BORDER CROSSINGS: HOW ACADEMIC, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL
EXPERIENCES CONVERGE TO SHAPE THE INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION OF
GERMAN AND CANADIAN STUDENTS ON THE ONTARIO-BADEN-
WÜRTTEMBERG EXCHANGE PROGRAM

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Abstract

Study abroad programs contribute significantly to a student's academic, personal, and professional development; however, students are often unable to articulate how their international experiences translate into specific learning outcomes and demonstrate connections between their academic and non–academic environments and experiences. This study drew on two strands of literature –study abroad and student learning and retention in higher education - and interviewed 12 Canadian and German participants in the Ontario-Baden-Württemberg student exchange program. The study found that while reinforcing the importance of study abroad to students' learning and development, students (I) distinguished between their academic, social, and cultural experiences; (II) recognized the interconnection of these experiences while abroad and at home; and highlighted (III) the importance of the classroom and academic institution as key sites to develop friendships, social networks, and a sense of belonging that ultimately enhanced students' learning outcomes and experiences in the academic, social, and cultural contexts.

Table of Contents

List of Tables

Chapter I: Introduction

The growing importance of international education in higher education

International education has moved to the core of higher education and universities are actively identifying themselves as 'international' or 'internationalized' academic institutions. But what constitutes an international or internationalized institution? After examining how universities from 12 different countries discursively present themselves as international, Stier and Börjesson (2010) found that the internationalized higher education institution presents itself as a fluid environment in which not only knowledge production, regional development and labour-relevant training occurs but also one that fosters morally conscious citizens whose actions, knowledge and experiences extend beyond their primary physical location. Thus, the internationalized academic institution provides an education that academically, professionally, and personally develops their students. A holistic education provides one with the knowledge, skills and values that are not only transferable but applicable in their lives outside not only the institution, but also their culture and nation state.

To foster such a holistic education, universities facilitate and provide opportunities for knowledge of different cultures to be exchanged, explored and discussed (Stier and Börjesson, 2010; AUCC, 2007, 2007b; Zha, 2003). Knight (2004) identifies various internationalization policies, programs, and strategies at both a national/sector level and institutional level. At the institutional level, she outlines two streams of activities: internationalization at home (IaH) and abroad.

IaH, a term labelled by Bengt Nilsson in 1998, is an integrated systems approach that institutions use to internationalize their campuses and involves the entire university, students, faculty and staff, as a way for institutions to internationalize their campuses (NAFSA, 2009). The goal of IaH is to "create knowledge and understanding of other countries, cultures, religions, and values to make the student prepared to communicate and collaborate globally in a change world" without having to study, work and/or live abroad (Nilsson, 2003, p. 31).

As noted by Knight (2004), these program strategies include foreign language study, internationalized curricula, area or thematic studies, recruitment of international students, cross-cultural training, visiting lecturers and scholars, student clubs and associations, international and intercultural campus events, and liaisons with community-based cultural and ethnic groups. As noted by many scholars, these initiatives assist and challenge students to critically examine not only different cultures and perspectives but also their own social and cultural identity and assumptions to develop "critical consciousness, values, awareness, skills and knowledge of cross-cultural differences," which in turn develop one's intercultural and global competences (Williams, 2008, p. 26; Sanderson, 2008; Stohl, 2007; Soria & Troisi 2013).

Internationalization abroad, however, refers to programs and activities that occur across borders such as international work or internship programs, international volunteer and service learning programs, study abroad programs, joint/double degree programs, faculty/staff mobility programs, service-learning, international development assistance projects, and cross-border delivery of education programs (Knight, 2004). While these programs all fall under the category of internationalization abroad, distinctions are made

between the different programs. For the purpose of this study, the following paragraphs will highlight differences between work/internship programs, international volunteer and service learning programs, and immersive study abroad programs. Immersive study abroad programs have been identified as the most effective strategies to develop students' intercultural competence when compared to work, volunteer, and service-learning programs (Stebleton, Soria and Cherney (2013) and are distinctly different in regards to a student's academic development.

Work abroad or internship course programs concentrate on the learning and development of the student but do not rely on traditional in-classroom experiences (Ali & Smith, 2015). As noted by Gault et al. (2000), internships are "structured work experiences" that emphasize the experience of work within the professional context and the learning that occurs and developed through paid or unpaid work experience (Ali & Smith, 2015, p 3).

Toncar and Cudmore (2000) examined the importance of work experience in the overall education of students through a study on undergraduate business students participating in the Overseas Internship Experience Program. This program involved a six to seven week supervised summer internship in England and provided students with the opportunity to live and work in a foreign country while experiencing cultural heritages through supervised and unsupervised travel. Students were placed in unpaid internships with both profit and non-profit organizations.

Toncar and Cudmore (2000) found that students who work abroad for a short period of time demonstrated personal growth in regards to self-confidence in engaging a foreign culture, intercultural development in regards to one's ethnocentrism, a deeper

understanding and respect for differing people and cultures, and greater empathy toward international students studying at one's home institution through their experiences of adjusting and integrating into the host culture. In this regard, one's personal, intercultural and professional development was influenced by living and working abroad in a culturally different environment.

While research on the outcomes of volunteer programs is limited, Tiessen (2012) examined the motivations of Canadian youth, individuals ranging from 18 to 30 years of age, who participated in a three to six month international development volunteer program. According to Tiessen, more than a third of the participants majored in International Development Studies and others identified with related fields such as International Social Work, Anthropology, Political Sciences and Languages. In doing so, Tiessen demonstrates an alignment between students' academic and professional/volunteer interests.

While Tiessen notes that important motivations for participating in the volunteer programs include similar reasons to other international opportunities, like cross-cultural understanding and personal growth, participants also highlighted an academic component in regards to the importance and desire to test an academic background or career choice. However, rather than refer to specific academic outcomes and developments, Tiessen (2012) categorized testing one's academic background with one's professional career choices and identifies these two motivations as aspects within the pursuit of personal growth. Instances of personal growth include gaining a broader perspective, skills development, and/or having an adventure. Therefore, while one's academic discipline is included in the discussion and overall student motivations, Tiessen (2012) suggests that

international volunteer programs focus and contribute to one's professional and personal development.

International service learning (ISL) "combines academic instruction and community-based service in an international context" (Crabtree, 2008, p. 18) and provides students with opportunities "to conduct collaborative, community-based work and research with international community partners to address issues in the host country" (Bringle et al., 2012, p. 243). The collaboration and community based work can be achieved through a variety of programs and experiences that range from faculty/staff led co-curricular service trips, academic courses in an international setting that include service experiences, and international programs with formal service-learning curricular (Crabtree, 2008). Regardless of the approach, ISL links international travel, education, and community service to increase students' global competence, development of humane values, build intercultural understanding and communication, enhance civic mindedness and leaderships skills, improve language skills, and develop one's intercultural sensitivity (Kiely, 2004; Crabtree, 2008; Bringle et al., 2012). Thus, while international service learning involves academic instruction while abroad, the identified learning outcomes focus on one's personal and intercultural development.

Stebleton, Soria and Cherney (2013) asked if different international activities available to students result in different outcomes concerning the development of global and intercultural competences. Their study examined five international activities: (1) a university study abroad program; (II) a study abroad program affiliated with another college or university; (III) travel abroad for cross-cultural experiences or informal

education; (IV) travel abroad for service learning, volunteer, or work experience; and (V) travel abroad for recreation.

Stebleton, Soria and Cherney (2013) found that all of the study/travel opportunities contribute to an increase in the students' academic engagement and sense of belonging on campus and, with the exception of travelling abroad for informal education, were positively associated with the development to apply disciplinary knowledge to a global context. Furthermore, participation in all activities, except for service and recreation, demonstrated development in linguistic competency in another language. University study abroad programs and traveling abroad for service programs, on the other hand, were positively associated with a student's ability to work with culturally diverse people.

Additionally, Stebleton, Soria and Cherney (2013) found that study abroad programs through the university or through another college/university resulted in intercultural and global competences that generally surpassed the outcomes of the other travel activities. In doing so, Stebleton, Soria and Cherney's (2013) research contribute to the current literature that perceive academic study abroad programs to be one of the most effective strategies to educate and develop interculturally sensitive and competent students and citizens (Williams, 2005; Clark et al., 2009, AUCC, 2007; Behrnd and Porzeit, 2012; Marx & Moss, 2011; Anderson & Lawton, 2011) regardless of the students' pre-college backgrounds, educational aspirations or college experience (Salisbury, 2011).

Likewise, numerous studies document how study abroad contributes to the personal, intercultural and professional development of study abroad participants and

confirms that study abroad is a powerful and effective tool available to academic programs and institutions (AUCC, 2007; 2007b; Clark et al., 2009; Anderson & Lawton, 2011; Yang et al., 2011). Some of the personal developments attributed to study abroad include increases in one's self-confidence, self-efficiency, and maturity (Clark et al., 2009; Black & Duhon, 2006; Hadis, 2005). Intercultural development includes the improvement in one's foreign language proficiency, understanding of global issues, appreciation, understanding and respect for cultural diversity and diverse world views, as well as the development of global critical skills, creativity thinking skills, and intercultural communication skills (Sutton and Rubin, 2004; Stier, 2004; Engle & Engle, 2002, 2003; Anderson et al., 2006; Altbach & Knight, 2007; Clark et al., 2009; Williams, 2009; Vande Berg et al., 2012; Lee et al., 2012). And professional and career development includes acquiring of international and/or intercultural skill sets abroad that influence one's career path (Franklin, 2010). Long-term changes in terms of citizenship or civil responsibilities are also enhanced in regards to civil engagement upon a student's return to their home country (DeGraaf et al., 2013).

