, as well.

Bryce expressed his appreciation for my patience and for listening as he processed his post-study abroad year. Bryce told me "I'm very appreciative of … I guess, your patience and listening here, too. This is … a lot to process over [cloud platform] on a Monday night [smiled]." He later thanked me for letting him participate. By listening to the stories of their experiences and Avery and Bryce's meaning making journeys I partnered with, and became good company for, them. Avery and Bryce partnered with a supportive researcher but most importantly, they partnered with their supportive self in their first-year post-study abroad.

Partnered with their supportive self. Avery and Bryce partnered with their supportive self to make meaning of the cognitive disequilibrium in key common milestones and/or unexpected major events in their first-year post-study abroad. As they partnered with themselves, Avery and Bryce each listened to their inner voices and made sense of disequilibrium by doing what they defined as right for them during their first-year post-study abroad. In this subtheme, they slowed down and reevaluated priorities, alleviated stress by using technology, and acted on their calling to serve and encourage others.

Slowed down and reevaluated priorities. Avery often slowed down the pace and reevaluated her priorities in her life by listening to her inner voice. Beginning with calmness, Avery slowed things down and took in everything; from here, she knew she could listen to her

inner voice and figure out things. Only then did she try to feel the emotions and finally analyze

how it made her feel:

> My whole life I've always checked in with myself for everything. I'm … very, I don't wanna say like self-aware but … I know why I'm feeling this and what I'm doing … Cuz … my whole life I'm just, like, has been, like okay, what's going on, and then I just figure it out … I like *knowing* [emphasis added, laughed] … checking in on myself is literally … the most important thing. And it's … how I get through things, how I, like, know where I'm at, and what I'm feeling and what's going on.

She intuitively and meticulously slowed down and allowed her inner voice to determine the paths

she chose and the decisions she made.

> Avery explained her strategy for supporting herself through new challenges:
>
> When I come across a new situation, I assess what is going on. For example, online school is a new situation and my decision-making strategy for my class load or if I would be staying at home or how I'd want to organize my room/classroom has always been the same since I was little: I make a to do list, figure out what needs to get done and what is bothering me in the current situation, get things done one at a time, and thrive in my new situation/space.

Throughout her life, Avery provided good company as a partner to herself by staying in touch

with her inner voice in novel situations. At times, Avery felt overwhelmed when she took on

more than she should, but she often stopped to reassess how the stress affected her emotional and

mental wellness.

> I would just, like, put way too much on my plate, but then I realized I did, and I figured out how to get out of it … which is great, because … yeah … it was way too much … that I was doing. I mean, I was making money, which was great, but it wasn't worth the mental toll that it was taking.

Even though Avery felt torn between earning money to fulfil her dream of traveling and her

mental health, she offered good company as a partner to herself by listening to that little voice in

her head.

> Avery's critical inner voice meant everything to her, and it gave her confidence in her

decision-making.

> I always listen to that "little voice in my head" for everything. Be it deciding to travel to either Latvia or Bulgaria for the weekend, I follow my instincts for everything. It's how I make all of my decisions. Moments or situations, where I seek out that voice, are when I feel as though it's been a while since I've been connected with myself. If I notice that I haven't listen to my gut in a while, I take a second and reconnect. That voice inside my head gets me through everything in life. If you don't trust yourself, then what are you doing?

By determinedly checking in with herself, Avery prioritized keeping in touch with her inner voice by slowing down the pace and reevaluating her priorities in her life. She trusted her inner voice and took action. Avery found good company as she partnered with herself by remembering her dream to travel and reevaluating her priorities, but she alleviated stress by using technology to organize herself.

Alleviated stress by using technology. Avery used technology to alleviate stress when her inner voice prompted her. When Avery started to feel overwhelmed or stressed, she supported herself by listening to her inner voice and taking a relaxing break to watch Netflix or Hulu. She knew when she needed time for herself and made this a priority:

> Um, but if I just look okay, right now I'm doing this, and then in five minutes … I'm gonna take time for Netflix because if I can watch Netflix in a day, then it's been a good day. If I can't, then what am I doing?

As good company in supporting herself, Avery's inner voice helped her get in touch with what she felt and take steps to alleviate the stress by watching Hulu:

> It's interesting but I think … every day, I always check in with myself and I'm like, okay watch Hulu or something like that … because I know I can't, I can't *work* [emphasis added] with how I'm feeling right now.

Deeply in sync with the prompting from her inner voice, Avery made sure she acted on this by giving herself technology breaks when she felt stressed. Streaming technology helped to keep Avery from feeling overwhelmed, but she also used Google Calendar to pace herself.

Avery self-monitored and kept herself from shutting down by using Google Calendar.

Not only did Google Calendar give Avery a way of organizing herself but, it helped her work in

smaller time increments.

> [I] basically [use] Google Calendar. That's, like, my … everything … I have to take one thing at a time cuz if I look at my *whole* [emphasis added] schedule for the week, uh, *yeah, then I* … [emphasis added] shut down [laughed].

By listening to her inner voice and taking action by using Google Calendar technology to help

pace herself to avoid stress, Avery self-monitored. While Avery partnered with herself as she

alleviated stress by using technology, Bryce partnered with himself by following his call to serve

and encourage others.

Acted on their calling to serve and encourage others. Bryce listened to his inner voice

and not only found himself called to come alongside others during unexpected major events, but

he acted on this calling to serve and encourage others. Throughout the interview, Bryce

mentioned "finding himself" called to serve and encourage others during crises. For instance, he

said, "I have found myself … [paused] I, I, I think I've found myself feeling needed in that. Um,

called, I guess, would be an okay way to describe it" and "I also would say, [paused] there's, for

me personally, there's a strong sense of, of calling for me to keep seeking out those moments."

When he looked back on the traumatic events he had gone through, he recalled:

> I found myself in the moments from those few days … when we were sheltering together through those … kind of disastrous events … trying to help people, or I could encourage, or I could sit with people and community members.

Bryce yielded to the calling in his heart and honored his inner voice by leaning into it and acting

upon it. He believed his calling filled a need in the face of unexpected major events. Here,

Bryce stood as a partner and good company to himself by acting on what he discerned as right

for him. Bryce listened to his inner voice and not only found himself called to come alongside

others during crises, but he felt a responsibility to self-reflect on those skills.

Each time Bryce practiced the skills he learned for coming alongside others, his

confidence grew; this prepared him for unexpected major events during his sophomore year

studying abroad, abruptly returning home, and ultimately experiencing post-study abroad.

> And so, … a lot of those skills and, and I guess I would say characteristics about myself
> that I had learned from going through those events, had just made those, I guess, known
> to me … and were very well known to me by the time I entered the student leadership
> role my sophomore year studying abroad.

Bryce embraced his confidence in his ability to set aside personal needs and turn genuinely to

help others.

As a student leader, Bryce felt a heavy responsibility for authenticity in his interactions

with his community: "especially serving as a … student leader for our community, I wanted to

continue to foster … not a shallow just attitude, but a … profitable attitude maybe." Bryce had

great confidence in what he knew his calling meant but concisely explained it to me. After

unpacking all this for me, Bryce admitted: "I feel I could have worded that better, but I think

that's … more for your sake, not mine [laughed]. I apologize for that." Not only did Avery and

Bryce experience supportive partnerships, but they also found perspective in key common

milestones and/or unexpected major events in their first-year post-study abroad.

Theme 3: Perspective in Key Common Milestones and/or Unexpected Major Events

In the third theme, perspective, participants gained perspective for themselves by

working through and making meaning of the pain they experienced in key common milestones

and/or unexpected major events in their first-year post-study abroad. As Avery and Bryce

developed perspective of their pain through supportive partnerships during post-study abroad,

they gained confidence in their internal foundations. Avery and Bryce accepted the reality that

some things spun out of their control, and they increasingly trusted their internal voices to guide their responses and make meaning of key common milestones and unexpected major events in their lives. Their acceptance gave them a feeling of freedom and certainty during the uncertain post-study abroad times. This perspective connected to self-authorship and the stages of grief layered with and between these subthemes. In the following section, I will discuss the subthemes I generated for perspective as Avery and Bryce turned negative situations into positive opportunities, increased their awareness of others, visualized themselves in a new light, reevaluated their beliefs and life goals, and explained peak meaningful experiences with representative objects in their first-year post-study abroad.

Turned negative situations into positive opportunities. Avery and Bryce turned negative situations into positive opportunities and gained perspective by making meaning of the cognitive disequilibrium in key common milestones and/or unexpected major events in their first-year post-study abroad. Clearly, abruptly returning home triggered an unexpected major event—a life-changing crisis—in the lives of Avery and Bryce, but they turned negative situations into positive opportunities in their first-year post-study abroad. In this subtheme, they made the best of a potentially uncomfortable situation, came to terms with why they were sent home, and found good in what they dreaded in their first-year post-study abroad.

Made the best of a potentially uncomfortable situation. Fairly hesitant about going home to stay in her old bedroom, Avery eventually saw the silver lining in the situation. After setting aside her initial apprehension about returning home to live, in time, Avery saw advantages in living in her old bedroom. As previously stated, when she pivoted to post-study abroad, Avery reluctantly told her mother: "It's going to be *different*" [emphasis added]. She later repeated her gratitude that, even though she had told her mother to go ahead and use her old

bedroom in whatever way she wanted, her mother had not changed it since high school. Avery found she did not mind the familiarity of her old room.

> The good thing is my room, she didn't wanna, I told her freshman year, I was like you can just turn it into whatever you want. It's not like I'm going to live here for, you know. And she decided not to, which is good for me now [emphasis added, laughed].

She added: "You know, my room's my high school room, it's all, *everything's the same*" [emphasis added, laughed as she gestured and looked back all around her room]. Yet she later described her room as "where my past, present, and future collide". Avery felt ambivalent about moving back into her high school bedroom at first, but she appreciated the familiarity in the long run.

> Avery noted the irony when she journaled that a globe she kept in her old bedroom actually came to represent her dreams.

> I almost find it funny and yet truly amazing to be living in a place with a globe I got years ago where my past, present, and future collide. I am constantly reminded of the fact that years ago, I dreamed of living in Europe and traveling, and that dream came true. Now, I'm dreaming of going to more places, and I know those dreams will come true as well.

A great divide loomed between her post-study abroad life and her life in her first-year post-study abroad bedroom Avery described. In spite of not expecting to live there for long, Avery eventually saw the benefits of returning to live in her old, familiar bedroom during post-study abroad. She had gained perspective on her earlier apprehension about returning home to live. Avery gained perspective on her concerns about returning to stay in her old bedroom, but she also dealt with angst that study abroad had been taken from her and her classmates.

Came to terms with why they were sent home. In the end, Avery changed her outlook but went through the discomfort of perceiving her class as cursed and assuming study abroad had been taken from them. During post-study abroad, Avery reconsidered her opinion and decided

her class was neither cursed nor the only class suffering loss. At first, Avery thought her

supposedly cursed sophomore class was lucky to study abroad.

> We, you know, got like a huge *break* [emphasis added] … and then *COVID* [emphasis added] happened and we're like, okay, what's going to happen our *junior* [emphasis added] year, you know? And then it's like COVID happened, and it happened to everyone. It wasn't just our class. And, like, you know, cuz we were just like, oh, we're the *cursed* [air quoted with fingers, emphasis added] class. Which I guess isn't true— every class is now.

In the moment, nothing made sense to Avery, and it angered her. Yet Avery finally found

meaning through her awareness that COVID-19 affected not just their class but every class and

eventually the entire world. In addition to seeing her class as not cursed, Avery struggled with

her impression that study abroad had been taken from them.

When Avery watched the rest of the world shut down, she finally understood that the

suspension of study abroad involved more than just being sent home. From the beginning,

Avery questioned their abrupt return home by questioning, "*Why? Why are we being taken out*

[emphasis added]?" Avery realized the tremendous loss of her study abroad opportunity and

summed it up by saying she felt like something was taken from her. During her first-year post-

study abroad, Avery slowly adjusted how she felt about being sent home and decided: "Once the

rest of the world shut down … it was almost like, okay, it wasn't just taken from me; it was

necessary for a while." In due course, this process helped Avery gain perspective about why the

university decided to send them home, but she had to go through the disequilibrium and

questioning. Understanding why they were sent home helped Avery gain perspective, yet

COVID-19 presented even more dynamics during post-study abroad.

Only when Avery grasped the far-reaching scope of COVID-19 as a pandemic, did she

reconcile herself with her anger that study abroad was taken from her. Avery repeatedly referred

to study abroad being taken from them, as well as her anger at being sent home. Avery finally

viewed the shutdown as "necessary for a while" when it affected the entire world during post-study abroad. It also helped her make meaning of the situation as she concluded: "But now, I mean now, I'm like okay, it makes sense. But in the moment, it did not." This prompted Avery's slow acceptance of the reality that having to go home involved something much bigger than something taken only from her. Avery released a great deal of anger. She told me post-study abroad made her miss her life abroad but happy it happened. Between accepting the reality of needing to return home and finally releasing her anger, Avery made meaning of her post-study abroad experience and saw the best in the unexpected major event. Avery and Bryce each came to terms with why they were sent home and then found good in what they had dreaded.

Found good in what they dreaded. Avery and Bryce used the word *good* to describe the break they took or the discomfort they endured during post-study abroad. Looking back, Avery saw her time at home during her first-year post-study abroad as a "good *break* [emphasis added] for me to really appreciate where I've gone and what I've done." Even though she dreaded going home to live, Avery chose to enjoy her family and appreciate all the good things in her life—like the places she visited and all she accomplished. This led her to reflect on all the things she would have missed had she been away at school:

> I have noticed that I enjoy time with my family more so than I did before. I appreciate that I am able to have game night or go to my parents for support instead of calling them from a completely different time zone … There was a part of me that was like I actually get to turn twenty with my family being here witnessing it, cuz … [I] wouldn't have been able to do that before. Um, or I get to see my Nona's 95th birthday, which I wouldn't have been able to see.

The meaning in the once-in-a lifetime memories Avery created at home during her first-year post-study abroad unexpectedly replaced the once-in-a lifetime opportunities Avery lost when study abroad ended. Avery reshaped her beliefs about abruptly returning home and chose to appreciate the positive aspects during post-study abroad. She viewed this good break as a

blessing in disguise. Just as Avery spoke of her post-study abroad time at home as good break,

Bryce spoke of good discomfort.

Bryce acknowledged that following his inner voice to pursue his calling flung him out of

his comfort zone but characterized it as good discomfort. To stay true to what he embraced as

his calling, Bryce reflected on how he sacrificed his own comfort to come alongside others

during crises:

> in a way that can benefit them and can help them … and … not just solely for, for my own need for community or for my own need for even performance maybe … or even comfort. I see myself … still pushed to move towards other people in a way that might benefit them.

He went on to tell how he reframed his discomfort: "And still uncomfortable, even as much as

I've been thrown out of my comfort zone. So, I think that is a good discomfort." Bryce paid the

cost of discomfort so he could pursue his calling, and he chose to see the subsequent

disequilibrium as good discomfort. In his good discomfort, Bryce resolutely took the

opportunity to make something good out of crises and difficult circumstances.

Since Bryce had faced other major crises in his college life, he decided to take the

opportunity to make something good out of difficult circumstances during post-study abroad.

When asked what resonated with him about the decision of where to live, Bryce thought for a

very long time. His answer centered on managing what he termed a *crisis*:

> It … was another crisis to be managed … and just another sudden event different—to be in—which I would step in and act on … and again do my best. Work to be … healthy or to keep others healthy, but all the same, … it was … a very sudden crisis to make a decision and to follow through with it and figure it out … as it progresses.

Everything Bryce had gone through previously prepared him for these moments and he: "did feel

prepared to make the most of it." Using his "go-to" reaction in crises, Bryce consciously chose

to support others and help them see the best in situations: "I tried to encourage our community to

make the most of what we had." Bryce saw these unexpected major events as a chance to follow

his inner calling, act on his own advice, and find the good in circumstances. Avery and Bryce

turned negative situations into positive opportunities, but they also increased their awareness of

others in the world around them in their first-year post-study abroad.

      Increased their awareness of others. Avery and Bryce increased their awareness of

others to gain perspective by making meaning of the cognitive disequilibrium in key common

milestones and/or unexpected major events in their first-year post-study abroad. They increased

their awareness of others but the perspective they gained took different forms in their first-year

post-study abroad. In this subtheme, they expanded their worldview and helped others in need in

their first-year post-study abroad.

      Expanded their worldview. Avery looked beyond herself to awareness of others and the

world, and she welcomed different points of view from a worldview perspective. Post-study

abroad helped Avery see herself in more global terms and recognize that her understanding relied

on not just knowing but wisdom. Being home from studying abroad increased Avery's

awareness of others by expanding her worldview even more:

> It just opens up your, your view on the world, and other people, and like especially with what's going on in today's world, I'm very much in tuned to, uh, the news when it comes to not just America. Like I know [host country] is going through a second lockdown or shutdown right now … I feel more clear-minded when I view the world. Having [been to] all of America, almost all of Europe, the Middle East, and some of Africa, when I hear the news, I almost always have been to the place they talk about. I feel more connected to the world because of my travels … My whole life is devoted to my love for seeing new sights and meeting new people of different cultures. I see myself as a connoisseur of the world, learning from each and every place that I go to.

Having a worldview focus meant Avery looked beyond the U.S. to world events and confidently

discussed worldwide issues. Her scope of understanding transcended U.S. matters and she

believed "it's like my, you know, *knowledge* [emphasis added] is power, but, like, my … *sense*

[emphasis added] is just, like, the *whole world* [emphasis added]." Avery welcomed the chance to see global issues from many points of view, and this shifted and enhanced her perspective on her sense of self. Avery saw increasing awareness of others in global terms while Bryce focused on his awareness of others needing someone to reach out to them in times of uncertainty.

Helped others in need. Bryce looked beyond himself to awareness of others who experienced difficulties. Bryce's post-study abroad time at home increased his awareness of others in need as he watched their responses during crises and intentionally made a difference in times that felt out of control. When Bryce saw his classmates saddened during difficult situations, he remembered:

> I was encouraged to try and make that difference for our community, um, and to try and make that difference for how people would begin to see the experience that they have had and the experience that they were having in that minute of uncertainty or of fear or of sadness and frustration … I found myself in a position where I really had hoped that I could help our community and my classmates turn that around … even though it was out of our control.

Instead of focusing on himself and his own point of view, Bryce deliberately increased his awareness of others by observing those in need and making a difference in their lives. Avery and Bryce increased their awareness of others as well as visualized themselves in a new light in their first-year post-study abroad.

Visualized themselves in a new light. Avery and Bryce visualized themselves in a new light to gain perspective by making meaning of the cognitive disequilibrium in key common milestones and/or unexpected major events in their first-year post-study abroad. They spoke of the ways they gained perspective as they visualized themselves differently both intrapersonally and interpersonally in their first-year post-study abroad. In this subtheme, in light of their experiences, Avery saw herself intrapersonally as more confident in pursuing her passion and in her openness; she also saw herself interpersonally as more independent, honest, and apt to stand

up to authority figures. Bryce saw himself intrapersonally as more capable, equipped, and willing to grow; he also saw himself interpersonally as challenged to respond with genuine empathy in their first-year post-study abroad.

Saw herself intrapersonally as more confident in pursuing her passion and in her openness. Avery gained perspective when she saw her personal identity shift, and thus saw herself intrapersonally as more confident in her drive to pursue her passion for travel and her openness in light of her post-study abroad experiences. With solid self-assurance, Avery chronicled her confidence in her drive to pursue her passions, which she presumed made her unique. Avery demonstrated a strong sense of self and place but acknowledged many factors affected her growth over time. When I asked Avery how she saw herself differently because of her experiences, she spoke first of her life as a timeline. She gestured with her hands and explained:

> I don't know if this will make sense, but it's like I see life from, like, a timeline [gestured with one hand flat] and I'm right here [gestured with the other hand up]. And yeah, I did all of that stuff, and yeah, I want to do all of these [gestured with the other hand on the other side] but [paused] it's like I'm right here [gestured by tapping one hand on top of the other to make a "T"] and this is just who I am, and then I forget that all these things shaped me into [laughed] um, who I am or what I've done.

Avery referenced a timeline to exemplify her life journey and unapologetically self-reflected on her awareness that much contributed to her intrapersonal identity. Avery knew that whether she continuously realized it or not, everything she experienced made her who she was in that instant.

Avery described her confidence in her drive to pursue her passions, and it made her feel unique: "[I] see myself as someone who knows where my passions lie which may be different from other people." Her belief and opinions about her identity did not rely on what others thought, even if she stood out from others. Avery's intrapersonal identity rested on the internal influence of her inner voice driving her to pursue her passions.

Further, Avery saw herself intrapersonally as more open because of a peak meaningful

experience when a professor reached out to Avery during post-study abroad:

> I think it just [paused] made me realize [paused] that I'm not always 100% okay … all of the time, even if I try to make people think I am. You know some people can just tell…I've been told I have a very expressive [face] … Apparently, it's a lot more obvious than I think it is. But it's … changed me in the sense of, like, … [paused] I mean, I've always trusted my professors but I, I feel more *open* [emphasis added].

Through this experience, Avery's personal identity shifted, and she realized she did not have to

feign perfection. She spoke of the resulting internal confidence in her openness. Avery took

time to make meaning of her experiences and trusted inner voice to bolster her confidence in

openness, even if she did not feel perfect. Just as Avery gained perspective when she viewed

herself intrapersonally as more confident in pursuing her passion and in her openness as her

personal identity shifted, she also saw herself differently interpersonally during her first-year

post-study abroad.

Saw herself interpersonally as more independent, honest, and apt to stand up to

authority figures. In constructing interpersonal relationships, Avery gained perspective as she

comfortably maintained healthy interpersonal relationships with others as she grew more

independent, honest, and apt to stand up to authority figures. Avery saw herself as a true,

independent traveler among travelers. She spoke of following her passion and making decisions

independently about traveling, despite what others thought. Yet she confidently opened herself

to inviting others to join her.

> I see myself as the traveler in all my friend groups even if they, too, like to travel … I rarely see other people like this as many go abroad just once or not as often. I have yet to find another person who constantly thinks of traveling, knowing how much a plane flight is from virtually anywhere at the drop of a hat. I am never not planning my next trip, working for ways to pay for it (currently working three jobs), and seeing who wants to come with.

Avery acknowledged that even if her independence caused her stand out in a group who loved

traveling, she boldly and purposefully followed her passion.

Avery confidently explained her growing honesty and straight forwardness in relation to

others during post-study abroad. She smiled and said:

> I'm a lot more honest, more blunt [laughed] about certain things … I feel more okay
> within myself and more at peace than I think some other people do … it's like them
> reaching out showed me that … I can just be *open* [emphasis added] and say, "Look, this
> is how I'm feeling, and this is why", and they understand. And it's, it, it's a good feeling
> to know that, like, someone's looking out for you.
>
> I feel comfortable telling … [other people and professors] … exactly why instead of …
> making up an excuse of, like, I'm sick, or this, or that … But it's just … opened me up a
> lot more … You know, I was just like, 'Well, you deserve to know the truth because you
> know, you've met me with that, and so I'm going to reciprocate it.' Um, but … it's helped
> me realize … what's going on … and if they're good enough person, they'll realize, you
> know.

Avery saw herself differently in relation to others because she stayed true to herself and valued

reciprocal relationships. She felt self-assurance within and more at peace in those relationships

with others, especially when they have looked out for her.

This inner confidence gave Avery the self-assurance to speak her mind with traditional

authority figures, like professors, who she thought treated her unfairly.

> First and for most, [sic] I always try to respect traditional authority figures, but as I've
> become an adult that respect must go both ways. Authority figures are seldom always
> right in their decisions or ideas. They aren't God and therefore if I deem it necessary, I
> will confront them. For example, this past semester, a professor was being rather harsh in
> his critiques of not only my work but others due to his own personal problems. I am not
> paying this university money for adults to act like children and therefore emailed him
> addressing the situation. He stepped up in the end and became better because of it. I kept
> going back and forth on whether or not to address the situation, but I knew nothing would
> be resolved if I didn't. In that moment, I followed my gut and did what I knew would
> foster correct change. While abroad, I had to deal with all types of authority figures from
> directors to professors to tour guides, etc. I've dealt with adults taking their anger out on
> others when, in reality, they are angry about something else entirely, which isn't fair and
> therefore should be addressed if said adult is actually a decent human being. I've
> experienced enough of the world to fight those internal and external struggles.

Relying on her inner, intuitive wisdom, Avery grew in comfort with honesty and openness with traditional authority figures like her professors. She gained perspective as she envisioned herself differently intrapersonally and interpersonally, and Bryce also gained perspective as he envisioned himself differently intrapersonally and interpersonally during their first-year post-study abroad.

Saw himself intrapersonally as more capable, equipped, and willing to grow. Bryce gained perspective as he saw his personal identity shift, and thus saw himself intrapersonally as more equipped, capable, and willing to grow in light of his post-study abroad experiences. Bryce spoke of gaining clarity about his calling and seeing himself as more capable. When I asked Bryce how he saw himself differently intrapersonally because of his experiences, Bryce paused for at least 15 seconds before he finally answered my question.

> [Looked to ceiling as if searching for the words] Personally, I see myself as more capable than I think … I would have seen myself beforehand. Those … were a lot of testing moments for me … I wouldn't say that I see myself [as] perfect … I'm comfortable to say that [smiled]. And I think in those moments, too, there, there were probably many things I didn't do perfectly, but … found myself … in the moments of … crisis that I guess I've experienced as a [████████████████] student in these weird ways … and also … in those moments of performance and flushing that out more and studying that more … I found myself capable.

While not claiming perfection, Bryce voiced confidence in himself, his skills, and his efficacy for his calling as his personal identity shifted. Bryce delineated how he came to see himself differently interpersonally in relation to his capability to carry out his calling.

> Bryce also felt more equipped with the tools to help others during sudden crises:

> [I found myself] … equipped for conversations like that, for … relationships … that show up … in those moments, or for … tasks that need to be taken care of or … I guess really personalities too, that are needed in those very sudden, unexpected, hard, emotional moments … I've found myself very well equipped for that more than … I had ever thought beforehand.

Bryce self-reflected on finding himself unexpectedly equipped and growing from his

conversations and relationships under the most difficult circumstances in unexpected major

events. His growing capacity to respond reflected his commitment to carrying out his calling at a

level he never envisioned.

On the other hand, Bryce also admitted a willingness to grow: "I do feel capable, and I

feel called to … serve or lead or perform … There's an aptitude … level … I haven't developed

there." He added:

> And even if I have a passion for it … I want to continue to learn, and I want to continue
> to grow … and I find myself in those moments … maybe still not as charitable as I hoped
> to be, or not as receptive all the time to other people's needs.

Bryce stayed true to himself and his willingness to grow so he could continue to pursue his

calling. Just as Bryce gained perspective as he saw himself differently intrapersonally as his

personal identity shifted, he also saw himself differently in interpersonal relationships.

Saw himself interpersonally as challenged to respond with genuine empathy. In

constructing interpersonal relationships, Bryce also gained perspective as he comfortably

maintained healthy interpersonal relationships with others as he challenged himself to respond

with to others with genuine empathy. Bryce spoke of the ways he saw himself differently

because he felt challenged to respond with to others with genuine empathy:

> And in relation to others … I still see myself as an empathetic person, and as … someone
> ready to help, ready to listen, but I'm still challenged by that notion personally … But I
> continue to see myself in reference to other people as … challenged to keep moving
> towards other people in those moments … in a way that can benefit them and can help
> them … and … not just solely for … my own need for community or for my own need
> for even performance maybe … or even comfort. I see myself … still pushed to move
> towards other people in a way that might benefit them.

Being in a place of cognitive dissonance helped Bryce realize more fully that everyone goes

through crises. He saw himself challenged to be more empathetic of the experiences of different

individuals and communities in his interpersonal relationships. Bryce followed his inner calling

but held himself accountable for authenticity as he pursued this calling. Avery and Bryce gained

perspective as they visualized themselves in a new light, but they also reevaluated their beliefs

and life goals in their first-year post-study abroad.

Reevaluated their beliefs and life goals. Avery and Bryce reevaluated their beliefs and

life goals to gain perspective by making meaning of the cognitive disequilibrium in key common

milestones and/or unexpected major events in their first-year post-study abroad. They trusted

their internal voices through the disequilibrium they experienced, and they reevaluated their

beliefs and goals by making meaning during key common milestones and/or unexpected major

events that layered with stages of grief. In this subtheme, they used the gift of time to self-reflect

on what truly mattered, vowed to follow through on hopes and dreams to travel, and planned to

follow through on the calling to serve others in their first-year post-study abroad.

Used the gift of time to self-reflect on what truly mattered. Avery used the gift of time

during her first-year post-study abroad to self-reflect on what mattered most in her life. Avery's

post-study abroad experience gave her time to listen to her internal voice to make choices about

what mattered to her. She told me she could "reflect more on myself and what I really want in

life. And, like, … why do I, you know, why am I going for this? Why am I going for that? And

I have just more time to reflect." Having this post-study abroad time put Avery in touch with

deciding what she valued most for herself and her future. Avery appreciated the time post-study

abroad gave her to reflect and resolutely turned to the hope and dream she truly wanted to follow

through with—traveling.

Vowed to follow through on hopes and dreams to travel. Taking time to listen to her

heart gave Avery renewed hope in her future dream to travel. The good break Avery took during

post-study abroad gave her time to appreciate her life and be true to one of her great passions—

traveling. She told me being home "makes me miss it [study abroad], but it also makes me

happy that it happened." Avery went on to tell me:

> Coming home [paused], it, I think [paused] what [paused] [host country] and study abroad has done for me is, like, has made me want to go more. And I think this is a good *break* [emphasis added] for me to really appreciate where I've gone and what I've done. Um, because now … I've literally been, like, this is where I want to go.

She further explained, "I think being forced to not travel and not continue the exact life I had

while abroad makes me appreciate it even more. I am better able to assess my dreams and what I

want to do." Losing the choice, to travel and live life as she wished, gave Avery perspective on

her hope and dream to travel. As Avery self-reflected during her good break, she heeded her

inner voice that compelled her to travel.

Post-study abroad helped Avery understand the preciousness of her time abroad and

focus on her future. As someone so young, Avery realized the privilege she possessed:

> Growing up, I didn't think I'd ever travel with friends … It's interesting living out my childhood dreams at the age of twenty [laughed]. It just has me make more dreams … for later on in my life. But … this has made me more excited to continue to travel, and to go abroad, and … do what I … want to do for the rest of my life.

She added, "Being home due to COVID, I sometimes forget that I did travel all of last year and

that I have experienced the world in ways that many people dream of. I have to remind myself

of that." Avery reflected deeply and gained perspective on her past and the future path her inner

voice propelled her to take. Appreciating her passion for traveling helped Avery focus on her

future and commit to planning more trips.

As part of reevaluating her beliefs and goals, Avery resolved to travel more and see more

cultures, and she returned to actively planning future trips. Avery planned to pay for and follow

through with her vow by working three jobs. From her expanding worldview, Avery cautiously

and optimistically told me: "I'm about to go on the Asia Tour … this summer, hopefully. I really do hope [laughed] it works out." This purposeful approach to life helped Avery gain perspective and make sense of the cognitive disequilibrium she experienced. Avery knew she wanted to continue traveling for the rest of her life. With her commitment to travel reestablished, Avery came full circle in her beliefs and life goals.

Throughout our conversation, Avery used the word *take* in many ways, but nothing resonated with more poignance that the control she took back as she gained perspective during post-study abroad. Avery confessed she "felt like something was taken away from me even though we only had a month and a half left." Nonetheless, she undeniably planned to take back her life: "I'm *taking it one moment at a time* [emphasis added] [gestured with hands to emphasize each word], or at least I'm trying to [laughed] as best as I can [shook head affirmatively]." For all the dreams and control that had been taken from her, Avery gained perspective and took steps to take control of her own life. Avery took back what she once felt was taken from her. She took back her dreams. While Avery's inner voice inspired her to pursue her love of travel, Bryce's inner voice stirred him to follow his calling to serve others.

Planned to follow through on the calling to serve others. Pivotal moments during post-study abroad provided Bryce with opportunities to gain perspective of the strong inner calling that propelled him toward his calling to minister to the needs of others during crises. Bryce referred to his calling many times during our interview, and his purpose crystalized for him as he gained perspective during his first-year post-study abroad. He described this calling, a need to come alongside others in times of crises, "an uncontrolled variable" in his college life. The conversations in his peak meaningful experience empowered Bryce but more importantly, he linked them to his calling. Through this peak meaningful experience, Bryce secured a sense of

equilibrium by making meaning in his experiences, and he found confidence in listening to what his own voice called him to do.

Bryce spoke of his inner need and commitment to help others when situations appeared out of their control and the vocation or calling into which he declared he stepped. He also discussed feeling drawn to move toward others to help them. Bryce felt an unexpected calling to help others in times of crises and actively sought out opportunities to answer the call. He committed himself to this unexpected calling.

> I think I've found myself feeling needed in that. Um, called, I guess, would be an okay way to describe it. Also, perhaps … I'm not sure … I'm open if you need to follow up with any other questions on that, but I think I've summed that up as best as I can think of at the moment.

At this point, his shoulders slumped a bit, he looked down, and he shook his head. Listening to his inner voice and feeling needed in this calling gave Bryce a purpose and meaning in his life. Bryce certainly embraced this calling, and continued to, months later. By reevaluating their beliefs and life goals, both Avery and Bryce gained perspective during their first-year post-study abroad. Avery found her purpose in her passion for traveling, and Bryce found his purpose in his calling. In the next subtheme, only Avery voiced emerging self-authorship through a representative object in their first-year post-study abroad.

Explained peak meaningful experiences with representative objects. Only Avery explained peak meaningful experiences with representative objects to gain perspective by making meaning of the cognitive disequilibrium in key common milestones and/or unexpected major events in their first-year post-study abroad. She chose to share two different representative objects to explain her peak meaningful experiences in their first-year post-study abroad. In this subtheme, Avery explained her peak meaningful experiences as she shared a

photograph of her study abroad cohort and submitted a photograph of globe in their first-year post-study abroad.

Shared a photograph of study abroad cohort. During our interview, Avery explained one of her peak meaningful experiences as she shared a photograph of her study abroad cohort. At one point Avery stopped, looked up, and pulled a panoramic photograph off the wall above her computer. As her first representative object, this photograph embodied all that happened to Avery since returning home from study abroad. She looked at the photograph for a few seconds and finally lamented:

> I was just looking at that and just … I don't know, remembering. And I mean … it was only, it hasn't even been a whole year since. I'm still super close with a lot of them, but it's just, it's, like, in that whole year, a lot has happened. And it's, it is just so interesting just, like, reflecting on it. Thank you [laughed] for that.

Meaning making of her disorienting dilemmas helped Avery demonstrate her growth and perspective she gained through the disequilibrium. This object captured the relationships Avery missed most, but it also helped her see how much she had grown during this challenging post-study abroad year.

Submitted a photograph of globe. In her first journal, Avery used a photo of a globe as a representative object to express a post-study abroad peak meaningful experience. Avery journaled on the perspective and meaning she found in a globe which represented her hopes and dreams during post-study abroad:

> One experience that stands out is living in my childhood room after going on so many adventures. I am surrounded by my past adventures and dreams I had of new ones. There is a small globe that my parents gave to me one Christmas or birthday, I cannot remember. I would spin it whenever I got bored or wanted to think of a new place to visit and would dream of a day that I could randomly place my finger on the map and go to wherever my finger landed. When I received the globe, I had only been to ten countries, and now I'm at country number thirty-six. That globe, which is placed over my desk, is a constant reminder that I still have more places to go and see.