Nevertheless, while study abroad programs share personal, intercultural, and professional development with international work, internship, volunteer, and service-learning programs, immersive study abroad programs are distinctly different in that at the core of the programs is an academic component. Immersive study abroad programs involve the enrolment of students within an institution abroad, alongside host culture students for one or two academic terms, who participate in projects or courses that result in academic credits, which transfer and contribute towards one's academic degree at his/her home institution ("Study Abroad", 2011).

Thus, study abroad experiences consist of three different contexts: (I) academic, which refers to "characteristics of an educational institution or environment" and one's concern with the "pursuit of research, education, and scholarship" ("Academic," 2015); (II) social in regards to a community of people, "who share the same interests, pursuits, or occupation, especially when distinct from those of [the]society in which they live," associated together for friendly interaction or companionship ("Social," 2015; "Community," 2015); and (III) culture, which concerns "distinctive ideas, customs, social behaviour, products or way of life in a particular nation, society, or people" ("Culture," 2015).

By studying within a foreign institution, researchers highlight not only one's personal and intercultural development, but also the participants' academic development. (AUCC, 2007; 2007b; Clark et al., 2009; Anderson & Lawton, 2011; Yang et al., 2011). Academic developments range from the transfer of credits (Anderson and Lawton, 2011), to subjective culture learning (Engle and Engle, 2003), one's engagement with their course material (Teichler, 2004; Sutton and Rubin, 2004), successful graduation rates (Posey and James, 2003; Barclay Hamir, 2011), and an increase in student engagement in regards to participation in activities during college (Gonyea, 2008).

My experiences with study abroad programs

However, having worked and interacted with study abroad participants within a university setting over the last four years, and having been a study abroad participant myself three times over the last four years, I have found that students rarely discuss and recognize the value of their academic experiences upon their return home. Rather, students appear to value their socio-cultural learning experiences, in regards to one's

personal and intercultural development, over their academic experiences. This is particularly evident when students are asked about their learning experiences. Students most often relate experiences that occur within social and what they commonly understand as "non-academic environments". Below I give three recent examples.

A girl who recently returned from France recalled that an important cultural learning experience took place for her while she was on a picnic in a park with a local student. She had asked the local student if she lived in the suburbs only to learn that her local friend considered her seemingly innocent query rude. She learned that unlike in Toronto, to insinuate that one lives in the suburbs within some French regions is to insinuate that the individual is of a lower social class. Another example is a student who returned from Germany. He explained how he learned a lot about the various political systems, such as the political systems in France, Germany and Italy, and exchanged knowledge with his counterparts on the Canadian political system over drinks at a bar. Or two European students, a German girl who studied in Iceland and another who studied in Canada, who explained that the highlight and most valuable part of their international experience was the ability to travel, explore and live within the nature and beautiful landscapes of their host country.

When asked specifically about their academic experiences, these same students reply with a simple, "It was fine" and comment as to whether or not their credits from abroad were successfully transferred. And while credits and the progression of one's academic studies are essential to the success of study abroad programs, these students did not seem to recognize or value their academic experiences in the same way as their socio-cultural experiences outside the classroom.

Additionally, students did not seem to perceive that their academic experience was also a socio-cultural learning environment. When pressed further about commenting on the cultural differences in academic environments, most students refer to programmatic requirements and associated features such as examinations worth 100 percent of one's final grade rather than thirty percent, or course requirements such as fewer course readings or the lack of assignments to require a demonstration of critical thinking skills. Few students move beyond these observations to be able to recognize how their socio-cultural experiences interrelate and integrate with their academic experiences to contribute to their understanding and appreciation of their host culture, home culture and their profession/discipline at large (Engle and Engle, 2002, 2003; Sutton and Rubin 2004; Cisneros-Donahue et al., 2012).

Montrose (2002) also recognizes this separation in her conversations with returned students. Based upon her own observations and having worked with study abroad participants, she found that students easily recount their social experiences, key encounters that were meaningful for the student, upon their return but find it difficult to explain or understand their experiences in an educational context. As a result, Montrose (2002) not only notes how many students are unable to incorporate their international socio-cultural experiences back into their academic work within their home institution, but also how institutions, in turn, have difficulty recognizing, evaluating and accrediting the learning with which students engage outside of the classroom to a student's degree.

MacMillan (2009) offers an explanation as to why both students and institutions may have difficulty connecting and incorporating their social and cultural international experiences to their academic work. Drawing upon her own international and educational

experiences, she explains that the academic institution is driven by provable scientific and objective thinking and "despite the rhetoric of 'bringing the world to the classroom', students are taught from a young age to leave themselves and their culture, background, and personal histories out of the academic process" (MacMillan, 2009, p. 249). Thus, MacMillan attributes the inability to connect and integrate one's personal experiences with one's academics as a product of the Canadian academic culture and structures within the academic institution.

Although lacking empirical studies, both Montrose (2002) and MacMillan (2009) urge institutions to redesign curricula to ensure experiential learning is incorporated into their study abroad programs. Unlike the traditional teacher-centered classroom, experiential learning is student driven learning that occurs outside the classroom. Students experience concrete experiences, such as volunteering in an organization or working in a lab, establish their own intentional learning outcomes, and engage in critical analysis and interpersonal skills to understand alternative worldviews (Montrose, 2002). Learning is evaluated based on the student's reading, writing, presentations and/or projects on their experiences and their subsequent analysis and reflection (Montrose, 2002). In this regard, the learning experiences become the object of study and relate specifically to a student's degree at their home institution.

Such recommendations, for example incorporating experiential learning into study abroad programs, offer important opportunities to improve student learning by structuring the learning environment to ensure a direct relationship between one's experiences outside the classroom with their academic study. Nevertheless, there is study

abroad literature that suggests an interrelation between one's academic engagement and intercultural interactions within non-experientially tailored programs.

Student development and the education benefits of study abroad programs

As stated above, Stebleton, Soria and Cherney's (2013) found academic study abroad programs to be one of the most effective ways to develop interculturally sensitive and competent students. In doing so, their research suggests that the academic component, which distinguishes study abroad programs from other international opportunities, influences and contributes in a substantial way to the intercultural and personal development of students.

Engle and Engle (2002, 2003) address how studying within a foreign institution contributes to one's subjective-culture learning experiences. They argue that there are fundamental differences in the academic and cultural experiences offered by various study abroad programs. To highlight these differences, Engle and Engle developed a level-based classification system based on objective criteria like program length, type of student housing, language of course work, etc. to define priorities and programs that would be appropriate to the various academic, personal, and career goals of future student participants. In developing their classification system of programs, Engle and Engle distinguish between "culture-based" international education and "knowledge-transfer" study abroad. Knowledge-transfer refers to areas like biology in regards to scientific exchange, and the study of technological applications whereas culture-based programs are based on the interculturalist perspective of study abroad programs that focus primarily on language and culture.

They also make a distinction between subjective culture and objective culture. Subjective culture learning refers to the "assumptions, values, and patterns of thinking and behaving….learned, shared, and maintained by groups of interacting people" (Engle and Engle, 2003, p. 4) while objective culture refers to learning that is acquired through the traditional academic work and knowledge of studying history, literature, politics, the arts, etc. The authors do not devalue objective culture in comparison to subjective culture, but argue that the advantage of studying abroad is that guided authentic cultural encounters and real life-application, rather than at home course work, tend to "confirm the value of objective classroom learning - and vice versa - when learning takes place according to local cultural norms" (Engle and Engle, 2003, p. 4). Thus, Engle and Engle suggest that by studying within a foreign institution, an environment that is influenced and driven by local norms and customs, students not only develop knowledge of their academic subject matter within the classroom but also develop an understanding of the host culture through the exposure to cultural behaviours, interactions, and approaches to learning.

Therefore, objective and subjective learning are not exclusive. Rather, engaging with academic subject matter abroad, experiencing different cultural approaches to learning and engaging in social and cultural interactions with members of the host culture, Engle and Engle (2003) suggest that the two forms of learning interrelate and influence the academic and intercultural development of students. Additionally, Engle and Engle (2003) demonstrate the importance of both in and out of classroom experiences, specifically instances in which students interact directly and dynamically with the host culture. In Engle and Engle's (2003) highest level of the Cross-Cultural

Immersion Program include: academic work context that involves local norms, partial or complete direct enrolment; individual integration homestay in regards to the student's residence; provisions for cultural interactions involve direct integration in the host culture through service learning, independent projects, or professional internships; and guided reflection on cultural experience such as orientations, mentoring, or courses in cross-cultural perspectives. In this regard, Engle and Engle (2003) suggest that subjective cultural learning occurs when students engage with the host culture both in and out of the classroom, thereby suggesting that both one's academic and socio-cultural experiences are important and contribute to one's academic and intercultural learning and development.

Thus, in regards to one's subjective culture learning and development, the subject or academic discipline of the student does not necessarily have to focus specifically on the host culture, such as German politics, law, or history for a student studying abroad in Germany. Rather, the importance lies in the learning environment that takes place according to local cultural norms and the academic institution that serves as a space in which students interact with students and professors of that culture. In this regard, one can argue that study abroad programs are beneficial and applicable to all students, regardless of their academic discipline, as it concerns how students approach and engage with information, situations, and individuals within their new cultural setting both in and out of the classroom.