Although, it is an interesting feeling knowing that I have and am living my dream. Going abroad helped make a good majority of that come true for me. I still dream of a day where I can financially pay for any place my finger lands on the globe for just knowing that I have been to many of those places already makes me feel like I am doing it justice.

Avery resolutely wrote of how her globe came to mean so much to her and inspire her over the years. This globe bridged her childhood hopes and dreams with the plans for the future she recommitted to during post-study abroad. She recognized where her heart led her and took action to achieve her goal to travel.

Avery continued journaling on what resonated with her about the globe and her peak meaningful experience during post-study abroad.

My globe represents all of the travel experiences I have had and will have. It represents me now even though I am not traveling. It represents my passion for this and the dreams I have. It is interesting to me that before this journal I didn't realize how much I resonated with this small object. I never realized how much I look up from my days [sic] work and stare at that globe. It is kind of what gives me joy in the midst of my current [Z]oom world. This object reminds me of why I went abroad and why I want to continue to travel because it brings me joy.

As she gained perspective, Avery looked to her globe as another source of self-support and inspiration.

Whenever I get stressed from online school or feel like COVID will never end I look to [my] globe. I'm currently looking at the globe for inspiration for this journal entry. I'm almost in awe at something so small yet monumental to my life. That tiny globe is my meaningful experience as it is a reminder that things will get better[,] and I will be able to travel once more.

Avery looked to her globe as a reminder of her dreams and another source of self-support and inspiration. She concluded with: "My meaningful experience while not just one moment and more like a surplus of moments wrapped up into one object shows me how passionate I am about traveling." This statement captured the perspective Avery gained in committing to what she knew in her heart was her passion and goal in life in her first-year post-study abroad.

Summary

This chapter included participant information and portrayals of the three themes I developed for this inquiry—pain, partnerships, and perspective in key common milestones and/or unexpected major events in the first-year post-study abroad. Beautiful, excruciating grief also layered itself among each of the themes and sub-themes. These three themes created the groundwork for Chapter 5, which reviewed the findings of this inquiry.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

"There are far, far better things ahead than any we leave behind."
– C.S. Lewis

Today, post-study abroad students' lives will be defined by the ways they make sense of unexpected major events surrounding the history-changing COVID-19 pandemic. The immersion aspect of study abroad set it apart from other travel experiences. This set the stage for reverse culture shock, a sense of loss, adjustments to transitioning to life at home, and an overall combination of positive and negative feelings (Gray & Savicki, 2015). Equilibrium and disequilibrium characterized this time (Barber et al., 2013). Three common experiences—pain, partnerships, and perspective—combined to prompt emerging self-authorship (Magolda, 2009). Grief (Kessler, 2019) spun its way through these experiences.

To be eligible for this inquiry, participants needed to be enrolled at University of the West Coast (a pseudonym), have completed their study abroad experience during the 2019-2021 academic year, and be between 18 years of age and 24 years of age. Over two-thirds of all University of the West Coast undergraduate students study abroad during year two of college, thus providing an ideal time frame to understand in what ways study abroad and emerging self-authorship intersected. I used basic qualitative methodology, which aligned with my belief that "knowledge is constructed by people in an ongoing fashion as they engage in and make meaning of an activity, experience, or phenomenon" (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 23). Self-authorship provided the framework for viewing in what ways Avery and Bryce faced key common milestones and unexpected major events in their first-year post-study abroad.

A great deal of research literature focused on identifying culture shock in study abroad and reverse culture shock in post-study abroad, as well as the need for provocative moments to edge students toward self-authorship. However, a lack of extant research centered on giving voice to and representing the deeper levels of the ways the post-study abroad experience facilitated emerging self-authorship in U.S. college students as they made meaning of unexpected major events in their first-year post-study abroad. To make the most increasing the effectiveness of post-study abroad policy and practice, and promoting emerging self-authorship in higher education, it was critical to understand in what ways the post-study abroad experience facilitated emerging self-authorship in U.S. college students in their first-year post-study abroad.

Data collected from two post-study abroad students' interviews and journals focused on real-world, post-study abroad reflections (Percy et al., 2015). I relied on Braun and Clarke's (2012) reflexive thematic analysis approach to data analysis. I used rich descriptions of the data to extend current literature on key common milestones in unexpected major events and emergent self-authorship during post-study abroad. I followed Baxter Magolda and King's (2012) guide for interpreting participants' level of self-authorship and developmental meaning making in the cognitive, intrapersonal, and interpersonal dimensions. As I observed links between participants' development and DEEs, I tied them to Kessler's (2019) stages of grief.

Overview of Chapter 5

In Chapter 5, I use my findings to answer each research question in light of existing literature, the three themes I crafted, and grief. The chapter also addresses implications for policy and practice, recommendations for future research, concluding reflections, and an epilogue.

Findings Related to Literature

My inquiry sought to understand in what ways, if any, the first-year post-study abroad experience of U.S. college students facilitates the development of emerging self-authorship. I created three themes from the data set: pain, partnerships, and perspective in key common milestones and/or unexpected major events in students' first-year post-study abroad. Beautiful, excruciating grief also layered itself among each of the themes and sub-themes. Appendix V lists the research questions and findings, themes, and stages of grief.

Research Question 1: In what ways, if any, does the post-study abroad experience facilitate the development of emerging self-authorship of U.S. college students?

The post-study abroad experience facilitated the development of emerging self-authorship of U.S. college students as they navigated experiences they encountered during unexpected major events though three themes of pain, partnerships, and perspective. The participants twisted through Kessler's (2019) stages of grief—denial, anger, bargaining, depression, acceptance, and finally found meaning on their journey to emerging self-authorship.

My findings were supported by Magolda (2009) who contended that three common experiences combined at any phase to prompt emerging self-authorship. The first experience was pain manifested through cognitive dissonance or some other uncomfortable key common milestone experience that caused a reexamination of life or beliefs. The second experience was having good partnerships for reflecting on their experiences. The third experience was perspective and meaning making achieved through such reexamination. More detailed discussions are provided for pain in the answer to Research Question a, partnerships in the answer to Research Question b, and perspective in the answer to Research Question c.

Magolda's (2004, 2008) research showed that the second phase of self-authorship, the Crossroads, usually occurred after college due to individuals feeling friction with and questioning traditional dependence. Individuals began to look inward for defining self. In my inquiry, participants' interview and journal responses showed signs that they were in the small group of college students in the Crossroads phase of emerging self-authorship. Barber et al. (2013) found that during year three of college, students made the most substantial shifts in emerging self-authorship by takings on roles which forced them to call on their inner voice. As participants struggled with tensions in unexpected major events, they listened to and cultivated their internal voice for predominantly internal meaning making and decision-making while contemplating other's points of view. They "engag[ed] in introspection to analyze interests, goals, and desires" (Baxter Magolda & King, 2012, p. 78). The findings contributed to research on what ways pain, partnerships, and perspective during the post-study abroad experience facilitate the development of emerging self-authorship of U.S. college students.

Research Question a: What are key common milestones for U.S. college students in their first-year post-study abroad?

Key common milestones for U.S. college students in their first-year post-study abroad included experiences involving pain as the stages of grief layered within and between the themes. Pain "is disequilibrium that compels students to revisit their own goals and conceptions of self as well as consider multiple perspectives" (Pizzolato, 2006, p. 38). Pain permeated the stages of grief: denial, anger, bargaining, depression, acceptance, and meaning (Kessler, 2019).

In the first area of key common milestone experiences, Avery and Bryce felt the pain of cognitive disequilibrium as they pivoted abruptly into post-study abroad. They heard the unbelievable, life-changing news that they were being sent home but denied it would actually

happen. When it did, the disequilibrium blindsided them. Research by Kessler (2019) and Pitts

(2016) supported my finding that individuals in the denial stage of grief had trouble believing

difficult news. Avery "wasn't mentally prepared for going home." Adler (1981) and Sussman's

(1986, 2001, 2002) studies showed that many returnees were not prepared for the readjustment

period of cross-cultural reentry experience in their home country. Butcher's (2002) findings

suggested that returnees, who did not want to return home and were not prepared, faced

especially challenging reentries and distress. Further, Chamove and Soeterik (2006) found that

grief symptoms were highest for those students. As Avery and Bryce rushed to leave their host

country, they sadly wrapped "up affairs and relationships". Pain in the unexpected ending to

study abroad disrupted relationships so "[i]t is understandable that in a sample of emerging

adults … where goals to establish relationships and intimacy are so salient, social disruptions are

particularly consequential to well-being" (Zimmer-Gembeck & Petherick, 2006, as cited in

Fanari & Segrin, 2021, p. 306). Avery found it almost impossible to process and make sense of

it all. Similarly, in the denial stage of grief, people "could not fully process" (Kübler-Ross &

Kessler, 2005, p. 10) what happened. Avery and Bryce handled disequilibrium differently upon

being sent home and transitioned from denial to the acceptance stage of grief (Kessler, 2019).

The findings added to research on what ways grief, lack of preparation, and disruption to

relationships impacted key common milestones for U.S. college students in their first-year post-

study abroad.

In the second area of key common milestone experiences, Avery and Bryce felt the pain

of cognitive disequilibrium as they looked differently at going straight home. Kübler-Ross and

Kessler (2005) wrote that the bargaining stage of grief "help[ed] our mind move from one state

of loss to another" (p. 19). Avery bargained to try to avoid going straight home and

unsuccessfully tried to stay with friends in an apartment in her host city. She seemingly flipped between accepting and bargaining as she gained clarity that study abroad transitioned to post-study abroad, and she realized she had little control of it. Bryce was more accepting of the news and considered moving home his best option, so he did not try to get out of going straight home. My participants' reactions mirrored Kübler-Ross and Kessler's (2005) account of the acceptance stage of grief as a way to "begin to find some peace with what has happened" (p. 27).

In the third area of key common milestone experiences, Avery and Bryce felt the pain of cognitive disequilibrium as they struggled with returning home to live. In spite of their close relationships with their families, they sensed things would be different and wrestled with mixed emotions about living at home. As they listened to their inner voices, Avery and Bryce felt conflicted by their family loyalties and their anxiety about returning home to live. They felt torn between the self they had come to be abroad and who they would be at home. My findings were consistent with, and supported research on, emerging self-authorship research by Magolda et al. (2012) on developmental changes in college indicating that from year one to year two, students moved from relying on external definitions of meaning making defined by others to less dependence on authority.

In the fourth area of key common milestone experiences, Avery and Bryce felt the pain of cognitive disequilibrium as they coped with having much taken from them. They felt the loss of the choice to stay abroad or return home. Kübler-Ross and Kessler (2005) described the anger stage of grief as something people choose "to avoid the feelings underneath until we're ready to face them" (p. 12). Avery used forms of the word *take* many times to describe her anger about the university taking away their choice to stay in their host city or to return home. Bryce felt frustrated and disappointed that the transition home was "out of our control". Participants'

comments were similar to, and added to, research by Allison et al. (2012) and Dettweiler et al. (2015) that referred to the loss, grief, and deprivation post-study abroad students experienced during reentry. As Avery and Bryce gave up once-in-a-lifetime opportunities and relationships, they felt the brevity of their grief for lost opportunities of community, familiarity, experiences, relationships, and friendships that were taken from them. They realized a time of mourning for personal relationships, experiences, and their life in the host country (Butcher, 2002; Gray & Savicki, 2015; Pitts, 2016). Their anxiety "and anger appear to be a result of the inability to comprehend, accept, or deal with such loss" (Kartoshkina, 2015, p. 39). As previously mentioned, the unexpected ending to study abroad disrupted friendships at a time critical for establishing relationships (Zimmer-Gembeck & Petherick, 2006, as cited in Fanari & Segrin, 2021). During post-study abroad, Avery and Bryce had no choice but to forfeit the autonomy they knew during study abroad. They spoke of frustration with COVID-19 limitations on making and carrying out plans with friends. In Fanari and Segrin's (2021) study during COVID-19, returnees also felt "isolated, unable to reconnect with their loved ones, visit their favorite places, or do the things they missed the most" (p. 306).

In the fifth area of key common milestone experiences, Avery and Bryce felt the pain of cognitive disequilibrium as they weathered discomfort with the once familiar. They held the tension between status quo and new realities at home. In the depression stage of grief, sadness made life seem empty and pointless, but "it makes us rebuild ourselves from the ground up … It takes us to a deeper place in our soul that we would not normally explore" (Kübler-Ross & Kessler, 2005, p. 25). Avery attributed her anger and lasting sadness to the COVID-19 shutdown and stopped doing things she loved most. Gaw (2000) stated that specific reentry reverse culture shock problems, experienced by some students, included depression. Sadness spiked in study

abroad students preparing to return home and peaked upon reentry (Saviski & Price, 2017). A noteworthy difference in my findings, as compared to those of Savicki and Price's study, was that Avery and Bryce's sadness began with them preparing to return home and stayed with them for months. Supporting my findings, Fanari and Segrin (2021) noted that "both reentry shock and reacculturative stress predicted … that individuals can display considerable emotional distress as much as six months after their reentry" (p. 306). As Allison et al. (2012) found with their participants, Bryce felt frustrated because he could not adequately explain his experiences to his family, and they were frustrated because they could not relate to his experiences. The findings aligned with research finding that returnees, who experienced reverse culture shock, longed for respect and needed to make their voices heard (Fanari et al., 2021). Like Bryce, returnees struggled to verbalize and explain learnings from their study abroad experiences (Thomas & Kerstetter, 2020). As with Bryce, Fanari et al. (2021) and Pitts' (2016) returnees had problems communicating their experiences and felt torn between personal expression and the expectations of listeners (Kartoshkina, 2015; Pitts, 2016; Raschio, 1987). The findings contributed to research on the key common milestone of the pain that students felt when they could not adequately share their experiences during post-study abroad. As they navigated their time at home, Avery and Bryce felt limited, trapped, and stuck. Avery related her anger with feeling trapped and stuck living at home compared to the freedom she had abroad. Christofi and Thompson (2007) found that students experiencing reverse culture shock had more freedom in the sojourn country than at home. Walling et al. (2006) held that students' negative reactions to their home culture "were emotionally intense, reflecting personal anger, criticism and guilt" (p. 158). The work of recent researchers (Fanari & Segrin, 2021; Segrin et al., 2017) supported my findings that post-study abroad students felt loneliness and isolation. Avery compared the U.S.

to Europe and "was thoroughly unimpressed [laughed]." Her reaction was reinforced by research showing that students often noted their new values and beliefs that did not align with their home country; this resulted in stress and anxiety (Fanari et al., 2021).

Research Question b: In what ways, if any, do key common milestones for U.S. college students connect to emerging self-authorship in their first-year post-study abroad?

Key common milestones for U.S. college students, in their first-year post-study abroad, connected to emerging self-authorship as my participants found good company in partnerships while the stages of grief layered within and between the themes. In partnerships, good company partners supported students "by respecting their opinions and feelings, helping them sort through their experiences, and collaborating with them to solve problems" (Magolda, 2009, p. 291).

In the first and second areas of partnerships, Avery and Bryce partnered with a supportive family member, as well as supportive friends and peers to connect their key common milestones to emerging self-authorship. For the most part, both participants had good partners and authentic, healthy, and interdependent relationships with their families, friends, and peers. Avery and Bryce quickly decided where to live for post-study abroad and maintained that not much went into making the decision with their families to move home. My participants voiced sad, quick goodbyes upon transitioning to post-study abroad and treasured the quickly organized final gala. They valued relationships and community and yearned to stay connected with supportive friends and peers. Bryce invested much of himself into building and drawing support from his interdependent relationships with his classmates and community team during study abroad. Like many returnees, Bryce yearned to unpack and share with others his cathartic experiences and what he learned (Allison et al., 2012; Kortegast & Boisfontaine, 2015; Pitts, 2016; Raschio, 1987). Yet Bryce felt frustrated because he could not adequately explain his

experiences to his typically supportive family, and they were frustrated because they could not

relate to his experiences. This was the one area where his family was not good company. The

frustrations in Bryce's family were affirmed by scholars who indicated almost one-quarter of

returnees struggled with relating to parents (Chamove & Soeterik, 2006). The perceived quality

of post-study abroad students' relationships with parents, siblings, and friends changed (Fanari et

al., 2021). Post-study abroad students realized their expectations and worldview profoundly

differed from that of their parents (Butcher, 2002). The friction and frustration in Bryce's family

showed he was questioning external formulas and pointed to him navigating the Crossroads

phase of emerging self-authorship. Avery and Bryce were deeply saddened when COVID-19

restrictions thwarted their plans for face-to-face post-study abroad gatherings. Their sadness

echoed Kessler's (2019) depression stage of grief. Again, the unexpected ending to study abroad

disrupted relationships (Zimmer-Gembeck & Petherick, 2006, as cited in Fanari & Segrin, 2021,

p. 306). Avery pressed her mother for help in managing time and setting priorities for herself.

Her mother respectfully came alongside Avery asking the right questions to encourage Avery to

think and figure out strategies for herself. Bryce listened to his internal voice that compelled him

to stay connected to partnerships with friends and peers who provided him with good company.

In research supporting these findings connecting key common milestones to emerging self-

authorship, Magolda (2009) contended that having "good partners (or internal support) for

thinking through their experiences" (p. 216) helped prompt emerging self-authorship. Research

by Magolda confirmed that in the college years, good company should focus on "developing an

internal sense of self" (p. *xxii*, 2004). Magolda's (2008) research further supported the

importance of authentic, healthy, and interdependent relationships with "good partners" to

help connect to emerging self-authorship journey.

In the third area of partnerships, Avery and Bryce partnered with supportive professors and classmates to connect their key common milestones to emerging self-authorship. Avery and Bryce each had an online/remote learning professor reach out in what they termed peak meaningful moments. My findings, that my participants had good company with professors, differed from some existing research. Fanari et al. (2021), Sussman (1986), and Toncar et al. (2006) found that some returnees encountered indifferent instructors. As good company, Avery's professor checked in on her and helped Avery turn around her sadness in Kessler's (2019) depression stage of grief. Avery described it as "overwhelming, but not … in a *bad* [emphasis added] sense … [and] just so … appreciated." Bryce felt heartened by university staff grieving with them as transitioned to post-study abroad. He also participated in a transformational course with a supportive professor and classmates where he was able to move past his frustration in the anger stage of grief. Baxter Magolda and King (2007) emphasized "[f]or some participants, talking about their experiences offers a first opportunity to verbalize how they see the world, how they define themselves, and how they relate to others" (p. 506). As good company, the professor skillfully orchestrated the course by partnering with Bryce and his classmates to help them learn to help others by helping themselves first in their distinct traumas and crises. This connected Bryce's key common milestones of pain to emerging self-authorship as he found meaning in Kessler's (2019) meaning stage of grief. Professors assumed an important role in supporting my participants with making meaning in peak meaningful experiences which eventually sparked developmental gains (Dunn et al., 2014; Engberg et al., 2016). Based on these findings, my inquiry adds to existing research in the importance of the role of educators as good company for post-study abroad students. Research by Barber and King (2014) contended that educators should purposely provide students with DEEs such as the

uncomfortable moments Bryce encountered in the transformational course he took. My participants appreciated quality connections and conversations in authentic, healthy, and interdependent relationships with supportive faculty and peers where they could find internal definition, thus connecting them to emerging self-authorship.

In the fourth area of partnerships, Avery and Bryce partnered with a supportive researcher in this inquiry during our interviews and journals to connect their key common milestones to emerging self-authorship. Avery thanked me for the opportunity to share her experiences and saw the value of reviewing all she faced. Bryce expressed appreciation for my patience and listening as he processed his experiences. As I gave my "full attention to understanding" (Christofi & Thompson, 2007, p. 62) my participants' experiences and meaning making journeys, I unexpectedly supported them as good company. In a like manner, Magolda and King (2008) recommend that during conversations and interviews with college students, the key was to empower students to make meaning of their experiences instead of the interviewer making meaning for them. In their research on emerging self-authorship, Baxter Magolda and King (2007) emphasized that "the interview is the stimulus for constructing meaning they haven't constructed before. In these ways … the interview itself may be a significant learning experience" (p. 506).

In the fifth area of partnerships, Avery and Bryce partnered with their supportive self to connect key common milestones to emerging self-authorship. Avery slowed down to listen to her inner voice in reevaluating life priorities and decision-making. She alleviated stress by using technology when her inner voice told her she needed a break. Bryce listened to his inner voice and acted on his calling to serve and encourage others. As they made sense and meaning of disequilibrium by doing what they defined as right for them, my participants were good company

to support themselves. King et al. (2009) indicated that "exploring and establishing a basis for beliefs, choices, action … and … developing a sense of identity to guide choices … serve as markers for student development in emerging self-authorship and meaning making" (p. 112). These findings contributed to research that the key common milestone of acting as good partners to themselves can connect post-study abroad students to emerging self-authorship in their first-year post-study abroad.

Research Question c: In what ways, if any, does emerging self-authorship support U.S. college students in making sense of unexpected major events in their first-year post-study abroad?

Emerging self-authorship supported U.S. college students in making sense of pain in unexpected major events in their first-year post-study abroad by pressing them to find perspective as the stages of grief layered within and between the themes. To resolve pain in unexpected major events and connect to emerging self-authorship, my participants listened to their internal voices, cultivated their internal foundation, "opened themselves to new ways of seeing things and gained perspective on their lives" (Magolda, 2009, p. 317)**.** This perspective pressed my participants toward Kessler's (2019) meaning stage where grief transformed "into something else, something rich and fulfilling … and empowers us to find a path forward" (p. 2).

In the first area of perspective, my participants made sense of unexpected major events as they turned negative situations into positive opportunities. Avery made the best of a potentially uncomfortable situation, and she gained perspective by finding the silver lining in the familiarity of living at home. Avery and Bryce both came to terms with why they were sent home. Once Avery realized their class was not cursed and the COVID-19 pandemic was far-reaching, she moved into the acceptance stage of grief (Kessler, 2019). When Avery questioned why, her

questioning drove her to find perspective, and she reconciled herself with why study abroad was taken from them. Both participants found good in what they dreaded by creating a new perspective. Avery and Bryce's reentry experiences, ranging from bitter to sweet, embodied those of participants in Kartoshkina's study (2015). My findings add to research that while participants experienced a plethora of reentry feelings, they saw the best in their situations and gained perspective. Avery described the time she had dreaded at home as a "good break" and reflected on all she would have missed had she still been abroad. Bryce acknowledged that being taken out of his comfort zone, as he listened to his inner voice to follow his calling, was actually "good discomfort". My findings were confirmed in Pitts' (2016) research where post-study abroad students struggled to make meaning of experiences as they looked to the future. My participants' belief "that the conflict was internal and personal, one that they viewed as constructive and necessary" (p. 159), aligned with research by Raschio (1987). They felt empowered to move past the negativity of reentry to positively reframe their perspective. Research on emerging self-authorship by Magolda (2008) supported my participants' acceptance of the reality that some things spun out of their control "but their reactions to what happened was within their control" (p. 279) as they intuitively cultivated and trusted their internal voices to guide their responses and make meaning of unexpected major events. This perspective seemed to connect to the Crossroads phase in the self-authorship journey (Baxter Magolda & King, 2012).

In the second area of perspective, my participants made sense of unexpected major events as they increased their awareness of others. Post-study abroad helped Avery expand her worldview as her scope of understanding transcended unexpected major events in the U.S. She saw herself in more global terms and confidently welcomed discussing global issues with diverse

others with many points of view. Just as the participants in Butcher's (2002) study, not only had

Avery and Bryce's worldview shifted, but their place in the world had been altered. Avery

recognized that her understanding relied on not just knowing but wisdom. Participants in

Magolda's (2008) study of emerging self-authorship also spoke of "a transformation from

knowledge to wisdom" (p. 277) as they secured internal commitments. Instead of focusing on

himself and his point of view, Bryce placed value on helping others in need and deliberately

increased his awareness of others by observing them and making a difference in their lives.

While my participants did not spend a full year studying abroad as those in Dwyer's (2004)

research, the findings supported their new perspectives as they sustained growth from

interactions and friendships with people from diverse cultures and formed a more sophisticated

outlook on the world. Baxter Magolda and King's (2012) research on emerging self-authorship

paralleled my findings that my participants' exposure to diverse others helped them rethink their

perspective on the world as they seemingly navigated the Crossroads phase.

In the third area of perspective, my participants made sense of unexpected major events

as they visualized themselves in a new light. Christofi and Thompson (2007) found that post-

study abroad students saw themselves in a new light because of their experiences back home.

My participants gained perspective as they self-reflected on intrapersonal and interpersonal

levels, and their sense of self shifted through the pain and disequilibrium in unexpected major

events. These findings augmented extant research. Researchers described self-reflection as an

intrapersonal strength (Doyle, 2009; Engberg, 2013; Magolda, 2008). Avery saw herself

intrapersonally as more confident in pursuing her passion and in her openness. She self-reflected

on her life as a timeline and showed a strong sense of self-awareness and place. Avery's belief

and opinion about her intrapersonal identity did not rely on what others thought, and she rested

on her inner voice driving her to pursue her passions. Bryce saw himself intrapersonally as unexpectedly more equipped, capable, and willing to grow as he gained clarity about his calling. He self-reflected on growing from his conversations and relationships under the most difficult circumstances in unexpected major events. He stayed true to himself and his willingness to grow and pursue his calling. Intrapersonally, my participants worked actively to listen to their inner voices to define their internal sense of self. Additionally, Avery saw herself interpersonally as more independent, honest, and apt to stand up to authority figures. She viewed her passion for traveling independently as unique, and she proudly stood out in her friend group. By relying on her inner voice, Avery's growing honesty and bluntness with questioning authority figures added to her sense of self—just as Dettweiler et al. (2015) and Rashio (1987) found with students in their research. Bryce also saw himself interpersonally as challenged to respond with genuine empathy for others as he pursued his calling. Together, findings in the interpersonal dimension aligned with Bryce's empathy for others (Braskamp et al., 2009; Engberg, 2013; Maharaja, 2018). Avery and Bryce's new perspective during unexpected major events and drive to cultivate and listen to their inner voices seemed to point to the Crossroads phase in Baxter Magolda and King's (2012) emerging self-authorship research.

In the fourth area of perspective, my participants made sense of unexpected major events as they reevaluated their beliefs and life goals. Avery used the gift of time to self-reflect on what truly mattered, questioned why she was doing certain things in life, and let her inner voice guide her. In her meaning making during the pain of the major unexpected event of returning home to live, Avery reevaluated her life goals and found new perspective as did students in a study by Jones et al. (2012). In similar findings by Raschio (1987) that echoed Avery's response, post-study abroad students' new perspective influenced their decision-making as they tried make

themselves "different but better" (p. 159). Avery and Bryce reevaluated their beliefs and life

goals. Avery vowed to follow through on her dream to travel, and Bryce planned follow through

on the calling to serve others. Understanding this perspective may have lessened the effects felt

during the grieving process (Butcher, 2002). In a similar manner as Avery, students in research

by Allison et al. (2012) and Dettweiler et al. (2015) felt empowered and vowed to travel more in

the future as they gained a sense of control over their own destiny. Throughout our conversation,

Avery used the word *taken* to describe her loss of study abroad. When Avery took back her

dream to travel, she took back her life. Bryce followed through on the "uncontrollable variable"

in his life—his calling to connect with and help others through crises. In Pitts' (2016) study,

students also vowed to connect with humanity and make a difference in the world. Just like

Bryce, short-term missionary students "reported that their experiences inspired personal growth

and gave them new perspectives about personal purpose, belonging and calling" (Walling et al.,

2006, p. 160). Coming home made Avery want to travel more and her sentiments were

expressed in a study by Le and LaCost (2017) who noted that post-study abroad students

attributed their hope and optimism in the future to their reentry reverse culture shock

experiences. Just as Avery and Bryce experienced through reflection, participants in previous

research (Jones et al., 2012; King et al., 2011; Savicki & Price, 2015; Wielkiewicz & Turkowski,

2010) were supported in their meaning making through reflection. This meaning making tied to

Kessler's (2019) meaning level of grief and added to current research. I found that emerging

self-authorship propelled my participants to make meaning and gain perspective through

"sort[ing] out what they believed to be important to them" (Magolda, 2009, p. 317). These

findings were like those of Barber et al. (2013) who, in a study of students making substantial

gains in emerging self-authorship, found that those who experienced the unexpected

disequilibrium of disruptions to their college experience were pressed "to reevaluate knowledge, identity, and relationships in light of these situations" (p. 884) as they navigated the Crossroads.

In the fifth area of perspective, my participants made sense of unexpected major events as they explained peak meaningful experiences with representative objects. Representative objects were discussed in Research Question 1d.

Research Question d: What objects, if any, give voice to and represent emerging self-authorship for U.S. college students in their first-year post-study abroad?

The objects that gave voice to and represented emerging self-authorship for U.S. college students in their first-year post-study abroad included photographs of Avery's study abroad cohort and a globe. Avery's photograph of her cohort represented how far they came in just one year. Her globe tied her past to her present to her future and represented her decision to follow her heart and passion for traveling. Avery's globe inspired and helped her make meaning of disequilibrium: "My meaningful experience [is] … a surplus of moments wrapped up into one object [and] shows me how passionate I am about traveling." This statement was supported by research indicating that post-study abroad students discovered meaning through opportunities to discuss, name, produce, and develop explanations of experiences. Objects, such as photographs, helped students connect study abroad to home by enabling them to share the most significant aspects of experiences (Kortegast & Boisfontaine, 2015). Since there is very little research on the objects that give voice to and represent emerging self-authorship for U.S. college students in their first-year post-study abroad, this inquiry extends the literature. Avery listened to her internal voice and moved past her pain to make meaning in what suggested the Crossroads phase of emerging self-authorship. This finding supported Magolda's (2009) emerging self-authorship research that found that by cultivating their internal voices, individuals were "identifying what

made them happy, examining their own beliefs, finding parts of themselves that were important

to them, and establishing a distinction between their feelings and external expectations" (p. 7).

Avery's meaning making was consistent with research by Barber et al. (2013) and Magolda

(2008, 2009) showing that the disequilibrium and meaning making in unexpected major events

moved students toward unlocking emerging self-authorship.

Implications for Policy and Practice

This inquiry intended to contribute to the body of research that attempted to understand in

what ways post-study abroad experiences impacted student development in emerging self-

authorship during post-study abroad. Gaining more detailed information, on the ways students

made sense of unexpected major events in their first-year post-study abroad, may aid university

leaders and educators to intentionally plan programs, instruction, and post-study abroad choices

(Barber & King, 2014). To help the post-study abroad experience facilitate the development of

emerging self-authorship, implications for policy and practice focused on six stakeholders—the

post-study abroad student, family, faculty (i.e., professors), international programs, student life

(i.e., resident assistants and spiritual advisors), and student health and well-being (i.e.,

psychologists and counselors)—and their roles in students' experiences of pain (cognitive

disequilibrium), partnerships (good company), and perspective (meaning making) with grief.

One implication of my findings pointed to returnees and their families needing more

immediate, intentional support during the post-study abroad period. Students typically returned

from study abroad in April or May and did not return to their home campuses until August or

September. This resulted in a gap time when students were not living at the university home

campus but rather living at home with their families under the unusual and difficult limitations of

the COVID-19 pandemic. The isolation of the COVID-19 pandemic may have exacerbated

returnees' pain and cognitive disequilibrium. My participants told me they felt anger, caught off guard, concern, devastated, deprived, disbelief, disenfranchised grief, frustration, isolated, limited, overwhelmed, powerless, sadness, stuck, uneasy, unfulfilled, unprepared, and singled-out during their post-study abroad time at home. This array of pain and cognitive disequilibrium implied that to promote mental well-being, there is a need for universities to help all stakeholders in understanding and supporting returnees' difficult feelings during post-study abroad. In a study supporting my findings, Fanari and Segrin (2021) noted that "individuals can display considerable emotional distress as much as six months after their reentry." Gaw (2000) found that reverse culture shock students risked "depression, alienation, isolation, loneliness, general anxiety, … [and] friendship difficulties" (p. 101). The perceived quality of their relationships with families may change (Fanari et al., 2021). Negative emotions exacerbated reentry resolution (Butcher, 2002; Sussman, 2002). Not being prepared for reentry added to subsequent distress experienced by returnees (Chamove & Soeterik, 2006).

Until their peak meaningful experiences, participants faced a difficult journey to make meaning and find perspective. Avery and Bryce felt out of place with the familiar. They yearned to resolve the disequilibrium of how and why they were sent home and somehow make meaning and find perspective in their post-study abroad lives. These experiences implied that had the university initially prepared returnees and families for ways to make meaning of the post-study abroad experience, some of these difficulties may have been alleviated. When post-study abroad "students were not provided with structured opportunities … to negotiate and renegotiate the meaning of their experiences and incorporate new understandings into post-study abroad activities" (Kortegast & Boisfontaine, 2015, p. 817), meaning making was limited. My participants experienced stages of grief intermingled with pain, partnerships, and perspective

during post-study abroad. As they twisted through the stages of grief, Avery and Bryce denied the possibility they could be sent home, and Avery bargained to try to avoid it. They felt anger over what was taken from them and experienced deep sadness bordering on depression. My participants finally accepted the reality of post-study abroad and found meaning and perspective of their grief. Research by Chamove and Soeterik (2006) supported my findings that grief was highest for post-study abroad students who felt unprepared to return and had a hard time returning. Pitts (2016) agreed that ultimately, students felt empowered to move past the pain of grief to positively reframe their post-study abroad experience and vowed to connect with humanity and make a difference in the world.

   In his grief research, Kessler (2019) penned that rites of passage were critical for acknowledging and working through the phases of grief to finally find meaning. While he was referring to funerals, Kessler (2019) reflected that "when we see our sorrow in the eyes of another, we know our grief has meaning" (p. 47). Avery spoke repeatedly of study abroad being taken from them, and Bryce used the words "began to grieve" even before he left his host country to return home. Both students felt isolated, and Bryce expressed frustration in trying to share his study abroad stories with his family during post-study abroad. Research by Butcher (2002) indicated that after the death of an individual, society typically called for a grieving ritual for the expression of emotions; however, no such ritual applied to post-study abroad reentry grief. This unique grief encompassed a loss of the host country friendships and experiences. Moreover, it exacted a readjustment to expectations and relationships when study abroad students returned home. Just as participants in Butcher's study, not only had Avery and Bryce's worldview shifted, but their place in the world had been altered. Understanding this perspective

may lessen the effects felt during the grieving process and press students toward meaning making in emerging self-authorship.

Since Avery and Bryce each spoke of the importance of the hastily planned final dinner with their study abroad cohorts before they left study abroad, it can be inferred that a rite of passage dinner to seal the study abroad experience could be equally or even more meaningful. Once study abroad students return to the U.S., one idea is for international programs and student life to collaborate in holding a rite of passage dinner that would bring together returnees and their families. This event could signal the closing of their study abroad chapter but also mark the beginning of their journey as global citizens chapter. Designed with the goal to feel more like a beginning than an ending, it could provide a way for returnees and their families to connect with others who are experiencing many of the same feelings, while also emphasizing future steps. This may help returnees make meaning at this critical time in their development when their loss of experiences they had hoped for and relationships were so salient. To support returnees and their families who cannot attend, attendance through an online platform could be offered.

At this rite of passage dinner, students could work independently or in small groups to reflect and consider their responsibility and next steps as global citizens. Material by La Brack's (n.d.) What's Up with Culture? website could be used during this ceremony. Specifically, La Brack's activities on identifying skills they learned while abroad may be helpful. These activities may help students make meaning and reconsider their life goals, which is an important step in emerging self-authorship. Reminding returnees of the knowledge and skills they have gained can help them incorporate some of those feelings into the co-curricular experience and give back to the campus community. During the rite of passage dinner, students could submit background music that reminded them of being abroad or returning home. A solemn time for

reflection, meditation, prayer, or gratitude could be incorporated before the meal. Food from the different study abroad countries could be featured. Students could write out on cards their hopes and dreams or plans to make a difference in the world and place the cards in sealed envelopes for them to open in one year. A looped slide show with photos taken abroad by students could be played. Student artwork inspired by post-study abroad could be displayed.