Teichler (2004) also notes how study abroad programs provide students with the opportunity to either study something similar abroad to which one studies at home or to study something different abroad that is considered to have equal value to the courses

offered at one's home institution (p. 402). Each scenario provides students with the opportunity to broaden one's horizons as one may experience different cultural teaching and learning methods within one's field of discipline and/or the exposure to new knowledge by engaging with a new discipline. The academic component also ensures that students receive recognition for work done abroad (Teichler, 2004, p. 402-03). In this regard, study abroad is not perceived as a year away from one's institution and studies, but as an extended educational experience in which a student continues his or her studies at a host institution and one's work and interactions contribute to a student's academic development and intercultural knowledge.

One study that examined study abroad participations in regards to their academic performance was the Georgia Learning Outcomes of Students Studying Abroad Research Initiative (GLOSSARI) project (Sutton and Rubin, 2004). The GLOSSARI project involved the compilation and analysis of study abroad participants across 35 institutions to determine and understand study abroad learning outcomes. As part of the study, Sutton and Rubin (2004) conducted a comparison on the academic experience of students studying on campus and students participating in the same course while abroad. They found that when examining three courses, students abroad improved their academic performance. Study abroad participants demonstrated better functional knowledge such as one's awareness and knowledge of cultural practices and a better context of realism and conceptual learning in regards to the ability to interpret and demonstrate course knowledge conceptually by taking different political and social contexts (Redden, 2010).

Stemler et al. (2014) sought to explore the relationships among intercultural competence, participant demographics, and specific components of study abroad

experiences (e.g. language immersion, situational exposure) using the Wesleyan Intercultural Competence Scale (WICS). This measuring device was based on Bennett's Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS) while incorporating situational judgment testing (SJT). SJT links questions to specific situational contexts in order to assess one's behavioural dimension (i.e. use of critical thinking, self-reliance, cultural and social skills) of intercultural competence.

In addition to eight measures to evaluate personalities/attitudes of intercultural competence such as openness, perspective-taking, empathy, ambiguity tolerance, etc., the WICS also incorporated 16 situations that study abroad students are likely to experience. These experiences include: using public transportation, interacting with local peers, going out with others, grocery shopping, visiting a local landmark, inability to find items that are easily available in the United States, local media coverage, views that differed from one's own, experiences with the local language, participation in local cultural events, attending formal dinners, interactions with professors or supervisors, participation in discussions with local peers, local family parties, religious services or events that differ from one's own religious beliefs (Stemler et al., 2014). In doing so, situational testing is important and interesting as Stemler et al. (2014) take into account the influence and experiences of the academic component of studying abroad such as one's interaction with peers and interactions with professors or supervisors abroad.

The study found that participants who experienced a wider variety of situations scored higher, thereby demonstrating that the more involved an individual is within the culture, both in and out of the academic classroom and institution, the more exposure experienced, the higher the intercultural development. In this regard, one's development

does not depend solely on the amount of time one spends within a given culture but rather the variety of one's academic and socio-cultural experiences.

Thus, study abroad literature in regards to one's educational benefits and academic outcomes suggest various relationships and contexts in which the academic and intercultural experiences interrelate. Engle and Engle's (2003) concept of subjective culture learning and Stemler et al.'s situational testing suggest that students' experiences both in and out of the foreign classroom are important and influence one's academic and intercultural development. Teichler (2004) highlights the importance of the classroom and how one's academic experiences within a foreign institution, whether studying within one's home discipline or engaging with a new discipline, contributes to one's intercultural understanding of the host culture. And Sutton and Rubin (2004) demonstrate how one's international experiences and intercultural development are apparent in how students' engage with their academic work and assignments. In doing so, the literature on the educational benefits of study abroad programs speaks to the value of study abroad programs in regards to both one's academic and intercultural development.

Nevertheless, what remains unanswered based on Montrose's work, MacMillan's work and my own observations is why study abroad participants overwhelming seem to value their out of the classroom, socio-cultural experiences, over their in classroom academic work in their host countries? How do students perceive their learning experiences within the academic and socio-cultural contexts while abroad? Do they recognize any interrelation or integration between the learning that occurs in the academic and socio-cultural contexts in regards to their overall international experience? Why or why not? How does student perception of their experiences and the

interrelationship between the academic and socio –cultural contexts translate into their ability to incorporate their international and intercultural experiences back into their academic studies once they return to their home institutions? This thesis is a first step to address and explore this research gap.

Chapter II: Literature Review

International and intercultural education

International education and intercultural education are often used interchangeably. However, this thesis will draw on interpretations to differentiate between the broad encompassing term of international education and the more specific outcome of intercultural education. One broad interpretation of international education concerns "the educative efforts that aim at fostering an international orientation in knowledge and attitudes and seek to build bridges between countries" (James, 2005, p. 315). This includes educative and international orientated activities, such as the incorporation of international issues and perspectives into the curriculum, the recruitment of international students, as well as study abroad programs and internships, that develop the academic, linguistic and intercultural knowledge and skills of the participants (Altbach & Knight, 2007; Bleszynska, 2008).

A second interpretation of international education refers to the study of Bennett's (2009) objective culture and Stier's (2006) content-competences. Similar to Engle and Engle's (2002, 2003) concept of objective learning mentioned above, objective culture or content-competencies refer to the knowledge of the institutions and their economic, social customs, and political structures, as well as the arts, customs, and literature of a culture. This knowledge can be considered as the 'textbook' knowledge that often develops when a culture is the specific object of one's study. However, the knowledge of a culture and even the understanding of different ways of thinking do not mean that one can adopt different ways of thinking and interact with members of a different culture (Bennett, 1993; Stier, 2006; Grünzweig & Rinehart, 2002).

Intercultural education, however, concerns the ability to interrelate and interact with different cultures and involves the understanding of subjective culture (Bennett, 2009). Subjective culture refers to the psychological features, the ways of thinking and behaving, which define a group of people. It is the "the worldview of people who interact in a particular context, their perspective on how to discriminate phenomena in the world, how to organize and coordinate communication, and how to assign goodness and badness to ways of being" (Bennett, 2009, p. S3). This knowledge of another's worldview involves a shift in one's cognitive and affective understanding and behaviour within differing cultures and contributes to the breakdown of barriers that limit intercultural contact such as ethnocentrism, racial and ethnic prejudice or xenophobia (Bennett, 2009; Bleszynska, 2008; Stier, 2006; Williams, 2009).

Another component of intercultural education and term used by researchers within the field is intercultural competence. While many researchers define and approach intercultural competence differently, Perry and Southwell (2011) argue that all definitions of intercultural competence involve the ability to interact effectively and appropriately with individuals of different cultures. For example, Williams (2009) defines intercultural competence as possessing three dimensions: cognitive, affective and behaviour. The cognitive dimension refers to the knowledge one has about cultural norms, values, behaviours and issues. The affective dimension occurs when one has the motivation, will and open-mindedness to encounter, act in and adapt to new cultural situations and values.

The behaviour dimension concerns the development and use of critical skills, which include resourcefulness, self-reliance, creative thinking, analytical skills, behaviour adaptability and culturally appropriate social skills (Williams, 2009).

Additionally, Williams (2009) argues that intercultural competence is more than the existence of one or all of these elements, but involves the interaction of various cognitive, affective and behaviour qualities that enables one to develop, interact and understand culturally sensitive environments.

Both concepts, intercultural education and intercultural competence, do not speak directly to what Engle and Engle (2003) refers to as the subjective learning experience in study abroad programs. This is because while intercultural education and intercultural competence refer to learning in terms of knowledge and understanding of different cultures and even speak to the application of this knowledge in developing skills to effectively communicate and interact in these cultural environments, they do not specifically address learning in context of the classroom or in the academic setting.

While an argument can be made that intercultural competence as such refers to cognitive, affective, and behaviour qualities and skills that could be applied to one's academics or in classroom experiences, there is very little said about how the academic and socio-cultural contexts interact to influence a student's learning both in and out of the classroom. The basic premise remains that the primary factor that contributes to the intercultural development of an individual is based on his/her exposure and engagement with a new culture and social environment rather than the experiences within a foreign academic classroom (Engle and Engle, 2003; Teichler, 2004). In this sense, scholarship on intercultural competence and the academic benefits or outcomes of study abroad recognize the context, objectives, and outcomes of the learning experiences from study abroad literature differently.

Immersive study abroad programs

There is much written about intercultural competence and its premise is based on the notion of culture shock in regards to one's exposure and engagement with cultural differences in a foreign environment. According to Oberg (1960), culture shock is "precipitated by the anxiety that results from losing all our familiar signs and symbols of social intercourse" and occurs when one is immersed in a different culture (Gaw, 2000, p. 85). While culture shock is commonly associated with negative feelings and experiences such as feelings of helpless, irritability, and feelings of being isolated or disregarded, there is also recognition that immersion in a different culture provides opportunities for cultural learning, self-development, and personal growth (Adler, 1975).