The rite of passage dinner could culminate with a symbolic ritual, such as passing the torch, to represent the transition from a study abroad student to a global citizen. A ceremony that brought returnees and their families together in the U.S. could be one way to that could mark the beginning of their journey as global citizens in this increasingly connected world. It could help returnees see post-study abroad not as an ending but as the beginning of their journey as global citizens. Avery encapsulated how she and Bryce felt like they were "connoisseur[s] of the world." Avery believed "it's like my, you know, *knowledge* [emphasis added] is power, but, like, my … *sense* [emphasis added] is just, like, the *whole world* [emphasis added]." Avery welcomed the chance to see global issues from many points of view, and this shifted and enhanced her perspective on her sense of self. Both participants were aware that they were part of a greater community than just the U.S. and saw the value in this citizenship. The overarching goal of this event could be to help students make sense and meaning of their post-study abroad lives and move forward with their hopes and dreams, as well as in emerging self-authorship.

After months of pain, both participants shared a post-study abroad peak meaningful experience where professors finally came alongside them to partner as good company. In a gesture that overwhelmed Avery in a good way, an online/remote learning professor reached out to check on her well-being. Bryce's professor orchestrated a transformational online/remote learning class that helped him deal with post-study abroad. These findings implied a need for

professors to be prepared to partner with returnees as soon as possible. Research by Dunn et al. (2014) and Engberg et al. (2016) concurred that faculty may assume an important role in supporting students with making meaning of post-study abroad experiences, particularly when students encountered uncomfortable moments that eventually sparked developmental gains. In support of partnerships with professors, Barber and King (2014) contended that "course-related experiences comprised the single largest contextual category of transformative experiences" (p. 447). Yet while faculty valued the constructs of emerging self-authorship, some lacked the knowledge or skills to facilitate these constructs (Stone & Surmitis, 2018). Pizzolato's (2005) study advocated for faculty partnerships with returnees because "it may be possible to induce self-authorship, and that college students often find themselves in potentially provocative moments, and so may be particularly well positioned for self-authorship interventions" (p. 638). Together, these findings suggested that had professors been coached with strategies to partner with returnees sooner, reentry may have been much smoother. Additionally, universities may consider preparing faculty to incorporate the Learning Partnerships Model (LPM) to edge students toward emerging self-authorship "by validating their ability to learn, situating learning in learners' experience, and defining learning as a collaborative exchange of perspectives" (Magolda & King, 2004, p. *xviii*). Preparing professors with strategies to help them to partner with returnees as soon as possible to provide authentic, healthy, and interdependent relationships may benefit post-study abroad students by connecting them to emerging self-authorship. On a formal level, another recommendation for intentional support may be a summer school course requirement for study abroad returnees. During his tenure at the University of the Pacific Bruce La Brack, who was a Professor of Anthropology at the University of the Pacific, required study abroad returnees to participate in a summer school course he created (1993). A course such as

this could give some students the opportunity to come together with other students who may have had the same experiences and soften the isolation of the pandemic. It could provide them with opportunities to find meaning in their post-study abroad experiences and find a way forward. Informing families of course content through family and parent groups, as well as email blasts, could help prepare them for what to expect. Professors may even consider checking in with students by email during the summer months.

La Brack (n.d.) also developed the What's Up with Culture website which may be a helpful on-line cultural training resource for universities to support not only study abroad students but parents/guardians/supporters of study abroad students and staff or faculty members involved with study abroad programs. This self-guided, self-paced vehicle "was developed to support and enhance a student's ability to make successful cultural adjustments both before going overseas and upon returning home from studying abroad" (La Brack, n.d, What Is This Stuff and Why Should I Care? section, para. 1) through self-reflection. The last four sections may be of interest to students who are preparing to return home or have returned home from studying abroad. The website goes beyond asking "How are you doing" and reinforces meaning making which propels students toward emerging self-authorship. The website guarantees that knowledge of the material will be immediately of value.

Additional intentional support could come through a collaboration between university international programs, student life, and student health and well-being to support students and their families in understanding possible iterations of pain, partnerships, perspective, and grief. These partnerships could include online support groups for students who do not return to campus until the fall semester. The support groups could help returnees work through and normalize what they were feeling with their post-study abroad experiences and understand that while their

experience is unique, it is also common. The option of meeting face-to-face support groups also may be offered when students return to campus for classes.

University international programs and student life programs could collaborate to assign a specific resident assistant, spiritual advisor, team, team member, or mentor couple to reach out to returnees by phone, email, or social media at different points in the program from the same point of contact. This contact could include offering support but also being there to ask specific questions and to see if returnees have questions about anything. These individuals could be trained to watch for indications of pain, partnerships, perspective, and grief in returnees and refer them for counselling if needed. The resident assistant, spiritual advisor, team, team member, or mentor couple could also attend the rite of passage dinner.

University websites could include videos, podcasts, and information to prepare stakeholders for what to expect when students return from study abroad. International programs or student life could post and monitor prompts on social media for students to comment on what they might be going through during post-study abroad. The University of Delaware's returnee website exemplifies how universities may provide resources for returnees to learn about what to expect upon returning, write their study abroad story, access opportunities to use and improve skills they gained abroad, volunteer to speak with other returnee groups, and find links to supports such as counseling services (University of Delaware, 2022). Universities could create podcasts such as Brubaker's series on returning from study abroad, including one on navigating grief and loss in re-entry (Small Planet Studio, 2020). Universities may consider creating a policy requiring a contingency plan to support individual students who return home from study abroad sooner than expected. Universities may want to consider incorporating these

recommendations to possibly alleviate the frustration of pain, partnerships, perspective, and grief during the post-study abroad and ultimately trigger emerging self-authorship.

Recommendations for Future Research

My inquiry findings identify in what ways the post-study abroad experience facilitated the development of emerging self-authorship of U.S. college students in their first-year post-study abroad. Five recommendations for future research, to extend or enhance this inquiry, follow.

First, my participants met the inclusion criteria but were limited to a homogenous group of students from one four-year university. They lacked racial and ethnic diversity and were not representative of the racial and ethnic diversity of the university. Moving forward, researchers could focus on the ways post-study abroad Indigenous students, other students of color, and first-generation college students react to pain, partnerships, perspective, and grief in emerging self-authorship. Future research could highlight the ways these students make decisions such as to where to live upon abruptly returning home from study abroad. The responses of racially and ethnically diverse students could provide other perspectives and may reveal different timing and approaches to emerging self-authorship during post-study abroad.

Second, my participants had supportive families. Future inquiries could consider challenges high-risk, post-study abroad students faced upon abruptly returning from study-abroad. Future studies could focus on the ways these students dealt with pain, partnerships, perspective, and grief, as well as their gains in emerging self-authorship during post-study abroad. Future research could concentrate on experiences of high-risk, post-study abroad students who abruptly returned home to live in unsafe homes or whose homes were unavailable.

Third, future studies could focus on the perspective of returnees' families on their students' post-study abroad experiences. The responses of returnees' families could provide other perspectives and may reveal different timing and approaches to emerging self-authorship during post-study abroad, as well as provide another layer of triangulation to findings.

Fourth, participants were given the opportunity to attach to their journal entry any physical artifact or a digital artifact that represented a peak meaningful experience during post-study abroad. Avery's explanations provided important contributions to the inquiry and gave me deeper insight into her emerging self-authorship. Future scholars may consider other non-traditional methods for data collection such as music soundtracks or videos representing a peak meaningful experience during post-study abroad (Fanari et al., 2022). Another method could include an arts-based and visual arts methods approach such as Welkener and Magolda (2014) used to analyze emerging self-authorship journeys through self-portraits by students (p. 583).

Finally, future inquiries could include a longitudinal, mixed-methods study with data collected before and during study abroad, as well as at the beginning and 4 months into post-study abroad. Utilizing semi-structured interviews and a quantitative assessment, such as the Self-Authorship Survey (SAS), could give a clearer picture of emerging self-authorship.

Chapter 5 presented an overview of the chapter, findings related to literature, implications for policy and practice, and recommendations for future research. I closed this dissertation with my concluding reflections and an epilogue.

Concluding Reflections

This inquiry sought to add to the body of research identifying in what ways the post-study abroad experience facilitated the development of emerging self-authorship of U.S. college students in their first-year post-study abroad. My participants shared pieces of their post-study

abroad experiences through interviews and journals. My findings confirmed the need for continued research of this topic.

Not all students had the same experiences as Avery and Bryce when they returned home abruptly from study abroad due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Countless other stories ache to be heard and there is much to be learned about emerging self-authorship from those stories. Once the pandemic wanes and study abroad opportunities unfold again, students will begin their study abroad experiences and eventually their post-study abroad experiences. Opportunities are wide open for continued research to identify in what ways key common milestones link to emerging self-authorship and in what ways college students made sense of unexpected major events during post-study abroad. Stories, of experiences and opportunities to help activate emerging self-authorship in post-study abroad students, may be lost should this research be ignored. Contributing to the body of knowledge regarding in what ways the post-study abroad experience facilitated the development of emerging self-authorship of U.S. college students in their first-year post-study abroad is important to promote well-adjusted self-authoring adults.

Epilogue

I began this dissertation journey with a hunch that something deeply developmental was occurring in the dozens of post-study abroad college students I had conversations with over the years. The students' stories were compelling, gripping, and filled with every emotion. At some point, I learned that having their stories heard seemed to be therapeutic for the students, and I made an effort to listen more intently. Their stories prompted me to wonder what was going on and whether this topic was worth investigating. My heart as a mother was touched by their transparency, but my training in child development kicked in and I began to question university leaders about what I was sensing. Two university student life leaders, and countless parents of

college students, confirmed that they had also seen this in post-study abroad students' stories and voiced concerned about the effects on students' well-being. Little did I know my hunch would turn into a four-plus-year journey into the hearts and minds of post-study abroad students.

The aspects of self-authorship felt like an extension of my interest and fascination for all things developmental with children. I remembered parenting my adult children, as they transitioned from our home to their own homes, as a delicate dance. I tried my best to help them make their own decisions and choices without pressuring them to live as I would. It was a long, mostly rewarding time of letting go but holding them near. I had no idea that through this inquiry, when a strategy I used was effective, I had provided my adult children with good company on their own self-authorship journeys.

Because of this inquiry, I am not the same person and educator I was when I began. Immersing myself in the inquiry of post-study abroad and emerging self-authorship opened my eyes to seeing myself, my family, and the world on very different terms. I unexpectedly experienced perspective on my own view of life and development thanks to these students.

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APPENDIX A: TIMELINE FOR THE INQUIRY

Date:	Task:
February 2017	• spoke informally with University of the West Coast Dean of Students concerning study abroad students
February 2018 **September 2019** **November 2019** **February 2020**	• spoke informally with University of the West Coast Vice-President of Student Life in 2018, late 2019, and early 2020 regarding idea of studying post-study abroad students at the university.
April 2020	• attended University of the Pacific dissertation proposal meeting.
August 2020	• applied and received inquiry approval from University of the Pacific Institutional Review Board • emailed University of the West Coast Vice-President of Student Life, who recommended I contact the University of the West Coast International Programs Director • received email from the International Programs Director who wrote that he thought my research sounded interesting and suggested I reach out to the University of the West Coast Office of Institutional Effectiveness Director • received email from the Office of Institutional Effectiveness Director who informed me of required documentation to supply but also warned me dean postponed October or November 2020 at the earliest • applied for inquiry approval from University of the West Coast Office of Educational Effectiveness
September 2020	• received approval from the University of the West Coast Office of Institutional Effectiveness to begin data collection in mid-October 2020
October 2020	• spoke with the International Programs Director who personally sent my recruitment email (with links to inquiry interest form, recruitment video, and recruitment flyer) to the 165 students who met the inquiry qualification guidelines • received returned inquiry interest forms from prospective participants • emailed letter of consent through HelloSign to prospective participants
November 2020	• emailed the International Programs Director who emailed second Recruitment Email to 165 students who met qualification guidelines • emailed acceptance with link to schedule semi-structured interview on Google Calendar Appointment Slots; two participants completed • began data collection • emailed link to demographic questionnaire to four participants • emailed reminders to participants who did not respond within a week; two participants completed • began data analysis • conducted interviews on a cloud platform; asked participants if they could think of other students that might be interested in participating in inquiry and encourage them to contact me; this attempt at snowball sampling did not yield additional participants • sent participants an email with a link to Journal 1 (with a representative object) on Google Forms; resent email to participants who did not respond within a week • sent participants an email with a link to Journal 2 on Google Forms; resent email to participants who did not respond within a week
June 2021	• completed data analysis
November 2021	• used member checking by sending to participants an email with a link to the option to read and respond to the Chapter 4 outline draft on Google Forms within ten days (Patton, 2015).

APPENDIX B: PARTICIPANT RECRUITMENT PROCESS

2017-2020

- spoke informally with the University of the West Coast Dean of Students concerning study abroad students in 2017
- spoke informally with University of the West Coast Vice-President of Student Life in 2018, late 2019, and early 2020 regarding idea of studying post-study abroad students at the university

August 2020

- received IRB approval from the University of the Pacific
- emailed University of the West Coast Vice-President of Student Life, who recommend I contact the Director of International Programs who said my research sounded intersting and suggested I email Office of Institutional Effectiveness
- emailed Office of Institutional Effectiveness; director informed me of required documentation to supply but also warned me dean postponed all research October or November 2020 at the earliest

September 2020

- received approval from the University of the West Coast Office of Institutional Effectiveness to begin data collection in mid-October 2020

October 2020

- emailed recruitment email to the International Programs Director who emailed it to 165 students who met qualification guidelines
- received returned inquiry interest forms from prospective participants
- emailed letter of consent through HelloSign to prospective participants

November 2020

- emailed International Programs Director who emailed second recruitment email to 165 students who met qualification guidelines
- emailed acceptance with link to schedule semi-structured interview and link to demographic questionnaire to four participants; emailed reminders to prospective participants who did not complete; two participants completed
- asked participants, during semi-structured interviews, if they could think of other students that might be interested in participating in inquiry and encourage them to contact me. (This attempt at snowball sampling did not yield additional participants.)

APPENDIX C: IRB APPROVAL—UNIVERSITY OF THE PACIFIC

UNIVERSITY OF THE
PACIFIC

Tarianne Gotelli Cotton <t_cotton@u.pacific.edu>

IRB2020-41 - Initial: Initial - Exempt
1 message

do-not-reply@cayuse.com <do-not-reply@cayuse.com>
To: dmcnair@pacific.edu, t_cotton@u.pacific.edu

Tue, Aug 18, 2020 at 10:51 AM

UNIVERSITY OF THE
PACIFIC

OFFICE OF RESEARCH AND SPONSORED PROGRAMS | INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

TO: Tari Cotton

FROM: Sandy Ellenbolt, IRB Administrator

DATE: Aug 18, 2020 10:51 AM PDT

RE: IRB Approval Protocol , IRB2020-41 - Self-Authorship and the Effects of Reverse Culture Shock in Post Study Abroad U.S. College Students: Strangers in their Own Land

Your proposal entitled "Self-Authorship and the Effects of Reverse Culture Shock in Post Study Abroad U.S. College Students: Strangers in their Own Land ," submitted to the University of the Pacific IRB has been approved. Your project received an Exempt review.

This approval is effective through August 17, 2021.

NOTE: Your IRB approved consent document with the official stamp of IRB approval dates can be found in Cayuse IRB. You are required to only use the stamped version of this consent form by duplicating and distributing to subjects. (Online consent should replicate approved consent document). Consent forms that differ from approved consent are not permitted and use of any other consent document may result in noncompliance of research.

It is your responsibility according to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services regulations to submit updates to the IRB. All further reporting for your study can be submitted through Cayuse IRB. Please be aware that procedural changes or amendments must be submitted to the IRB for review and approval prior to implementing changes. Changes may NOT be made without Pacific IRB approval except to eliminate apparent immediate hazards. Revisions made without prior IRB approval may result in noncompliance of research. To initiate the review process for procedural changes, complete Protocol Revision Form.

Best wishes for continued success in your research. Feel free to contact our office if you have any questions

—————————————
Human Subjects Protection
Office of Research and Sponsored Programs
3601 Pacific Avenue Stockton, CA 95211
Tel 209.946.3903
Email IRB@pacific.edu

APPENDIX D: RECRUITMENT EMAIL

Dear Post-Study Abroad Student,

I would like to invite you to participate in a research inquiry involving post-study abroad students. The purpose of this research is to describe in what ways, if any, the post-study abroad experience facilitates the development of emerging self-authorship of U.S. college students.

If you are interested in participating, please follow this link and complete the form within one week: Inquiry Interest Form.

Please follow this link to a short, one minute video to learn more about me and this research inquiry: Recruitment Video.

Any volunteer participant who completes all items in this inquiry throughout the fall of 2020, which include:
• Inquiry Interest Form and Research Subject's Consent to Participate in Research Form
• Demographic Questionnaire and recorded Semi-Structured Interview (online)
• Journal 1 (which includes presenting and discussing a representative object)
• Journal 2
by item deadlines, will be emailed a $30 Amazon gift card at the conclusion of the inquiry as a thank you for their participation.
A recorded Discretionary Follow-Up Semi-Structured Interview may be conducted.

Your responses will be confidential. Your name will not be associated with any direct quotes or identifying information. No one will know you are in this inquiry unless you tell them.

If you have any questions, please contact me at (209) 601-2845 or by email at t_cotton@u.pacific.edu, or Dr. Delores McNair at (209) 946-2674 or dmcnair@pacific.edu.

If you have any questions about your rights as a participant in a research project or wish to speak with an independent contact, please contact the Office of Research & Sponsored Programs, University of the Pacific at (209) 946-3903 or by email at IRB@pacific.edu.

Thank you,
Tarianne Gotelli Cotton, M.A.
Doctoral Candidate, University of the Pacific
[Information removed to protect confidentiality.]

Recruitment Flyer

APPENDIX E: INQUIRY INTEREST FORM

[Inquiry Interest Form](#)

Thank you for your interest in my doctoral dissertation study titled: "Self-Authorship and the Effects of Reverse Culture Shock in Post-Study Abroad U.S. College Students: Strangers in their Own Land."

Please complete this form within a week.

Eligibility Requirements
Did you study at [Information removed to protect confidentiality] International Programs study abroad campuses [Information removed to protect confidentiality] for the fall semester of the 2019–2020 academic year?
◯ Yes
◯ No

Eligibility Requirements
Are you currently enrolled at [Information removed to protect confidentiality] for the fall semester of the 2020–2021 academic year?
◯ Yes
◯ No

Age Verification
	Are you currently between the ages of 18- to 24-years?
◯ Yes
◯ No

Inquiry Interest
	Are you interested in learning more about being a participant in this inquiry?
◯ Yes
◯ No

Contact Information
Please provide your contact information below.
Thank you for your time!

Tarianne Gotelli Cotton
Doctoral Candidate, University of the Pacific
[Information removed to protect confidentiality.]

	Your Name (first and last name)

	Phone Number (XXX) XXX-XXXX

	Email Address

APPENDIX F: RECRUITMENT FLYER

An invitation to participate in a University of the Pacific dissertation inquiry

Post Study Abroad Students

Purpose: To describe in what ways, if any, the post study-abroad experience facilitates the development of emerging self-authorship of U.S. college students.

- Did you study at one of ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮ International Programs study abroad campuses for the fall semester of the 2019-2020 academic year?
- Are you currently enrolled at ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮ for the fall semester of the 2020-2021 academic year?
- Are you currently between the ages of 18 to 24 years?

The inquiry involves:

- a recorded Semi-Structured Interview (45-60 minutes) using a mutually agreed upon cloud platform or by phone),
- two Journals (30- 40 minutes each)

- a recorded Discretionary Follow-Up Semi-Structured Interview (using a mutually agreed upon cloud platform or by phone) is possible if further clarification is needed (30- 40 minutes

Your participation is voluntary and confidential, and your name will not be associated with this inquiry.

If you are interested in participating in this study, please complete the survey available here or scan the QR code below: **https://forms.gle/4V1aVovKMJxqDaMB7**

SCAN ME
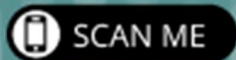
For more information, please contact:

Tarianne Gotelli Cotton

Ed.D. Candidate | University of the Pacific

t_cotton@u.pacific.edu

1-209-601-2845 (call/text)

Study supervised by: Dr. Delores McNair

APPENDIX G: RECRUITMENT VIDEO SCRIPT AND LINK TO RECRUITMENT VIDEO

Recruitment Video

Hi! I'm Tarianne Gotelli Cotton and

I'm currently a doctoral candidate at the University of Pacific in Stockton, California.

[Information removed to protect confidentiality.]

In my dissertation, I'll be describing in what ways, if any,

the post-study abroad experience

facilitates the development of emerging self-authorship in college students.

And because you studied abroad and returned home,

I would love to have you volunteer to participate in this inquiry.

Basically, you would be completing

an interview and two journal entries for this inquiry

about those really important and meaningful experiences

you've had since returning home from study abroad.

If you look in the email you received with this video,

it gives you more specific information on the inquiry, my contact information,

and a link to an Inquiry Interest form you can fill out.

Now, if you decide not to participate, there's no penalty.

But I want you to know I would love to have you join me in this journey

about returning home from studying abroad.

I look forward to hearing from you!

Thank you.

APPENDIX H: RESEARCH SUBJECT'S CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH
FORM

UNIVERSITY OF THE PACIFIC – BENERD COLLEGE
RESEARCH SUBJECT'S CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

SELF-AUTHORSHIP AND THE EFFECTS OF REVERSE CULTURE SHOCK IN POST-STUDY ABROAD U.S. COLLEGE STUDENTS: STRANGERS IN THEIR OWN LAND

Name of Lead Researcher: Tarianne Gotelli Cotton
Name of Faculty Advisor: Delores McNair, Ed.D.

You are being invited to participate in a research study, and your participation is entirely voluntary.

      A.   **Purpose of Research**. The purpose of this inquiry is to describe in what ways, if any, the post-study abroad experience encourages the development of emerging self-authorship of U.S. college students.

      B.   **Duration of Participation**. The expected duration of participation in this study will be a total of approximately 2.75 hours over the course of (six) months.

      C.   **Research Procedures.** Data collection should begin in September and be completed by February. If you decide to participate, you will be asked to complete:
- Inquiry Interest Form and Research Subject's Consent to Participate in Research Form (approximately 10 minutes)
- Recorded Semi-Structured Interview (Approximately 60 minutes) and Demographic Questionnaire (approximately 10 minutes)
- Journal 1 (which includes presenting and discussing a representative object) (approximately 40 minutes)
- Journal 2 (approximately 40 minutes)

Participation in this research study will total approximately 2.75 hours over the course of six months.
A recorded Discretionary Follow-Up Semi-Structured Interview may be conducted.

      D.   **Foreseeable Risks.** There are some possible risks involved for participants e.g., some participants may feel uncomfortable discussing or writing about their study abroad experiences. The possible risks are: minimal. We do not anticipate any adverse impact to you or any discomfort as we ask about your study abroad experiences.

      E.   **Benefits**. There are no direct benefits to you, but you may possibly reflect on your study abroad experience as you respond to the Inquiry Interest Form, Demographic Questionnaire, Semi-Structured Interview questions, and journal prompts and prepare and discuss an object to represent a post-study abroad experience. Participating in this study may possibly lead you to a better understanding of how study abroad experiences facilitate the development of emerging self-authorship. Participating in this study may possibly lead you to

learn about and apply successful post-study abroad reentry strategies, as well as develop in emerging self-authorship.

       F.   **Alternative Procedures.** There are no alternative research procedures for this study.

I.   CONFIDENTIALITY

We will take reasonable steps to keep confidential any information that is obtained in connection with this research study and that can be identified with you. We must provide certain research records to government agencies that may be subject to disclosure requirements under state and federal law. In such a case, it is possible that the agency may be required to disclose certain of your information pursuant to applicable state or federal law (e.g., the Freedom of Information Act or California Public Records Act.)

Measures to protect your confidentiality are: The researcher will assign to you a pseudonym to protect confidentiality. During the recorded Semi-Structured Interview, the researcher will ask you if the pseudonym is acceptable; if it is not, the researcher will change the pseudonym. Your name will not be used in any reports, records will be kept in secured locations, the number of researchers or persons with access to the records will be limited to the extent reasonable, records will be [reasonably] de-identified, and no material will correlate the informed consent form to the research data.

Upon conclusion of the research study, the data obtained will be maintained in a safe, locked or otherwise secured location and will be destroyed after a period of three years after the research is completed.

II.   PARTICIPATION

You were selected as a possible participant in this study because you are a ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮ post-study abroad student from the United States, are between the ages of 18 to 24, studied at one of four ▮▮▮▮▮▮ International Programs study abroad campuses (A, B, C, or D) for the fall semester of the 2019–2020 academic year, and are currently enrolled at ▮▮▮▮▮▮ for the fall semester of the 2020–2021 academic year.

We expect to have (16) participants initially to be selected for this inquiry. The researcher expects that through attrition, the final group will be no more than (eight) participants. Please feel free to ask any questions you may have.

Your decision whether or not to participate will involve no penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. If you decide to participate, you are free to discontinue participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

III.   COLLECTION OF INFORMATION

Identifiers might be removed from the identifiable private information that, after such removal, the information could be used for future research studies or distributed to another investigator for future research studies without additional informed consent from you, if this might be a possibility.

Your information collected as part of the research, even if identifiers are removed, will not be used or distributed for future research studies.

IV.   **UNIVERSITY CONTACT INFORMATION**

I am the lead researcher in this inquiry, and I am a doctoral candidate in Educational and Organizational Leadership at the University of the Pacific, Benerd College in Stockton, California. This research inquiry is part of my dissertation research for my doctorate.

If you have any questions about the research at any time, please contact me at (209) 601-2845 or t_cotton@u.pacific.edu, or Dr. Delores McNair at (209) 946-2674 or dmcnair@pacific.edu.

If you have any questions about your rights as a participant in a research project or wish to speak with an independent contact, please contact the Office of Research & Sponsored Programs, University of the Pacific at (209) 946-3903 or by email at IRB@pacific.edu.

V.   **COMPENSATION & NO COMMERCIAL PROFIT**

Volunteer participants will be asked to complete the following within one week of receipt:
- Inquiry Interest Form and Research Subject's Consent to Participate in Research Form
- Recorded Semi-Structured Interview (online) and Demographic Questionnaire
- Journal 1 (which includes presenting and discussing a representative object)
- Journal 2

and will be emailed a $30 Amazon gift card at the conclusion of the inquiry as a thank you. A recorded Discretionary Follow-Up Semi-Structured Interview may be conducted.

VI.   **DISMISSAL FROM STUDY**

It is possible that we may decide that your participation in this research is not appropriate. If that happens, you will be dismissed from the study. In any event, we appreciate your willingness to participate in this research.

VII.   **ADDITIONAL COSTS TO SUBJECT**

There is no cost to you for participating in this study.

VIII.   **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT AND SIGNATURE**

I hereby consent: (Indicate *Yes* or *No*) [Note: Only include these items if applicable.]

- To be audio recorded during this study.
  ___Yes   ___No

- For such audio records resulting from this study to be used for transcription:
  ___Yes   ___No

- For my identity to be disclosed in written materials/oral presentations resulting from this study:
  ___Yes   ___No

You will be offered a copy of this form to keep. You may print and keep a copy of this form.

Your signature below indicates that you have read and understand the information provided above, that you have been afforded the opportunity to ask, and have answered, any questions that you may have, that your participation is completely voluntary, that you understand that you may withdraw your consent and discontinue participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled, that you will receive a copy of this form, and that you are not waiving any legal claims, rights or remedies.

Signed: _____   Date: _____

Research Study Participant (Print Name):   _____

Researcher Who Obtained Consent (Print Name):   _____

APPENDIX I: DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONNAIRE

Demographic Questionnaire

The purpose of this questionnaire is to help gain deeper insights into how participants see themselves. It will enable me to describe participants better and provides context for other data gathered.

Email address
_____.

1. My name is (first and last name)
   _____.

2. My gender is:
   a) Female
   b) Male
   c) Non-Binary
   d) I prefer not to answer this question.

3. My ethnicity is:
   a) White
   b) Hispanic or Latino
   c) Black or African American
   d) Non-resident Alien
   e) Asian
   f) Two or more races
   g) American Indian or Alaska Native
   h) Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islanders
   i) Other
   j) Race/ethnicity unknown
   k) I prefer not to answer this question.

4. When I returned from studying abroad in 2020, my age was:
   a) 18 years
   b) 19 years
   c) 20 years
   d) 21 years
   e) 22 years
   f) 23 years
   g) 24 years
   h) I prefer not to answer this question.

5. The year I studied abroad, I was a:
   a) Freshman
   b) Sophomore
   c) Junior
   d) Senior
   e) I prefer not to answer this question.

6. I am a first-generation college student:
   a) Yes
   b) No
   c) I prefer not to answer this question.

7. I studied abroad at this location:
   a) A–[Information removed to protect confidentiality.]
   b) B–[Information removed to protect confidentiality.]
   c) C–[Information removed to protect confidentiality.]
   d) D–[Information removed to protect confidentiality.]
   e) I prefer not to answer this question.

8. My major while studying abroad was:
   a) Business Administration
   b) Communication
   c) Fine Arts
   d) Humanities and Teacher Education
   e) International Studies and Languages
   f) Natural Science
   g) Religion and Philosophy
   h) Social Science
   i) I prefer not to answer this question.

9. I traveled outside the United States before studying abroad:
   a) Yes
   b) No
   c) I prefer not to answer this question

10. When I returned home from studying abroad, most of the time I lived:
    a) with my family in our primary residence—apartment, townhouse, condo, or home
    b) with my family in a secondary residence—apartment, townhouse, condo, or home
    c) with other family member(s) in a primary residence—apartment, townhouse, condo, or home
    d) with other family member(s) in a secondary residence—apartment, townhouse, condo, or home
    e) with my friend(s) in an apartment, townhouse, condo, or home
    f) Alone in an apartment, townhouse, condo, or home
    g) Other—None of the above describes where I lived. Please describe: _____.
    h) I prefer not to answer this question.

APPENDIX J: SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS—PROTOCOL AND ALIGNMENT WITH RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Research Question:	1. In what ways, if any, does the post-study abroad experience facilitate the development of emerging self-authorship of U.S. college students?	a) What are key common milestones for U.S. college students in their first-year post-study abroad?	b) In what ways, if any, do key common milestones for U.S. college students connect to emerging self-authorship in their first-year post-study abroad?	c) In what ways, if any, does emerging self-authorship support U.S. college students in making sense of unexpected major events in their first-year post-study abroad?	D) What objects, if any, give voice to and represent emerging self-authorship for U.S. college students in their first-year post-study abroad?
Semi-Structured Interview (approximately 60 minutes):					
Before the Semi-Structured Interview begins: Hi, thank you so much for meeting with me. I would like to thank you for volunteering to be part of my inquiry and let you know how much I appreciate you taking the time to talk to me today. I know you're very busy and I will be sure to be respectful of your time. I also wanted to thank you for signing the Research Subject's Consent to Participate in Research Form (with HelloSign). I want you to know that copies of the signed informed consent forms will be kept in a locked cabinet. All digital data will be kept on my password protected computer or on my password protected cell phone. No one will know you are in this inquiry unless you tell them. I want to remind you that my inquiry seeks to understand how the post-study abroad experience facilitates the development of emerging self-authorship of U.S. college students. Today, our interview will last about an hour, and I will be asking you questions about when you left your study abroad program and when you returned home from studying abroad. Before we begin the interview, do you have any questions? If yes: Answer questions. If no: Okay, if you don't have any questions, let's get started. First, I want you to know that if at any time you feel uncomfortable about answering any question, just let me	✓				

know and we can stop the interview at any time (Castillo-Montoya, 2016).					
1. Let's begin with choosing a pseudonym for you to keep your identity confidential. This means your name and any identifying information will not be associated with any of your direct quotes. This lowers the ability of others to link you with your responses. I would like to assign you the pseudonym _____. Is this pseudonym acceptable? If it is not, will the pseudonym_____work for you? Thank you for your input on your pseudonym.	✓				
2. Let's start by finding out about you. Please share a bit about who you are (Baxter Magolda & King, 2007; Magolda & King, 2008). Thank you for sharing this with me.	✓				
3. I'd like for you to talk about what it was like before you returned home from studying abroad. What were some world events you were concerned about before you returned from studying abroad? How would you describe how you felt during this time? Thank you for your responses.	✓	✓	✓	✓	
4. At some point you needed to return home. I'd like to hear about the process of having to return home from studying abroad. What happened when you found out you needed to return home? Thank you for explaining this to me.	✓	✓	✓	✓	
5. I'd like to learn about how you made the decision of where to live when you returned home from studying abroad. Tell me about the thought process you followed to decide where to live. What resonates most with you about this process? Thank you for walking me through this process.	✓	✓	✓	✓	
6. My last few questions are about your experiences since you returned home from studying abroad. I'd like to ask you to think about your experience of being home after studying abroad. Please tell me about a peak meaningful experience that contributes to your growth as a person. This seems to be a pivotal moment for you. Thank you for describing this to me.	✓	✓	✓	✓	
7. I'm interested in learning about how you make sense of experiences like this. How does this experience make you see yourself differently? What are ways you see yourself differently in relation to others? Thank you for your giving me your perspective on this.	✓	✓	✓	✓	
8. What are other comments or insight you would like to share with me? (Baxter Magolda & King, 2007, p. 500). Thank you for your insight on this.	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Prompts (used to draw out more information or get clarification): Repeating back or a form of "Tell me more about _____", "I'd like to hear more about _____", "What happened next?", "How did you feel when _____", "What was that experience like?", "Please give me an example of _____" or "I'm very interested in finding out	✓	✓	✓	✓	

more about _____" may be used as a follow up to any question (Castillo-Montoya, 2016).					
To Close the Semi-Structured Interview: Those were all the questions I have at this time. Thank you so much for your time and contributions to my inquiry. Be watching for an email with a link to Journal Number One. Take care and thanks, again. Good-bye.					