Adler (1975) describes the cross-cultural learning experiences as "a set of intensive and evocative situations in which the individual experiences himself and other people in a new way distinct from previous situations and is consequently forced into new levels of consciousness and understanding" (Yershova et al., 2000, p. 45). In this sense, the exposure to and contact with cultural differences, through programs such as study abroad, was considered enough to disorient an individual and force him or her to reflect and adjust his or her behaviours and attitudes.

However, more recently educators and researchers have challenged the value of immersion and its transformative effect in regards to enhancing an individual's intercultural growth and development (Roman, 2003; Rizvi, 2007; Salisbury et al., 2013; Root & Ngampornchai, 2013). Specifically, in regards to study abroad programs, studies have challenged the value of learning from simply being immersed in an academic institution abroad. As the purpose of study abroad programs is to provide students with

the opportunity to experience academic and social experiences that differ from their home institution, scholars like Vande Berg question if students should "live the life of a typical host university student by enrolling directly in regular university courses, alongside local students, where they would be taught in the target language by host university professors" (Vande Berg, 2009, pg. 4).

Several study abroad programs are modeled as "integrated university study". An "integrated university study" involves students participating in regular courses alongside students from their host institution and not courses specifically designed for study abroad and/or international students ("Integrated University Study", 2011). Vande Berg (2009) and Vande Berg et al. (2009) express reservations with the integrated model and argue that direct enrolment poses two major challenges. First, language barriers exist for students who do not have the level of language proficiency to take courses in the target or host country's language of instruction. As a result, students will study courses in English alongside fellow international English speaking students and in doing so, become removed from associations and relationships with members of the host culture that contribute to one's intercultural development.

The issue of language proficiency and its importance to student learning through study abroad is interesting. Some studies have found that students who have a high level of language proficiency and who take courses alongside host students show signs of significant intercultural learning and an ability to develop relations with members of the host culture (Ife et al., 2000; Vande Berg et al., 2009) while others contest the correlation between language proficiency and intercultural development (Savicki, 2011; Jackson, 2011).

For example, Savicki (2011) sought to understand the relationship between language proficiency assessments and the relationship between these measures and study abroad outcomes and inputs. In his study, Savicki (2011) found that higher proficiency did not relate to higher percentages of interaction with native speakers nor did lower proficiency relate to higher percentages of interaction with English speaking peers. Additionally, none of the language proficiency measures correlated significantly with either the Socio-Cultural Adaptation Scale Total score or either factors scores: Cultural Empathy and Relatedness; Impersonal Endeavours and Perils. In this regard, regardless of one's language proficiency, each had a similar percentage of contact with peer and host culture groups, thereby questioning the correlation between one's level of language proficiency and degree of interaction, two factors that could influence one's integration into the host culture and intercultural development.

Savicki (2011) also found two conflicting patterns of psychological inputs to study abroad with measures of language proficiency. First, students with higher initial language levels show significantly greater critical thinking and marginally lower neuroticism, thereby suggesting successful study abroad adjustment and adaptation. However, students with a higher language level showed lower pre-departure levels for the American Identity Commitment/Affirmation factor and the Explore/Search factor of the American Identity Measure, which assesses a students' sense of self in terms of feeling and attitudes of belonging to the larger US society. In doing so, Savicki (2011) suggests that although students may be cognitively and emotionally ready for new experiences, they lacked the ability to reflect critically on their home culture issues, thereby

questioning the development of a more ethnorelative worldview that is a component of one's intercultural development.

Jackson (2011) also sought to understand the relationship between study abroad experiences in regards to one's linguistic competency, intercultural sensitivity, and sociopragmatic awareness. She found that the development sequence of intercultural competence does not parallel linguistic competence. Students with an advanced level of language proficiency did not demonstrate a high level of intercultural competence and Jackson attributed this distinction due to foreign language students being predominantly exposed to academic discourse within a formal academic setting rather than direct contact and interactions with members of the host culture. Due to the lack of intercultural contact, students were minimally aware of, or uncomfortable with values and behaviours that differed from their own.

As a result, Jackson (2011) suggests that intercultural teaching should be incorporated into pre-sojourn programming through the facilitation of activities that help learners develop socio-pragmatic awareness, cultural knowledge, communication skills, copying strategies and attitudes that could lead to successful intercultural adjustment and interaction. She also suggests a well-designed intercultural communication course that students take in order to make sense of their intercultural interactions and study abroad experience while at home or abroad. In doing so, the course would link theory with practice and enable students to reflect critically on their international experiences in regards to communication style, acculturation progress, cultural learning strategies, expectations and goals of studying abroad, and preparation for returning home.

Vande Berg et al. (2009) found that students who took courses in English alongside local students showed lower levels of intercultural competence than students who took courses in English with their fellow American peers. Likewise, Norris and Steinberg (2008) found little difference in intercultural measures between students who participated in English speaking programs or foreign language speaking programs, thereby suggesting "the consistent impact of studying abroad, regardless of the program's language of instruction" (Savicki, 2011, p. 63).

These are indeed confusing findings and while there may not be a consensus on the importance of language immersion in study abroad, the literature does help raise core issues about the importance and relevance of total immersion in a host culture and the level of engagement with that culture for intercultural learning to occur.

Woolf (2007) offers insight into why one might develop intercultural skills from being in a group with one's fellow peers rather than being in a context of full immersion with students of the host country. He suggests that the existence and recognition of commonalities enable and allow study abroad students to engage in discussions of comparative cultural differences. Further, he suggests being in a group environment versus being alone enables students to engage in discussions of cultural difference, thus contributing to the development of their intercultural skills. However, Woolf does not draw upon any empirical evidence to support his claim.

Sandford (1966) proposed the challenge and support theory that supports Woolf's (2007) explanation above. Sandford argues that students develop the most in environments that provide a balance of both challenge and support (Vande Berg et al., 2009). In this regard, Vande Berg et al.'s (2009) study in which students enrolled in

courses with their fellow American peers had a support system that contributed to their intercultural learning. As a group within a foreign context, these students shared many commonalities, such as cultural values and behaviours and their actual study abroad experience, while experiencing and facing together a new and challenging environment in a different culture and country.

Researchers and educators have thus begun paying attention to the structure of study abroad programs and recognize the importance of intervention strategies that are reflective of Kolb's experiential learning theory. The following section will briefly draw upon Kolb's theory of experiential learning in order to identify how international educators have incorporated experiential learning into their programs and practices.

Experiential learning and intervention strategies

Experiential learning is a philosophy based on Dewey's theory and understanding that experience has a primary role in how an individual learns and creates meaning (Kolb, Boyatzis and Mainemelis, 2001). Kolb's approach to experiential learning identifies how one transforms experiences into knowledge. He identified a four stage learning cycle that involves concrete experiences, abstract conceptualizations, reflective observations and active experimentation (Kolb, Boyatzis and Mainemelis, 2001). Simplified, a learner will engage with a concrete experience, observe and reflect upon that experience. Experiences are then conceptualized and abstract concepts lead to new implications and testing of actions, thereby contributing to the creation of new experiences (Kolb, Boyatzis and Mainemelis, p. 3, 2001). In this regard, concrete experiences can test ideas and one's reflection and feedback can contribute to a change in practices, theories and future experiences (Smith, 2001, 2010).

Kolb also notes that the learning cycle can begin at any of the four points and that the learning process can be perceived as a continual spiral (Smith, 2010). In this regard, how one chooses to approach and transform experience into knowledge, such as concrete experience or abstract conceptualization, depends on the specific context of one's experience (Kolb, Boyatzis and Mainemelis, 2001). Thus, experiential learning is not achieved by merely providing tools or techniques that students can apply to their experiences or a mere recording of one's experience but rather an active and critical examination of an experience that changes or alters one's future experiences and overall development (Smith, 2010).

In an academic context, many educators and instructors approach experiential learning as a learning experience in which a student has "direct encounter with the phenomena being studied" (Smith, 2010). For example, Blair (2011) in "Study Abroad and the City: Mapping Urban Identity," uses study abroad programs to familiarize students with European urban landscapes and to develop students' visual, interpretative, communicative and sociological skills through mapping the cultural, social, and literal history of homosexuality in Paris. Students participate in excursions through the main streets of Paris and are given activities and assignments that require the students to identify and analyze characteristics of the city that relate to the topic of homosexuality.

However, the mere experience of walking through Paris is not enough to ensure learning and development. Drawing upon The National Society for Experiential Education's (MSEE) Eight Principles of Good Practice for All Experiential Learning Activities, Scott identifies the specific roles of instructors and students within an

experiential learning model. The NSEE principles highlight that both the instructors and the students share responsibility for experiential learning.

Instructors are responsible for designing and facilitating authentic, i.e. settings outside the traditional classroom, learning experiences. They must recognize that in order to attain and develop knowledge, students, in addition to onsite experience, require the following: (I) a pre-established foundation in which they can build meaning out of experiences; (II) know the learning outcomes to which they are working; (III) think deeply about the experience before, during, and after the experience; (IV) receive feedback during the experience to gauge improvement; (V) receive evaluation based on their outcomes in regards to the effort to build knowledge upon the experience; and (VI) conclude that the knowledge gained is both real and useful (Blair, 2011, p. 40)

In this regard, experiential learning occurs outside the traditional academic classroom and involves both the instructor's and students' engagement in turning experience into knowledge through active reflection, observation, feedback and evaluation of one's experiences. Additionally, the object of study is the foreign environment in which the learning occurs. In the case of Blair's (2011) group of students, the subject of study was homosexuality within Paris while the students travel to France to experience and live in Paris for a short period.

This approach to learning is also evident in Wagenknecht's (2011) article "The Experiential Teaching of Berlin – Theoretical Reflections and Best Practices from a Study Abroad Site". Similar to Blair (2011), Wagenknecht explores how to facilitate the experiential teaching of urban cultures in intercultural education. He draws upon Itin's (1999) transactional model of experiential education in which "carefully chosen

experiences supported by reflection, critical analyses, and synthesis, are structured to require the learner to take initiative, make decisions, and be accountable for the results" (Wagenknecht, 2011, p. 139).

His course regards Berlin as a European city with marks from many historical, political, architectural, artistic, and aesthetic periods. The course sought to understand the interdependencies between modes of human thought and activity, and their respective manifestations within the urban landscape of the city. Thus, experiential experiences facilitated by the instructor included students travelling and living in Berlin to enable them to visit particular sites within the city, partake in city walks, and engage in interviews with artists and local protagonists. Students were also required to actively engage with the city and were expected to actively participate in the events and discussions. Additionally, assignments such as the final project involved the students to examine closely one aspect of the city.

Both Blair (2011) and Wagenknecht (2011) note that study abroad programs are effective strategies and programs to facilitate experiential learning because of the foreign environment. According to Wagenknecht (2011), experiences that do not correlate with previous knowledge require students to actively observe, reflect, analyze, and synthesize. In this regard, the foreign environment facilitates a heightened sense of learning and students are provided with the environment, tools, and activities to create meaning that can be applied to an academic context. Thus, the foreign environment is the academic context and subject of study.

A second form of experiential learning within study abroad programs exists within what some educators and instructors identify as intervention strategies. Vande

Berg et al. (2012) define intercultural interventions as "intentional and deliberate pedagogical approaches, activated throughout the study abroad cycle before, during and after that are designed to enhance students' intercultural competence" (p. 29-30). Intercultural interventions vary and can occur at one's home institution, such as the implementation of pre-departure orientations that include an intercultural component, and/or via online or virtual learning (Vande Berg, 2009).

Online or virtual learning initiatives involve cultural mentoring. Thus, while abroad, students are in contact with educators at their home institution. The role of cultural mentoring is to guide students and engage them in discussions concerning their intercultural interactions and encounters (Pederson, 2009; Blasco, 2012; Vande Berg et al, 2012). Another form of cultural mentoring and guidance can also involve curriculum that encourages and requires students to interact with members of their host culture (Cadd, 2012).

While the focus of these interventions is not necessarily to make the connection between the academic and social environments within which students are learning; interventions, as described by Vande Berg et al. (2009), demonstrate that these initiatives can create opportunities for study abroad students to recognize and value experiences gained from both social and academic learning environments, to develop a greater understanding and knowledge of their host cultures, and sharpen their intercultural skills.

Intervening in students' international experience ensures that students are in constant contact and communication with their instructors at their home institutions. They receive encouragement and support throughout their time abroad by educators at their home institution who provide them with a space to discuss their international and

intercultural encounters. As their contact is an educator/instructor, both academic and cultural experiences become integrated into their discussions and reflections. Furthermore, these educators/instructors assess and provide feedback on student's discussions and reflections; this formal evaluation of the experience validates and recognizes the student's cultural experiences both outside as well as within an academic context. In doing so, this form of interaction and assessment provides the message to the student that their home institution recognizes this form of learning, the interaction and value of both their academic and cultural experiences (Vande Berg et al., 2009).

In this manner, the academic dimension and supportive involvement of one's home institution either through faculty led study abroad experiences or cultural mentoring seeks to ensure that one's academic work, or a component of their academic engagement, focuses on the student's intercultural experiences and ensures that the student reflects upon his/her observations and experiences. Thus, experiential learning theory explains how students, with the guidance and assistance from one's instructors, draw meaning from their experiences and how instructors can assist a student's development by transforming one's socio-cultural experiences into intercultural knowledge within an higher education and academic context.

Nevertheless, experiential learning and intervention strategies typically are not implemented within integrated university study programs as these programs are structured to, in a sense, disconnect students from their home institution to allow students to "live the life of a typical host university student by enrolling directly in regular university courses, alongside local students" and be taught by host university professors (Vande Berg, 2009, pg. 4).

As demonstrated above, there appear to be differences among the objectives, values, and outcomes of study abroad programs in regards to how one's international experiences contribute to one's academic and/or intercultural development. Literature on the educational benefits highlight the importance and influence of the foreign academic institution and one's experiences outside the classroom on the intercultural and academic development of the students in regards to subjective culture learning, situational experiences, and exposure to different approaches to learning and teaching and academic performance in regards to the demonstration of one's functional knowledge (Engle and Engle, 2003; Stemler et al., 2014; Teichler. 2004; Sutton and Rubin, 2004).

However, literature concerning intercultural education and competence and study abroad literature that focuses specifically on the intercultural development of students predominantly bases a student's development on one's socio-cultural experiences while disregarding or minimizing the role of the foreign institution. In doing so, the literature cautions against integrated university study abroad programs by demonstrating how language proficiency that would enable students to study alongside host nationals does not necessarily influence one's intercultural development, and how engaging in academic discussions and context with members of one's home culture or institution while abroad may have a more impactful influence on one's development of intercultural skills and competencies.

In this regard, there appear to be differences in the study abroad literature in regards to understandings of the role and influence of studying within a foreign academic institution and engaging in international socio-cultural experiences abroad. Additionally, the literature appears to address the academic and socio-cultural interactions as separate

experiences, thereby demonstrating a lack of research on understanding the relationship between the two different contexts in regards to the overall international student experience.

Additionally, what remains unaddressed is the students' perspective in understanding how learning occurs within the academic and socio-cultural experiences while abroad. How and why do students value or differentiate between their academic and socio-cultural experiences? How do they recognize or perceive the learning that occurs within and outside of the classroom? Do they recognize an interrelation or integration of their academic and socio-cultural contexts while abroad? Why or why not?

The purpose of this study is to explore students' academic, social, and cultural experiences within an integrated university study abroad program and understand if and how students recognize an interrelation between the learning experiences that occur within these (academic, social, and cultural) contexts. As the study abroad literature (as discussed in chapter II) is limited in drawing a connection between in and out of classroom experiences and/or academic, social and cultural contexts to student learning, I will draw on explanatory models and theories from the literature on student learning and retention in higher education.

Analytical Framework: Student learning and retention in higher education

Literature within the field of student learning and retention in higher education discusses student learning within the academic, social, and cultural contexts, factors that influence one's learning, and the presumed relationship between one's academic and social, and cultural experiences. While retention in post-secondary literature refers to on-time graduation, program completion, or continued enrollment in classes throughout one

semester (Wild & Ebbers, 2002; Box et al., 2012; Alarcon & Edwards, 2013; Letkiewicz et al., 2014), studies also examine the socio-cultural perspective concerning retention in terms of the existence of social and cultural bias within educational institutions that favour students within dominant social groups, thereby resulting in the exclusion and poor retention of non-traditional students with low socio-economic status (Devlin, 2013), such as older students, ethnic minorities, and working class women (Kahu, 2013). Researchers have examined the various experiences described by students as culture shock (Christie et al., 2008) and learning shock (Griffiths, Winstanley, and Gabriel, 2005) that illustrate how cultural differences can pose as a barrier for many students (Kahu, 2013).

Drawing on the works of Astin (1999), Tinto (1997), Rendon (1994), Karp et al. (2010), and Deil-Amen (2011), and taking into the socio-cultural perspective, as exchange students studying within a foreign institution and culture may not identify with dominant social or cultural groups, this study draws on their theories to examine the role and influence of the academic classroom, social peers and networks, and the cultural experiences in regards to sense of belonging and validation to understand the different factors that influence and contribute to the overall student experience within higher education.

Astin's (1999) student involvement theory is particularly relevant for this study as it addresses the different learning environments within higher education institutions. Student involvement concerns "the quantity and the quality of physical and psychological energy that students invest in the college experience" (p. 528). Such involvement includes various forms and activities including a student's academic work, participation

in extracurricular activities, and interactions with faculty and staff. Astin (1999) found that the greater a student's involvement in college, i.e. in both the academic and non-academic context, the greater his or her learning and personal development.

Astin (1999) demonstrates that activities that occur within and outside of the classroom are significant in regards to a student's overall development and interrelate in regards to a student's motivation and behaviour towards one's learning and development. Student involvement theory addresses students' motivation and behaviour and views students' time and energy as institutional resources that can be used as a basis to measure academic and non-academic activities in regards to their effectiveness of increasing or decreasing student involvement.

Tinto (1997) explored the importance of the classroom in student persistence in three distinct ways. First, using the concepts of learning communities and collaborative pedagogy within the classroom, he found that students who participated in collaborative or shared learning groups developed a network of support of classroom-based peers. This community supported students and encouraged their attendance and class participation and groups formed within the classroom often extended beyond the classroom. Thus, through collaborative learning settings, students were able to bridge and blend the academic-social contexts of college. In this regard, "classrooms served as the academic and social crossroads out of which 'seamless' education activities are constructed" (Tinto, 1997, p. 613). Second, he discussed the importance of a shared curriculum as well as collaborative pedagogy in bringing together students and faculty. This collaboration between students and faculty, Tinto stated, added richness to the student experience and enabled them to connect their personal experiences to class content and recognize the

diversity and variance of views within the classroom. Third, Tinto found that the students' perception of intellectual gain and their GPAs were greater in the learning community rather than the traditional learning settings. Tinto's work highlighted the importance of the classroom as a space in which a sense of community and mutual learning takes shape and positively contributes to a student's sense of academic development and eventually to a student's persistence.