APPENDIX K: DATES AND PURPOSE FOR DATA COLLECTION PROCESS
DOCUMENTS

Document	Date	Purpose
Appendix A: Timeline for the Inquiry	February 2017	• outlined the inquiry process • provided a road map for inquiry
Appendix B: Participant Recruitment Process	August-November 2019	• chronicled process for participant recruitment
Appendix C: IRB Approval— University of the Pacific	August 2020	• documented inquiry approval from the University of the Pacific Institutional Review Board
Appendix D: Recruitment Email	October 2020	• offered University of the West Coast post-study abroad students the opportunity to volunteer to possibly participate in this inquiry • was my first opportunity to reach out to prospective participants; students were expected to read emails from the university regularly • became a first step for me to develop rapport with students as someone they could work with and trust, and it added a layer of credibility to this inquiry • introduced me to prospective participants • shared my sincerity for learning about student experiences without judgement • gave details on this inquiry and explained that it intended to describe in what ways, if any, the post-study abroad experience facilitates the development of emerging self-authorship of U.S. college students • contained links to inquiry interest form, recruitment video, and recruitment flyer • advised prospective participants that any participant who completed all inquiry items, which included: inquiry interest form and online informed consent document; demographic questionnaire and recorded semi-structured interview; Journal 1 (which included presenting and discussing a representative object); and Journal 2 by item deadlines, would be emailed a $30 Amazon gift card funded by me at the conclusion of the inquiry as a thank you for their participation • informed prospective participants that if clarifying questions were needed to strengthen the data, a recorded discretionary follow-up semi-structured interview was possible • stressed that all their responses would be confidential, their name would not be associated with any direct quotes or identifying information, and no one would know they were in this inquiry unless they told them • gave contact information if there were any questions
Appendix E: Inquiry Interest Form	October 2020	• helped me determine if prospective participants qualified for this inquiry by asking if they studied at one of four University of the West Coast international campuses for the 2019–2020 academic year; were currently enrolled at the University of the West Coast for the fall semester of 2020–2021 academic year; were currently between ages of 18- to 24-years; and were interested in learning more about in what ways, if any, the post-study abroad experience facilitates the development of emerging self-authorship of U.S. college students

		• asked for name, phone number, and email address of prospective participants so I could email them link to informed consent document through HelloSign (an electronic signature program)
Appendix F: Recruitment Flyer	October 2020	• offered one more way to connect to prospective participants. • was simple, was easy to read, and gave limited and bulleted details on the inquiry (Large print headline was designed to speak to target audience—post-study abroad students. Suitcase theme was consistent with theme on other forms I used throughout inquiry and reminded prospective participants of their travels as they studied abroad.) • provided purpose of inquiry • listed questions regarding qualifications for prospective participants • described what inquiry involved • stressed that participation in this inquiry was voluntary and confidential and that their name would not be associated with this inquiry • included a QR (Quick Response) code for prospective participants to scan to open Inquiry Interest Form • gave contact information if there were any questions
Appendix G: Recruitment Video Script and Link to Recruitment Video	October 2020	• was appropriate for this group of students because due to COVID-19 pandemic, they were familiar with classes, learning, assignments, assessments, teachers, and classmates being online. For many students, internet was their connection to family and friends during study abroad (Seitz, 2016) and had likely been their connection to outside world during the COVID-19 quarantine. I uploaded video to my Google Drive so only prospective participants with link accessed it. • introduced me to students and put a name with my face • gave details on the inquiry and explained that it intended to describe in what ways, if any, the post-study abroad experience facilitates the development of emerging self-authorship of U.S. college students • referred students to the link to inquiry interest form • clearly stated that if students opted to not volunteer for inquiry, there would be no penalty (Roberts & Hyatt, 2019) • directed students to the email with contact information if there were any questions
Appendix H: Research Subject's Consent to Participate in Research Form	October 2020	• offered prospective participants enough information to make an informed choice about volunteering to participate or not participate in inquiry and to discontinue participating at any time • emailed through HelloSign, to me and participants, a signed copy of document for our records • resent through HelloSign, to prospective participants who did not respond, within a week. (No data were collected without consent of participants.) • was a required form and contained information on purpose of research, duration of participation, research procedures, foreseeable risks, and benefits • provided information on confidentiality, participation, and collection of information • included details on university contacts, compensation and no commercial profit, dismissal from study, additional costs to the subject, and notification of research results • concluded with a section on acknowledgement and signatures of researcher and participant • gave contact information if there were any questions

Appendix I: Demographic Questionnaire	November 2020	• asked participants to answer basic demographic questions:
		  o name
		  o gender
		  o ethnicity

		o age upon return from studying abroad o year in school when studying abroad o first-generation college student o study abroad location o major while studying abroad o traveled outside the United States before studying abroad o location lived most of the time upon returning home from studying abroad • gave deeper insights into how participants saw selves • enabled me to describe participants better • provided context for other data I gathered • aligned with research questions • resent link for demographic questionnaire to participants who did not respond within a week
Appendix J: Semi-Structured Interview Questions—Protocol and Alignment with Research Questions	November 2020	• gave participants opportunity to tell story of their post-study abroad experience, in what ways they made sense of this, and in what ways they grew personally • provided diverse expression options • aligned with research questions
Appendix K: Dates and Purpose for Data Collection Process Documents	September 2021	• listed dates and purpose for the data collection process documents
Appendix L: Journal 1 Prompt Alignment with Research Questions	November 2020	• sent to participants through an email with a link to Journal 1 on Google Forms • elicited deeper reflection from participants by asking them to respond to research question-based prompts (Participants shared an object that represented a peak meaningful experience or provocative moment they had since returning home from studying abroad. The representative object could be any artifact physical artifact (such as a piece of clothing, pottery, or a painting) or a digital artifact (such as a photo, an audio or video recording, a postcard, a blog post, or a social media post) • provided diverse expression options • aligned with research questions
Appendix M: Journal 2 Prompt Alignment with Research Questions	December 2020	• sent to participants through an email with a link to Journal 2 on Google Forms • peeled back layers of meaning making behind experiences participants described with their representative object • elicited deeper reflection on in what ways they saw themselves, others, and the world, as well as their decision-making • provided diverse expression options • aligned with research questions
Appendix N: Email with Link to Demographic Questionnaire	November 2020	• thanked participants for volunteering for inquiry • contained link to demographic questionnaire on Google Forms • advised participants that any participant who completed all inquiry items by item deadlines, would be emailed a $30 Amazon gift card funded by me at the conclusion of the inquiry as a thank you for participation • gave contact information if there were any questions

Appendix O: Email with Acceptance and Link to Schedule Semi-Structured Interview	November 2020	• contained information about inquiry • provided link to Schedule Semi-Structured Interview on Google Calendar Appointment Slots • asked participants to contact me if none of these appointment slots worked so we could set up another time • initialized snowball (chain) sampling strategy through encouraging participants to think of any other University of the West Coast classmates from their post-study abroad group and forward recruitment email to them • told participants no one will know they were in this inquiry unless they told them • reminded participants not to tell me names of other participants • advised participants that any participant who completed all inquiry items by item deadlines, would be emailed a $30 Amazon gift card funded by me at the conclusion of the inquiry as a thank you for participation • resent to participants who do not respond within a week • gave contact information if there were any questions
Appendix P: Email with Link to Journal 1	November 2020	• thanked participants for their time and effort • contained link to Journal 1 on Google Forms • advised participants that any participant who completed all inquiry items by item deadlines, would be emailed a $30 Amazon gift card funded by me at the conclusion of the inquiry as a thank you for participation • listed Journal 1 prompts • gave contact information if there were any questions
Appendix Q: Email with Link to Journal 2	December 2020	• thanked participants for their time and effort • contained link to Journal 2 on Google Forms • advised participants that any participant who completed all inquiry items by item deadlines, would be emailed a $30 Amazon gift card funded by me at the conclusion of the inquiry as a thank you for participation • listed Journal 2 prompts • gave contact information if there were any questions
Appendix R: A 15-point checklist of criteria for good thematic analysis	Entire data analysis procedure	• listed criteria for good thematic analysis" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 96) • circled through process from transcription to coding to analysis to overall to written report • outlined how trustworthiness was established in each phase of thematic analysis

Appendix S: The Reflexive Process of Data Analysis Used in this Inquiry	September 2021	• summarized how I used the phases along my reflexive process of data analysis journey:
		  o Phase 1 in Reflexive Data Analysis: Familiarized myself with the data
		  o Phase 2 in Reflexive Data Analysis: Coded the data
		  o Phase 3 in Reflexive Data Analysis: Generated initial themes from the code
		  o Phase 4 in Reflexive Data Analysis: Reviewed themes against dataset and research questions
		  o Phase 5 in Reflexive Data Analysis: Named and defined themes
		  o Phase 6 in Reflexive Data Analysis: Wrote my analysis

Appendix T: Participant's Option to Read and Respond to Chapter 4 Outline Draft	November 2021	• sent to participants through an email an email with a link to the option to read and respond to the Chapter 4 outline draft on Google Forms within ten days (Patton, 2015). • thanked participants for their time and effort

| Appendix U: Establishing Trustworthiness in Each Phase of Thematic Analysis | Entire data analysis procedure | • outlined how trustworthiness was established in each phase of thematic analysis
○ Phase 1 in Reflexive Data Analysis: Familiarized myself with the data—Establishing trustworthiness
○ Phase 2 in Reflexive Data Analysis: Coded the data—Establishing trustworthiness
○ Phase 3 in Reflexive Data Analysis: Generated initial themes from the code—Establishing trustworthiness
○ Phase 4 in Reflexive Data Analysis: Reviewed themes against dataset and research questions—Establishing trustworthiness
○ Phase 5 in Reflexive Data Analysis: Named and defined themes—Establishing trustworthiness
○ Phase 6 in Reflexive Data Analysis: Wrote my analysis—Establishing trustworthiness |

APPENDIX L: JOURNAL 1 PROMPT ALIGNMENT WITH RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Journal 1

Research Question:	1. In what ways, if any, does the post-study abroad experience facilitate the development of emerging self-authorship of U.S. college students?	a) What are key common milestones for U.S. college students in their first-year post-study abroad?	b) In what ways, if any, do key common milestones for U.S. college students connect to emerging self-authorship in their first-year post-study abroad?	c) In what ways, if any, does emerging self-authorship support U.S. college students in making sense of unexpected major events in their first-year post-study abroad?	D) What objects, if any, give voice to and represent emerging self-authorship for U.S. college students in their first-year post-study abroad?
Journal 1 Prompts: (30 minutes) For this Journal entry, you may attach a written, audio, or video response. You may be as creative as you want as long as you explain the representative object and respond to the prompts:					
1. What, if any, peak meaningful experience have you had since returning home from studying abroad?		✓	✓	✓	✓
2. Decide on a representative object that represents the experience and attach it to the Journal entry. The representative object may be any physical artifact (such as a piece of clothing, pottery, or a painting) or a digital artifact (such as a photo, an audio or video recording, a postcard, a blog post, or a social media post) that represents this peak meaningful experience you have had. In what ways does the object represent the experience? What resonates with you about the object and the experience?	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
3. How does the experience affect how you see yourself? How does the experience affect how you see yourself in relation to others?	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

APPENDIX M: JOURNAL 2 PROMPT ALIGNMENT WITH RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Journal 2

Research Question:	1. In what ways, if any, does the post-study abroad experience facilitate the development of emerging self-authorship of U.S. college students?	a) What are key common milestones for U.S. college students in their first-year post-study abroad?	b) In what ways, if any, do key common milestones for U.S. college students connect to emerging self-authorship in their first-year post-study abroad?	c) In what ways, if any, does emerging self-authorship support U.S. college students in making sense of unexpected major events in their first-year post-study abroad?	D) What objects, if any, give voice to and represent emerging self-authorship for U.S. college students in their first-year post-study abroad?
Journal 2 Prompts: (30 minutes) For this Journal entry, you may attach a written, audio, or video response. You may be as creative as you want as long as you respond to the prompts:					
1. What kinds of situations push you to listen to that "little voice in your head"?	✓	✓	✓	✓	
2. When you come across a new situation, what is your decision-making strategy? If your strategy has changed since coming home from studying abroad, explain how and why.	✓	✓	✓	✓	
3. What internal and external struggles, if any, come when you choose between respecting and honoring traditional authorities and following your intuition or internal voice? If your struggles have changed since coming home from studying abroad, explain how and why.	✓	✓	✓	✓	
4. When you reflect on the impact of major events on your college experience, how does being home from your study abroad experience affect how you see the world?	✓	✓	✓	✓	
5. Please reflect on how these experiences are shaping your hopes and dreams. Now that you are home, when you consider all these experiences you have had, how have your hopes and dreams changed for this school year?	✓	✓	✓	✓	

| 6. If you could give advice to future post-study abroad students to help them with their transition home, what would that advice be? | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | |

APPENDIX N: EMAIL WITH LINK TO DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONNAIRE

Dear Participant,

Thank you, again, for volunteering to participate in the inquiry, "Self-Authorship and the Effects of Reverse Culture Shock in Post-Study Abroad U.S. College Students: Strangers in their Own Land".

Please follow this link to a short Demographic Questionnaire and complete it within a week: Demographic Questionnaire.

Remember …
Any volunteer participant who completes all items in this inquiry throughout the fall of 2020, which include:
- Inquiry Interest Form and Research Subject's Consent to Participate in Research Form
- Demographic Questionnaire and recorded Semi-Structured Interview (online)
- Journal 1 (which includes presenting and discussing a representative object)
- Journal 2

by item deadlines, will be emailed a $30 Amazon gift card at the conclusion of the inquiry as a thank you for their participation.
A recorded Discretionary Follow-Up Semi-Structured Interview may be conducted.
If you have any questions about the research at any time, please contact me at (209) 601-2845 or t_cotton@u.pacific.edu, or Dr. Delores McNair at (209) 946-2674 or dmcnair@pacific.edu.
If you have any questions about your rights as a participant in a research project or wish to speak with an independent contact, please contact the Office of Research & Sponsored Programs, University of the Pacific at (209) 946-3903 or by email at IRB@pacific.edu.
Thank you—
Tarianne Gotelli Cotton
Doctoral Candidate, University of the Pacific
[Information removed to protect confidentiality.]

APPENDIX O: EMAIL WITH ACCEPTANCE AND LINK TO SCHEDULE SEMI-
STRUCTURED INTERVIEW

Dear Participant,

Congratulations! You have been selected to participate in my inquiry, "Self-Authorship and the Effects of Reverse Culture Shock in Post-Study Abroad U.S. College Students: Strangers in their Own Land".

Please follow this link to Google Calendar Appointment Slots to schedule our interview within a week: Google Calendar Appointment Slots for Semi-Structured Interviews.

Interviews will take place at a mutually agreed upon time on Zoom, on another mutually agreed upon cloud platform, or by phone and last about 60 minutes.

Any volunteer participant who completes all items in this inquiry throughout the fall of 2020, which include:
   •   Inquiry Interest Form and Research Subject's Consent to Participate in Research Form
   •   Demographic Questionnaire and recorded Semi-Structured Interview (online)
   •   Journal 1 (which includes presenting and discussing a representative object)
   •   Journal 2
by item deadlines, will be emailed a $30 Amazon gift card at the conclusion of the inquiry as a thank you for their participation.
A recorded Discretionary Follow-Up Semi-Structured Interview may be conducted.

If you can think of any other post-study abroad students who studied at the [Information removed to protect confidentiality] international campus in the 2019–2020 school year and may be interested in this inquiry, please encourage them to contact me with any questions within one week. Please do not tell me their names.

If you have any questions about the research at any time, please contact me at (209) 601-2845 or t_cotton@u.pacific.edu, or Dr. Delores McNair at (209) 946-2674 or dmcnair@pacific.edu.

If you have any questions about your rights as a participant in a research project or wish to speak with an independent contact, please contact the Office of Research & Sponsored Programs, University of the Pacific at (209) 946-3903 or by email at IRB@pacific.edu.

Thank you so much for your help—
Tarianne Gotelli Cotton
Doctoral Candidate, University of the Pacific
[Information removed to protect confidentiality.]

APPENDIX P: EMAIL WITH LINK TO JOURNAL 1

Dear Participant,

Thank you, again, for participating in my inquiry, "Self-Authorship and the Effects of Reverse Culture Shock in Post-Study Abroad U.S. College Students: Strangers in their Own Land".

Please follow this link to Journal 1 and complete it within a week: Journal 1

The prompts are included at the end of this email for your review.

Remember …
Any volunteer participant who completes all items in this inquiry throughout the fall of 2020, which include:
- Inquiry Interest Form and Research Subject's Consent to Participate in Research Form
- Demographic Questionnaire and recorded Semi-Structured Interview (online)
- Journal 1 (which includes presenting and discussing a representative object)
- Journal 2

by item deadlines, will be emailed a $30 Amazon gift card at the conclusion of the inquiry as a thank you for their participation.
A recorded Discretionary Follow-Up Semi-Structured Interview may be conducted.

If you have any questions about the research at any time, please contact me at (209) 601-2845 or t_cotton@u.pacific.edu, or Dr. Delores McNair at (209) 946-2674 or dmcnair@pacific.edu.

If you have any questions about your rights as a participant in a research project or wish to speak with an independent contact, please contact the Office of Research & Sponsored Programs, University of the Pacific at (209) 946-3903 or by email at IRB@pacific.edu.

Thank you—
Tarianne Gotelli Cotton
Doctoral Candidate, University of the Pacific
[Information removed to protect confidentiality.]

Journal 1 Prompts: (30 minutes). Please respond on the link above within a week.
For this Journal entry, you may attach a written, audio, or video response. You may be as creative as you want as long as you explain the representative object and respond to the prompts:

1. What, if any, peak meaningful experience have you had since returning home from studying abroad?
2. Decide on a representative object that represents the experience and attach it to the Journal entry. The representative object may be any physical artifact (such as a piece of clothing, pottery, or a painting) or a digital artifact (such as a photo, an audio or video recording, a postcard, a blog post, or a social media post) that represents this peak meaningful experience you have had.
In what ways does the object represent the experience?
What resonates with you about the object and experience?
3. How does the experience affect how you see yourself?
How does the experience affect how you see yourself in relation to others?

APPENDIX Q: EMAIL WITH LINK TO JOURNAL 2

Dear Participant,

Thank you, again, for participating in my inquiry, "Self-Authorship and the Effects of Reverse Culture Shock in Post-Study Abroad U.S. College Students: Strangers in their Own Land".

Please follow this link to Journal 2 and complete it within a week: Journal 2 .

The prompts are included at the end of this email for your review.

Any volunteer participant who completes all items in this inquiry throughout the fall of 2020, which include:
- Inquiry Interest Form and Research Subject's Consent to Participate in Research Form
- Demographic Questionnaire and recorded Semi-Structured Interview (online)
- Journal 1 (which includes presenting and discussing a representative object)
- Journal 2

by item deadlines, will be emailed a $30 Amazon gift card at the conclusion of the inquiry as a thank you for their participation.
A recorded Discretionary Follow-Up Semi-Structured Interview may be conducted.

If you have any questions about the research at any time, please contact me at (209) 601-2845 or t_cotton@u.pacific.edu, or Dr. Delores McNair at (209) 946-2674 or dmcnair@pacific.edu

If you have any questions about your rights as a participant in a research project or wish to speak with an independent contact, please contact the Office of Research & Sponsored Programs, University of the Pacific at (209) 946-3903 or by email at IRB@pacific.edu.

Thank you—
Tarianne Gotelli Cotton
Doctoral Candidate, University of the Pacific
[Information removed to protect confidentiality.]

Journal 2 Prompts: (30 minutes)
For this Journal entry, you may attach a written, audio, or video response. You may be as creative as you want as long as you respond to the prompts:
1. What kinds of situations push you to listen to that "little voice in your head"?
2. When you come across a new situation, what is your decision-making strategy? If your strategy has changed since coming home from studying abroad, explain how and why.
3. What internal and external struggles, if any, come when you choose between respecting and honoring traditional authorities and following your intuition or internal voice? If your struggles have changed since coming home from studying abroad, explain how and why.
4. When you reflect on the impact of major events on your college experience, how does being home from your study abroad experience affect how you see the world?
5. Please reflect on how these experiences are shaping your hopes and dreams.
Now that you are home, when you consider all these experiences you have had, how have your hopes and dreams changed for this school year?
6. If you could give advice to future post-study abroad students to help them with their transition home, what would that advice be?

APPENDIX R: A 15-POINT CHECKLIST OF CRITERIA FOR GOOD THEMATIC ANALYSIS

Process	No.	Criteria
Transcription	1	The data have been transcribed to an appropriate level of detail, and the transcripts have been checked against the tapes for 'accuracy.'
Coding	2	Each data item has been given equal attention in the coding process.
	3	Themes have not been generated from a few vivid examples (an anecdotal approach), but instead the coding process has been thorough, inclusive and comprehensive.
	4	All relevant extracts for all each theme have been collated.
	5	Themes have been checked against each other and back to the original data set.
	6	Themes are internally coherent, consistent, and distinctive.
Analysis	7	Data have been analysed—interpreted, made sense of—rather than just paraphrased or described.
	8	Analysis and data match each other—the extracts illustrate the analytic claims.
	9	Analysis tells a convincing and well-organized story about the data and topic.
	10	A good balance between analytic narrative and illustrative extracts is provided.
Overall	11	Enough time has been allocated to complete all phases of the analysis adequately, without rushing a phase or giving it a once-over-lightly.
Written report	12	The assumptions about, and specific approach to, thematic analysis are clearly explicated.
	13	There is a good fit between what you claim you do and what you show you have done, i.e., described method and reported analysis are consistent.
	14	The language and concepts used in the report are consistent with the epistemological position of the analysis.
	15	The researcher is positioned as active in the research process; themes do not just 'emerge.'

APPENDIX S: THE REFLEXIVE PROCESS OF DATA ANALYSIS USED IN THIS INQUIRY

(based on Braun and Clarke, 2006)

Phase	Description of Reflexive Process	Reflexive Thematic Analysis in Inquiry: Kept detailed descriptions of procedures, details, and timelines, as well as reasons for theoretical, methodological, and analytical choices in Reflexive Thematic Analysis section of Chapter 3 draft on password protected devices (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).
Phase 1 in Reflexive Data Analysis: Familiarized myself with the data	Transcribe data (if necessary), read and re-read data, noting down initial ideas.	Considered research questions and any obvious elements, took notes, and preliminarily organized data into short codes on Excel spreadsheets. • Took limited notes on overall impressions, comments that felt important, and any visual cues that stood out during interviews. • Dedicated one half hour immediately after interviews to note making—writing out stream of thoughts about the interview. Considered context, key issues, surprising things, and further questions. Made notes of preliminary impressions (Braun & Clark, 2012). • Read through the transcriptions after receiving transcriptions of interview recordings from Rev.com. In intimately acquainting myself with content of each data set, asked myself questions such as "How does this participant make sense of their experiences? What assumptions do they make in interpreting their experience? What kind of world is revealed through their accounts?" (Braun & Clarke, 2012, p. 61). Wrote out thoughts about the data, as well as initial notes, in the transcription margins (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). • Listened to each Rev.com interview recording and made sure Microsoft Word transcript was as orthographically accurate as possible (Braun & Clarke, 2012). Kept in mind obligation to double check accuracy of any direct quotes used in manuscript. • Transferred interview data and notes for each participant from Microsoft Word to Excel spreadsheet with three columns and labeled them Speaker, Dialogue, and Notes. Made sure to copy everything correctly from transcript columns and not miss relevant information for either participant. Reread transcripts on Excel. This provided two formats for organizing and storing raw data. Seeing the interview transcripts in different formats helped me think about raw data in another way. • Added two more columns to Excel spreadsheet: Research Question (RQP, RQS1, RQS12, RQS3, and RQS4) and Code. My short, descriptive, and interpretative codes reflected language and perceptions of participants, my own theoretical framework, and the research questions (Braun & Clarke, 2012). Looked for patterns and analytic ideas (Braun et al., 2014). Confirmed the appropriateness and consistency of my codes within and across the data sets. • Added data from journals to spreadsheets after reviewing the interviews and repeated entire process for journals. • Read and reread my transcripts and added thoughts to my Notes column.
Phase 2 in Reflexive Data Analysis: Coded the data	Code interesting features of the data in a systematic fashion across the	Coded data that had analytic relevance and noted it in the *Code* column, organized data, and checked for consistency. With research questions in mind, decided which aspects of the coded data set might be interesting enough to later form the basis of themes and noted this in the *Notes* column. Repeated this process for each item in the data set. • Used Excel to alphabetically sort *Code* column for each participant after making certain I coded as much as possible. This allowed me to see all the

	entire data set, collate data relevant to each code.	same codes together and gave me a whole other way to see, compare, and contrast codes. Codes summarized large chunks, as well as small chunks of data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). • Searched for codes to combine or eliminate based on research questions. (For instance, I took code *Trauma this class endured* and combined it with *Disequilibrium/ equilibrium of unexpected major events may facilitate emerging self-authorship and meaning making.* The combination of these two codes eventually folded into the theme, *Pain,* in Phase 5.) • Made certain to code all important information and checked appropriateness and consistency of all codes within and across data sets of both participants. • Looked quickly at sorted data to code any important information I somehow missed and had not coded. • Sorted and re-sorted codes in order of frequency, importance, and relevance to research questions and considered how to group those codes. • Noticed that quite a few of the codes fit Stages of Grief: denial, anger, bargaining, depression, acceptance, and meaning (Kessler, 2019) and placed those codes separately at top of list. • Took remaining codes and grouped similar codes together on Excel spreadsheet for each participant. • Made generating themes from these codes more streamline by making sure codes matched on both participants' Excel spreadsheets. Looked at frequency and importance of each code to help me further collapse codes into more succinct sections. In some cases, I recoded codes.
Phase 3 in Reflexive Data Analysis: Generated initial themes from the codes	Collate codes into potential themes, gather all data relevant to each potential theme.	Shifted from generating codes to constructing potential themes. Created a thematic map and code coversheet for each participant. Collapsed codes into initial themes and developed short, representative phrases for each initial theme (Braun & Clarke, 2006). • Looked for wider identifying features, broad topics, and issues that brought certain codes together. • Drew a rough initial thematic map to help me organize, connect, and see codes from another perspective (Braun & Clarke, 2006). • Added a *Theme* column to each Excel spreadsheet. • Created a table for each participant and arranged my codes in order of reoccurrence. As I compared, contrasted, and clustered codes on participant tables, I kept returning to one long, reoccurring code which seemed to intersect with the three most important parts of the data sets: *Good discomfort, relationships with supportive people through peak meaningful experiences, and making sense of unexpected major events.* • Based on this long code, recursively collapsed the rest of codes into three renamed initial themes: *Disequilibrium/Equilibrium*, *Relationships*, and *Meaning Making.* Used previous code labels to add any relevant information into *Notes* column. Discarded any codes that did not fit and highlighted any codes that might eventually work as subthemes. • Dug back into data sets and developed short phrases to represent each initial theme. As I moved through each coded initial theme, kneaded and massaged the short phrases to best represent what participants voiced to develop initial themes and answer research questions. Kept in mind that I wanted to relate findings in a logical and sequential order to ultimately tell the analytic story of how the findings answered the research questions (Clarke & Braun, 2014). • Collapsed this rich, deep information into initial themes and then turned to next critical steps for generating themes to answer the research questions.
Phase 4 in Reflexive Data Analysis:	Check if the themes work in relation to	Thought about coded extracts in terms of generating themes and recursively revisited research questions. Thought about how to best express these codes by initial themes to answer research questions and how to eventually fold initial themes into final themes.

Reviewed themes against dataset and research questions	the coded extracts (Level 1) and the entire data set (Level 2), generate a thematic 'map' of the analysis.	• Sorted Excel spreadsheet by *Theme* column and reread every data set line with initial themes in mind to make certain initial themes fit (Clarke & Braun, 2014). • Returned repeatedly to raw data: Word transcripts, to make certain context was appropriate. • Looked for central organizing concepts in each initial theme and added these to *Notes* column (Braun et al., 2014). • Pulled out research questions and considered how initial themes would answer each research question, making sure to assign research questions appropriately in *Research Question* column (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Braun et al., 2014). • Folded initial themes into final themes, but still needed definitions and names.
Phase 5 in Reflexive Data Analysis: Named and defined themes	Perform ongoing analysis to refine the specifics of each theme, and the overall story the analysis tells, generate clear names and definitions for each theme.	Continued analysis of final themes and generated theme definitions and names. Refined the specifics of initial themes and abbreviated themes on spreadsheets. Made certain theme names best represented topics and checked grammatical consistency. • Refined specifics of initial themes and found three letter "p" terms that formed basis for names of the final themes, in "Authoring Your Life" by Marcia B. Baxter Magolda. Ended up using the letter "p" to shorten themes: "PAIN" (for good discomfort: disequilibrium/ equilibrium), "PART" (for partnerships: relationships) and "PERS" (for perspective: meaning making) and noted an initial theme for each code in *Theme* column on each participant's Excel spreadsheet (Baxter Magolda, 2009). • Wrote clear definitions with succinct descriptions of three final themes. • Worked recursively through theme and subtheme names to confirm they best represented each topic and checked grammatical consistency of verb forms.
Phase 6 in Reflexive Data Analysis: Wrote my analysis	The final opportunity for analysis. Selection of vivid, compelling extract examples, final analysis of selected extracts, relate back of the analysis to the research question and literature, produce a scholarly report of the analysis.	Used vivid and compelling quotes to answer research questions through the story of data. Double-checked, adjusted, and rearranged sequences of themes and subthemes. Recursively revisited and revised subthemes to best represented data and captured "the essence of the theme" (Clarke & Braun, 2014, p. 194). • Wrote *Themes* section of Chapter 4 and double-checked context of each data item to make certain to place it in correct theme and time sequence. Some data overlapped in themes and subthemes, so I adjusted them. Rearranged some subthemes sequentially to give presentation a logical flow. • Made certain to add any changes to Excel worksheet to later sort all data and check against Chapter 4. • Based analysis on what I found in data, what I found interesting, and how it answered research questions (Clarke & Braun, 2014). In interviews, when participants asked for clarification, clarified but also reminded them this was *their* story. • Recursively revisited and revised subthemes so they best represented data and captured "the essence of the theme" (Clarke & Braun, 2014, p. 194) of post-study abroad experience and emerging self-authorship journey of each participant. • Used member checking and had "those who were studied review the findings" (Patton, 2015, p. 668), by sending to participants an email with a link to the option to read and respond to the Chapter 4 outline draft on Google Forms within ten days (Patton, 2015). • Ultimately checked each step of thematic analysis against "A 15-point checklist of criteria for good thematic analysis" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 96).

APPENDIX T: PARTICIPANT'S OPTION TO READ AND RESPOND TO CHAPTER 4
OUTLINE DRAFT

Thank you, again, for participating in my inquiry, "SELF-AUTHORSHIP AND THE EFFECTS OF REVERSE CULTURE SHOCK IN POST-STUDY ABROAD U.S. COLLEGE STUDENTS: STRANGERS IN THEIR OWN LAND."

I would love to have you look over my findings in the Chapter 4 Outline Draft. Space for your feedback is provided below the link.

I'll appreciate your reactions and impressions. Feel free to add comments.

Please reply with your comments by November 25, 2021.

Thanks, again!

Tarianne Gotelli Cotton
Doctoral Candidate, University of the Pacific
[Information removed to protect confidentiality.]

Email:
_____

My name is (first and last name):
_____

Interest in Option to Read and Respond to Chapter 4 Outline Draft:

Are you interested in reading and responding to the Chapter 4 Outline Draft?
    ○ Yes
    ○ No

Chapter 4 Outline Draft
Insert link to Chapter 4 Outline Draft here.

Your impression of the way I am describing you in the biographical statement:
What are your impressions of these findings? Are you okay with this? Do you want to make any changes to it?
_____

Your overall impression of the Chapter 4 Outline Draft: What are your impressions?
_____

Is there anything else you would like to add or didn't cover during our conversations or that has occurred to us since our last time together?
_____

APPENDIX U: ESTABLISHING TRUSTWORTHINESS IN EACH PHASE OF THEMATIC ANALYSIS

Based on Braun and Clarke (2006); Lincoln and Guba (1985), as cited in Nowell et al., (2017)

Phase	Means of Establishing Trustworthiness	Application: During every phase, I used my password protected devices to store detailed descriptions of procedures, details, and timelines, as well as reasons for theoretical, methodological, and reflexive analytical choices (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Merriam and Tisdell, 2016).
Phase 1 in Reflexive Data Analysis: Familiarized myself with the data—Establishing Trustworthiness	• Prolong engagement with data • Triangulate different data collection modes • Document theoretical and reflective thoughts • Document thoughts about potential codes/themes • Store raw data in well-organized archives • Keep records of all data field notes, transcripts, and reflexive journals	Spent a great deal of time with raw data from semi-structured interviews and journals: • Used multiple types of data: semi-structured interviews and journals (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Roberts & Hyatt, 2019). • Engaged adequately in collecting data to remain open to expected, as well as unexpected, patterns in data which may have led to contrary, disconfirming, or alternative conclusions. • Documented theoretical and reflective thoughts (Braun & Clark, 2012). • Created possible codes and themes, organized data, and noted appropriateness and consistency. Repeated entire process for raw data in journals. • Kept detailed descriptions of procedures, details, and timelines, as well as reasons for theoretical, methodological, and analytical choices in *Reflexive Thematic Analysis section* (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). • Repeated entire process for raw data in journals.
Phase 2 in Reflexive Data Analysis: Coded the data—Establishing Trustworthiness	• Researcher triangulation • Reflexive journaling • Use of a coding framework • Audit trail of code generation	Systematically analyzed data through creating codes: • Recursively visited entire data set; journaled reflections; and combined, eliminated, or added codes with analytic relevance in Excel Code columns. • Noted codes interesting enough to later form basis of themes in Excel Notes columns. • Continued reflexive journaling; sorted and re-sorted codes in order of frequency, importance, and relevance to research; and made sure codes matched for both participants.
Phase 3 in Reflexive Data Analysis: Generated initial themes from the codes—Establishing Trustworthiness	• Researcher triangulation • Diagramming to make sense of theme connections • Keep detailed notes about development	Shifted from generating codes to constructing potential themes; looked for wider identifying features, broad topics, and issues that brought certain codes together (Braun & Clarke, 2006): • Drew a rough initial thematic map to help organize, connect, and see codes from another perspective (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Braun & Clarke, 2012; Braun et al., 2014; Clarke & Braun, 2014; Terry et al., 2017). • Added a Theme column to each Excel spreadsheet; created a table for each participant and arranged codes in order of reoccurrence.

	and hierarchies of concepts and themes	Discarded any codes that did not fit and highlighted any codes that might eventually work as subthemes.
Phase 4 in Reflexive Data Analysis: Reviewed themes against dataset and research questions— Establishing Trustworthiness	• Researcher triangulation • Test for referential adequacy by returning to raw data	Thought about coded extracts in terms of generating themes; revisited research questions and considered how to best express codes by initial themes and answer research questions. • Sorted Excel spreadsheet by *Theme* column and reread every data set line to make certain initial themes fit (Clarke & Braun, 2014) • Returned repeatedly to raw data to make certain context was appropriate • Looked for central organizing concepts in each initial theme and added these to *Notes* column (Braun et al., 2014) • Considered how initial themes answered research questions and assigned research questions appropriately in *Research Question* column (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Braun et al., 2014). • Folded initial themes into final themes but still needed definitions and names
Phase 5 in Reflexive Data Analysis: Named and defined themes— Establishing Trustworthiness	• Researcher triangulation • Documentation of theme naming	Continued analysis of final themes and generated theme definitions and names: • Refined specifics of initial themes and found terms that formed basis for names of final themes • Wrote clear definitions and descriptions of three final themes. • Worked recursively through theme and subtheme names to confirm they best represented each topic and checked grammatical consistency of verb forms.
Phase 6 in Reflexive Data Analysis: Wrote my analysis— Establishing Trustworthiness	• Describing process of coding and analysis in sufficient details • Thick descriptions of context • Description of the audit trail • Report on reasons for theoretical, methodological, and analytical choices throughout the entire study • Member checking	Used vivid and compelling quotes to answer research questions through story of data: • Double-checked context of each data item to make certain it was in correct theme and time sequence. Adjusted any data that overlapped in themes and subthemes. Rearranged some subthemes sequentially to give presentation a logical flow. • Revisited and revised recursively subthemes so they best represented data and captured "the essence of the theme" (Clarke & Braun, 2014, p. 194) • Made certain to add any changes to Excel worksheets; sorted all data and checked against Chapter 4. • Based analysis on data and what was interesting, as well as how it answered research questions (Clarke & Braun, 2014) • Provided in-depth analysis and thick, rich descriptions of nature of settings and findings (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). • Used member checking and had "those who were studied review the findings" (Patton, 2015, p. 668), by sending to participants an email with a link to the option to read and respond to the Chapter 4 outline draft on Google Forms within ten days (Patton, 2015).

Stages of Grief:	denial, anger, bargaining, depression, acceptance, meaning	denial, anger, bargaining, depression, acceptance	anger, depression, meaning	acceptance, meaning	meaning