While Astin and Tinto's work is considered seminal it is also criticized as their studies focused mainly on the experience of traditional students. Traditional students typically are undergraduate students who enroll in college immediately after high school, then pursue one's studies on a full-time basis at a four-year sector institution (Deil-Amen, 2011b). By examining the experiences of traditional students, critiques challenge Tinto's model and suggest the inadequacy when taking into account cultural experiences of minority students or non-traditional students in a college community (Deil-Amen, 2011, Karp et al., 2010; Guiffrida, 2006; Rendon, 1994). Non-traditional students typically are over the age of 24, are enrolled part-time while working full-time, and are of the minority based on one's gender or race (National Center for Education Statistics). Work by Rendon (1994), Karp et al. (2010), and Deil-Amen (2011) for example has examined the experiences of marginalized students to understand how one's cultural experiences interrelate with one's academic and social experiences.

Rendon (1994), Karp et al. (2010), and Deil-Amen (2011) express the importance of support to student learning, albeit with different terminology. Rendon (1994), in the Transition to College Project, sought to understand how students become active members of their academic community and how their out-of-classroom experiences, such as their

interpersonal interactions, may have strengthened, reinforced or inhibited their classroom learning. Her study sought to understand the different student learning experiences of culturally diverse students, both academic and non-academic experiences within the college, in order to identify the environments and experiences that contribute to successful student learners; students interested and dedicated to their learning and who believed they would succeed at their studies.

In her study, Rendon (1994) found that students' narratives distinguished between involvement and validation. Involvement, as suggested earlier by Astin (1999), was identified by how much time, energy and effort they dedicated to their learning. Research concerning this concept of involvement suggests that the more time and effort a student dedicates to their learning, the more they engage with their own education, and the greater their achievement, persistence, and satisfaction with their education. Likewise, uninvolved students often neglected their studies, have little contact with their peers and faculty and abstained from extracurricular activities (Rendon, 1994).

While involvement was important, Rendon (1994) established that validation, more than involvement, contributed to a student's personal and social adjustment and their interpersonal and academic development. Validation occurred with incidents, both in and out of class, in which an external agent, whether it was one's family member, friend, or member of the university, took the initiative to recognize, encourage and/or support the students either academically or interpersonally. This validation affirmed the student's capability of academic work, supported their academic endeavours and their social adjustment.

Furthermore, Rendon (1994) noted how validation offers many benefits to students. Firstly, validation is an enabling and supporting process that occurs both in and out of the classroom and thus contributes to the academic and interpersonal development of students. Secondly, when validation is present, students feel capable of learning and experience a sense of self-worth. Additionally, students feel that what they bring and contribute to the college experience is accepted, recognized, and valuable. Thus, validation is a prerequisite to student development and validation is itself a developmental process and not an end itself, thereby suggesting that the more validation, the richer the academic and interpersonal experiences.

Thus, validation is a supportive factor that integrates and connects one's socio-cultural and academic experiences. Supportive individuals both outside and within the institution, such as one's peers and professors within the classroom, who contribute to a student's sense of belonging and self-worth, in turn affect and positively influence one's academic development in regards to one's contributions to classroom discussions and engagement with the academic content.

Karp et al. (2010) sought to examine how student persistence within two-year commuter institutions in which it is assumed that community college students lack the time to participate in social activities on campus, such as clubs, that facilitate social integration. Similar to Rendon (1994), Karp et al. (2010) defined integration as having a sense of belonging on campus and found that not only did both academic and social integration exist for community college students but that the academic and social activities interrelate.

Specifically, Karp et al. (2010) identified the importance of information networks in regards to the students' academic and social integration. Information networks refer to "social ties that facilitate the transfer of institutional knowledge and procedures" (Karp et al., 2010, p.8). The researchers clarify institutional knowledge and procedures by drawing a comparison between two social interactions. They note that "knowing people to say hello to in the hallways did not strongly influence students' sense of belonging; knowing people through whom one could learn about professors, course options, or support services did" (Karp et al., 2010, p. 8).

Information networks reflect an "information-seeking process and/or information chains" that included college-based social relationships with other faculty or classmates in which they could learn about resources available outside the classroom (Karp et al., 2010, p. 8). These information networks and social connections not only made the campus more enjoyable and provided students with a reason beyond academics to come to campus but also increased their sense of confidence and sense of belonging. In this regard, information networks provided three benefits: campus connections, social contact, and personal resources that encouraged students to feel connected to the college and engage in activities and resources outside the classroom.

When examining whether or not information networks come from academic or social locations, Karp et al. (2010) found that they generally develop through academic sources and from within the classroom. Thus, Karp et al. (2010) demonstrate another interrelation between one's academic and socio-cultural experiences through information networks. Information networks demonstrate how academic sources and relations within the classroom serve as another support system. These academic relations increase one's

sense of confidence and belonging that in turn influences one's social experiences outside the classroom. In this regard, the classroom is a space of academic and cultural interaction that contributes to one's desire to engage in social activities and interactions outside the classroom.

Additionally, Karp et al. (2010) found that many students developed social relationships with fellow peers. These social relationships "began as academic relationships and were rooted in academic processes" but extended beyond the classroom (Karp et al., 2010, p. 16). For example, Karp et al. (2010) highlight how students found study groups to be academically beneficial but that they were also used as a social outlet. Thus, group work, a form of pedagogy designed to enhance the academic learning of students (Mortimore, 1999), is not only a combination of academic and social interactions that evolve around course content, but also social relations that extend beyond the classroom. In this regard, academic pedagogy and processes lead to the development of social relationships.

Combining Rendon's (1994) subjective sense of belonging and Karp et al.'s (2010) interrelation of one's academic and social relationships, Deil-Amen (2011) introduces the concept of 'socio-academic integrative moments'. 'Socio-academic integrative moments' refer to instances in which the social and academic integrate to provide support and feelings of belonging, a sense of identity and academic and social competence. Such integration occurs when feelings of social inclusion and comfort are present within the academic setting and are produced through positive student-student interactions or student-professor support and approachability within the classroom.

As noted by Mertes (2013) in "Exploring the Construct of Social Integration in a Community College Environment," Deil-Amen (2011) seems to point to a different construct of social integration. Unlike Tinto's (1994) framework on four-year residential institutions, Deil-Amen's study on two-year community colleges moves away from social activities, such as clubs on campus, and more on peer groups that develop from and around academically-related activities. It is these academic activities and interactions between students and students and their instructors within the classroom that contribute to a student's persistence, confidence and sense of inclusion on campus.

Thus, Deil-Amen's (2011) 'socio-academic integrative moments' suggest another relationship between one's academic, social, and cultural experiences. Differing from Rendon (1994) and Karp et al.'s (2010) relations, Deil-Amen (2011) suggests that one's social and academic interactions influence and contribute to one's cultural experiences. In this regard, positive student-student and student-peer social and academic interrelations lead to cultural experiences of inclusion and belonging.

Furthermore, Deil-Amen (2011) also notes that in addition to having social benefits, these 'socio-academic integrative moments' can also contribute to social capital and provide informational benefits, which correlates to Karp et al.'s (2010) work on information networks. She argues that socio-academic ties and relations can be "crucial points of information-exchange that can strengthen academic knowledge and lend encouragement and needed information about cognitive, behavioural, and procedural strategies for success in class, college, and career" (p. 73). Thus, a student's academic environment and his/her sense of belonging and inclusion can lead to 'socio-academic integrative moments' that enable students to recognize and integrate their learning not

only with the academic and social contexts of the academic institution, but also extend beyond the institution in regards to one's professional career.

The literature concerning student learning and retention within higher education therefore recognizes and suggests the various instances and degrees to which student's academic, social, and cultural experiences matter and interrelate. Astin (1999) demonstrates how one's academic experiences within the classroom as well as one's social engagement in activities outside the classroom contribute to one's overall learning and personal development. Tinto (1997) highlights how pedagogical approaches within the classroom can lead to social interactions and a sense of community that shapes one's academic development and contributes to a student's persistence.

Rendon (1994) suggests that one's socio-cultural experiences within the classroom, specifically in regards to validation and one's relationship with faculty and peers, can contribute to one's academic and learning experiences while Karp et al. (2010) also speak to faculty and peer relations but in regards to how a student's sense of belonging within the classroom extends beyond and leads to social interactions and engagements outside the classroom. Likewise, Deil-Amen (2011) suggests that one's social and academic interactions with faculty and peers influence and contribute to one's cultural experiences of belonging and inclusion, as well as influence one's professional development outside the institution. Overall the literature highlights the importance of the classroom and provides insights into the academic environment and how it can serve as a core space for student's experiences and learning, be they academic, social and/or cultural in nature. It is for this reason that I have selected this literature on the student experience to serve as my analytical framework for my research study.

Chapter III: Methodology

Research Questions

I am interested in exploring if and how students recognize and interrelate their academic, social and cultural learning experiences during study abroad. Specifically, my thesis asks the following research questions:

1. In what ways do students describe their learning from study abroad?

    i) In what contexts do they speak of their learning experiences?

    ii) Do they identify and differentiate between their learning in the academic, social, and cultural contexts?

    iii) Do they refer to individuals/programs/environments that promote/support their learning?

2. In what ways do students connect their study abroad experiences to their return home?

    i) In what ways do they see the application of their study abroad experiences to their personal, academic and/or professional development?

    ii) Do they differentiate between the value of their academic, social and/or cultural experiences to their personal, academic and/or professional development?

Research methodology

As this thesis seeks to understand how study abroad participants identify and describe their academic, social, and cultural experiences, a basic interpretative qualitative approach is most suitable (Merriam, 2002). Qualitative researchers are interested in understanding the meaning people have constructed, that is, how people make sense of

their world and the experiences they have in the world (Merriam, 2002, p. 13). By conducting an interpretive qualitative approach, the researcher is seeking "to discover and understand a phenomenon, a process, and/or the perspectives and worldviews of the people involved" (Merriam, 2002, p. 5). In this regard, to understand and identify the 'essence' of human experiences – in this case, the learning experiences of students – as described by the participants in the study (Creswell, 2012). For example, what learning experiences or situations contribute to a student's academic, personal, intercultural, and/or professional development while studying abroad?

The goal of this approach is to rely as much as possible on the participant's view of the situation by examining specific contexts in which participants' experiences occur. As meaning is typically created by interactions with other people, the "researcher often addresses the processes of interaction among individuals" (Creswell, 2007, p. 24). For example, how did interactions between the study abroad participants and other individuals, such as peers, professors, and/or family members, lead to learning experiences? How may one's support or lack of support from one's peers or professors influence the student's motivation and desire to engage with their academic studies or their social and cultural integration? How may have one interaction and relationship influence subsequent learning experiences both within the academic and socio-cultural contexts?

In terms of practice, the interview questions remain general so participants can construct their own meaning from the situation while remaining consistent so each student could reflect and address the same questions. The product of the qualitative inquiry and approach is "richly descriptive" and the findings are presented using rich

descriptions (Merriam, 2002, p. 5). This detailed description and presentation of the student experiences allows the researcher to develop a deeper understanding of the study abroad experience by drawing connections and understanding how the students identify their academic, social, and cultural learning experiences and drawing upon these interactions to understand how the different contexts interrelate and support a student's academic development and social engagement - for example, understanding that a student's initial differentiation between their academic and socio-cultural experiences is attributed to a certain kind of activity like travel. While travel may have inhibited some of the students' academic engagement and development, other social and cultural interactions, such as one's relations with one's peers and professors, contributed to their sense of validation and academic motivation. In doing so, the rich descriptions enable the researcher to understand the different influences of activities and relationships that either support or inhibit the interrelation between the academic, social, and cultural contexts of studying abroad.

Researchers also recognize their own background and how their own experiences and knowledge shape their interpretations and the intent is to interpret and make sense of others' meanings about the world (Creswell, 2007). For example, as a past study abroad participant, having studied at the same institutions as some of the students, and as an administrator within the OBW program, I had to distance myself so as not to confuse or combine my own international experiences and understanding of the program as an insider researcher with the students' experiences and understandings. Insider research is defined as a "study of one's own social group or society" and an insider researcher is

identified as "an individual who possess *a priori* intimate knowledge of the community and its members" (Greene, 2014, p. 2).

While there are many pros to being an insider researcher, such as having a more natural interaction with participants and a quicker establishment of rapport and trust as the students were excited and willing to speak with me as both a former study abroad participant and administrator within the program, there were also some challenges of which I needed to be aware. For example, too much familiarity with the study abroad experience and OBW program could have led to a loss of objectivity and a risk of making assumptions based on my prior knowledge and experience. To keep myself distanced, I actively was conscious of my own experiences when speaking with students and refrained from leading students or asking of similar experiences. Also, by relying on the students' rich descriptions of their experiences, I was able to ensure that the analysis of their experiences was solely based and justified on the comments addressed by the students.

Additionally, the students, knowing my previous and current position, recognized my familiarity with their experiences and I had to be wary of being too subjective. For example, many of the students when having difficulty formulating their thoughts would try to express them by saying things like, "you know what I mean?" In order to avoid deferring responses from the participants and not to be too subjective, I would ask students to give an example of what they mean to gain additional clarification and to ensure that I was not making assumptions about the participant's meaning by basing it on my own experiences or knowledge, thereby limiting potential researcher bias.

Interpretation of the data was achieved through inductive and deductive logic and the examination of patterns, relationships, and meanings that develop from the data (Creswell, 2012). Thus, the findings are a mix of inductive re-occurring patterns that are derived from the data as well as deductive reasoning in which patterns that correlate to and support existing theories and research within the literature of student learning and retention shaped and contributed to the understanding of the interrelation between the academic, social and cultural experiences of study abroad participants on the OBW exchange program. These re-occurring patterns and experiences were the objective of the study and as stated by Patton: "This understanding is an end in itself, so that it is not attempting to predict what may happen in the future necessarily" (Merriam, 2002, p. 5).

Participants

This study examined the experiences of undergraduate students who have returned from participating on the Ontario-Baden-Württemberg (OBW) program. The OBW program was chosen due to my familiarity with participating institutions and my role as an administrator within the program. My familiarity and insider researcher position (Greene, 2014) provided me with what Greene (2014) refers to as "expediency of access" (p. 4). Due to my relationships with past participants and the program director, I was able to access the field and study participants easily and as an insider researcher was accepted and supported by both the program director and the student participants in their willingness and excitement to partake in the study.

Additionally, the OBW program was chosen as it reflects and implements an integrated university study program in that the students enroll and partake in courses alongside host nationals rather than specific courses or programs designed for

international students. In terms of language proficiency, students are required to have a minimal knowledge to high degree of knowledge of their host target language, depending on their discipline of study and courses available in their target or home language, prior to the commencement of their academic studies.

The students, from across various institutions, also travel alone and not as a group to their different host institutions. However, the coordinating offices in both Ontario and Baden-Württemberg provide students prior to their departure and upon their arrival orientations in order to assist the students in their academic and cultural integration. In doing so, the study of the OBW program is able to take into account intervention strategies that occur prior and during the study abroad experiences that are designed to enhance students' intercultural competence, enable students to recognize and value experiences gained from both social and academic learning environments, and develop a greater understanding of their host cultures (Vande Berg et al., 2009).

The OBW is a consortium of 12 universities in Ontario, Canada, and nine research universities in Baden-Württemberg, Germany, that provides an opportunity for undergraduate and graduate students of all academic disciplines to study within these two partner regions. The program was established in 1990 and since its establishment over 2000 students have participated across the Province of Ontario and the state of Baden-Württemberg (Ontario Universities International).

By studying a consortium of universities within two specific regions, this research seeks to control for various cultural factors and support systems available to students. As the participating institutions are situated within the same region of their country, Ontario and Baden-Württemberg, one can assume that the cultural interactions and experiences

for the participating students studying in Ontario and those studying in Baden-Württemberg may be similar. Additionally, by examining participants within the OBW program, student's support systems beyond their home institution are also taken into account by adding the additional component of the OBW program office.

Nevertheless, the consortium includes higher education institutions that vary in size as well as the location and size of the city in which they are located. Thus, while seeking to limit variables, the consortium also allows for a variety of experiences in order to understand various factors and situations that may influence a student's overall international experience.

Twelve undergraduate students (six German and six Canadian) who studied abroad for at least one semester were chosen to reflect the typical "integrated university study" and to ensure that students were exposed to learning within the classroom. All students within the study participated during the 2013-2014 academic year and were interviewed approximately one year after their study abroad experience to ensure that students have returned for a short period and were able to recount and reflect on their international experiences (see Table 1). Pseudonyms have been used to maintain anonymity.

Finally, it is interesting to include both the experiences of Canadian and German students participating on the same program. In doing so, the study was able to highlight certain values that are prevalent in the Canadian experiences when compared to the German experiences - for example, the importance and frequency of travel as well as the importance of institutional language support for Canadians studying in Germany

compared to the German students who did not perceive language to be a barrier that

inhibited their social and cultural integration.

Table 1: OBW Participants

	Name	Gender	Home University	Host University	Term	Field of Study
1	Christine	Female	Universität Hohenheim	University of Ottawa	Full Year	Communications
2	Liz	Female	Universität Freiburg	University of Toronto	Full Year	Psychology
3	Patrick	Male	Universität Mannheim	University of Guelph	Full Year	Psychology
4	Steph	Female	Universität Stuttgart	University of Waterloo	Fall	English and History
5	Jenny	Female	Universität Heidelberg	Laurentian University	Full Year	Psychology
6	Tom	Male	Universität Konstanz	Carleton University	Full Year	Linguistics
7	Ben	Male	University of Guelph	Universität Stuttgart	Full Year	English
8	Anna	Female	University of Guelph	Universität Freiburg	Full Year	Zoology
9	Daniel	Male	University of Western Ontario	Karlsruher Institut für Technologie	Summer	Physics and Engineering
10	Haley	Female	Trent University	Universität Konstanz	Full Year	Psychology and Sociology
11	Adam	Male	York University	Universität Tübingen	Full Year	Psychology and Sexuality Studies
12	Maddie	Female	Trent University	Universität Konstanz	Full Year	Biology

Data collection and analysis

Students were contacted by two means. The first was a direct approach in which an e-mail explaining my research and the interview process to OBW participants whom I had met while studying abroad in Konstanz, Germany (see Appendix A: Researcher's E-mail). The second means of contact was through the OBW Academic Director.

The Academic Director sent e-mails to both Canadian and German 2013-2014 participants from various institutions explaining the research and interview process. The students were asked to let the Academic Director know if they were interested in participating. Upon being informed of their willingness to participate, I then contacted the student and arranged a time and date for the interview. All students received the interview questions beforehand (see Appendix B: Interview Questions) and a consent form (see Appendix C: Consent Form) in order to provide them with an opportunity to reflect upon their experiences.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted to provide students the opportunity to highlight and recount experiences that they deem important, what experiences were meaningful to them, and the value of these experiences in regards to the overall study abroad experience. Each interview lasted approximately an hour. Due to geographical limitations, only one interview was conducted in person. The remaining eleven interviews were conducted over Skype. Each interview was audio taped and afterwards transcribed verbatim.

Thematic analysis was used to as method to analyze the data across the twelve interviews and identify recurring patterns and themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). A theme captures important examples or experiences and represents some level of patterned

response or meaning from the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The 'keyness' of a theme determines whether it relates and contributes to the overall research question and project (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

In terms of measuring prevalence and the relevance of data items, this study identified sematic or explicit level of themes that appeared anywhere in each individual interview (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Semantic or explicit level themes refer to the explicit or surface meaning of the data in which the researcher does not look for anything beyond what a participant has related (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Thus, a realist/essentialist paradigm was implemented in that the researcher "theorizes motivations, experiences, and meaning in a straight forward manner based on the unidirectional relationship that is assumed between meaning and experience and language" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 14). As a result, the analytic process involved a "progression from description, where the data have simply been organized to show patterns in sematic content, and summarized, to interpretation, where there is an attempt to theorize the significance of the patterns and their broader meaning and implications, often in relation to previous literature" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 13).

Coding of the data occurred after all interviews had been completed and transcribed. After identifying initial codes within individual interviews based upon the interview questions, there was a revision of codes to highlight and understand shared and individual experiences across the data set. During this stage, inductive codes based on similarities and differences contributed to the development of themes pertaining to the locations and environments in which students identified as academic, social, and cultural experiences.

Within these thematic contexts, codes were re-visited and re-evaluated to identify factors and instances that supported or inhibited the interrelation between the different contexts while abroad and upon the students' return to their home institution and country. Additionally, single experiences and factors were considered as important as those repeated or shared by students in order to understand the various factors that influence or inhibit interrelation between the different contexts.

While themes are strongly linked to the data themselves, the researcher must acknowledge his/her analytical preconceptions and his/her active role in identifying patterns/themes, selecting patterns/themes of interest, and reporting them to the reader (Braun & Clarke, 2006). In this regard, a theoretical thematic analysis was implemented in regards to the identification of themes being driven by the researcher's analytical framework. For example, when coding the data, I looked for instances and experiences that correlated and supported theories within the literature of student learning within higher education. For example, Astin's student involvement theory, supportive individuals and programs that contributed to an individual's sense of belonging (Deil-Amen, 2011) and validation (Rendon, 1994), as well as the influence of peer relations (Tinto, 1997; Karp et al., 2010) and information networks (Karp et al., 2010).

Challenges

While collecting the data, I did experience some challenges. There was a lack of pilot testing of the interview questions, which would have been a useful way to obtain feedback about the clarity of some questions. As a result, some of the students did not understand or were unsure of how to respond to the following research question: Would

you describe these experiences as complementary, distinct or inhibitory in regards to your overall intercultural learning and international experiences? Why?

Some of the students, both Germans and Canadians, were aware and had heard of the term 'intercultural learning' but lacked the understanding of what specifically intercultural learning entails. As a result, they were hesitant in responding and unsure of how to relate experiences that may reflect or address the question. Some of the participants expressed a desire to be led and to ensure that they provided the 'right' answer. Thus, it was important as the researcher to allow the participants time to reflect and gather their understanding of intercultural learning rather than lead and impose the literature's definition of intercultural learning upon the students.

Additionally, by conducting the interview in English, language may have been a barrier for some of the German students. For example, students would refer back to their notes for the interview questions and when struggling to find words that communicated their thoughts, they would refer to terms that were used in the interview questions, such as 'complementary' to describe the interrelation. Furthermore, having provided students with the interview questions prior to their interview, many students made notes and would refer to them during the interview. In doing so, at times, the student would stop mid-sentence to refer back to his/her comments, thereby distorting the flow of their experiences as well as leaving incomplete thoughts.

Limitations of Study

This study initially proposed to conduct interviews with a key administrator and faculty members from the German and Canadian institutions as well as conduct a content analysis of study abroad documents. The purpose of these two additional data sets was to

provide a holistic account of the study abroad program and to understand the context of the experience by taking into account multiple perspectives and factors involved within the study abroad programs. The interviews with faculty and administrators would have also sought to fill gaps or clarify issues or experiences that arose from the student narratives and experiences. Additionally, these interviews would have provided insight and understanding of the type of experience students are expected to have while abroad and the experiences that are validated and valued from the administrative and academic environment within a student's home institution. Due to time restrictions, I was not able to incorporate the administrators, faculty, and study abroad documents and as a result, the study is limited in scope in relying solely on interviews with students.

A second limitation involves the relationship between the researcher and the OBW program as stated above concerning insider research. Having worked as an administrator within the organization under study and studied at two of the participating institutions, my familiarity with the institutions and various programs available to study abroad students would lead to unintentional bias and pre-conceptions. To limit my familiarity and bias, students across various institutions, in addition to my own, were approached and interviewed in order to account and limit my understanding of the different institutional cultures and practices that students engaged with while abroad.

A third limitation also involves the time at which students were interviewed. The majority of students were interviewed approximately one year after their study abroad experience. While one year does provide students with time to reflect and understand the effects of their international experiences, there were differences in the students' academic and professional statuses. For example, the majority of students had returned to their

home institution and were currently studying, thereby providing them with experiences on which they could draw in regards to academic influences and development. A couple of students, however, did not return to their studies, having completed their degree requirements abroad. As a result, some students could not refer to instances in which they could recognize any interrelation and influence of their international experiences on their academics when they returned.

Additionally, taking into account that many of the participants were still studying during the study, only a couple of students could refer to specific instances in which they believed their international experiences had influenced their professional development. In this regard, interviewing students two or three years after their international experience could provide a more holistic understanding of one's professional development outside the institution.

Fourthly, the study of participants within two specific regions of Ontario and Baden-Württemberg was an in-depth study and, as a result, is not representative of the larger student study abroad population and does not take into account other cultural factors that students studying in China or India, for example, may encounter. Additionally, the students' socioeconomic factors, gender, program of study, etc. were not determining factors and were not taken into account in regards to the selection of participants. In doing so, understanding demographic variables that could influence one's engagement in certain activities, such as one's socio-economic positions influencing one's travels while abroad, an experience that contributed to certain students separating their academic and socio-cultural contexts, is not addressed.

Additionally, while using Skype as a data collection had its advantages, such as being inexpensive, allowing for geographical flexibility, and is accessible, reliance on Skype also has limitations. For example, due to the researcher's or the participant's internet connection, a couple of interviews dropped mid-sentence, which required reconnecting and the repetition of a question or experience. As a result, the flow of the interview and the student's experiences was inhibited. In doing so, a couple of times a student lost his or her train of thought, which lead to the omission of certain experiences that initially were deemed as important or relevant.

Finally, the lack of debriefing after the interview prevented the opportunity to clarify any experiences or statements. For example, being able to provide students with the main points of their interview and requesting participants' feedback on how their experiences were understood could have provided further clarity and understanding of their student learning experiences and the factors that influenced their overall academic, personal, intercultural, and professional development.

Chapter IV: Key Findings

Findings 1: Understanding the interrelation between the academic, social and cultural contexts of study abroad experiences

Research Question 1:

In what ways do students describe their learning from study abroad?

      i.   In what contexts do they speak of their learning experiences?

     ii. Do they identify and differentiate between their learning in the academic, social, and cultural contexts?

   iii. Do they refer to individuals/programs/environments that promote/support their learning?

When asked to describe their learning and study abroad experiences, students differentiate between the academic, social, and cultural context of studying abroad (see Diagram 1). Students describe the academic context as primarily involving class experiences and refer to pedagogy and interactions with professors and peers. Students identified the social context as predominantly social interactions with other students, domestic and international, both on and off campus. Interestingly, they made a distinction between their social and cultural experiences and referred to the cultural context as interactions and engagements with the host culture, specifically non-student professionals and other members within the local community outside the academic institution.

Table 2: Differentiation between the academic, social, and cultural context

Academic Context	Social Context	Cultural Context

Classroom

- Exposure to different approaches to learning within one's discipline
- Exposure to new disciplines
- Interactions with faculty and peers

On Campus

Academic conferences and workshops for students

On Campus

- On campus residence and residential/on campus events with fellow students (potlucks, barbeques, sports events)
- Student outreach programs
- Departmental events

Off Campus

- Off campus residence and residential events (potlucks, movie nights)
- Student outreach programs and fundraisers
- Travel

On Campus

- Interaction with non students through work on campus

Off Campus

- Cultural holidays and traditions
- Local community activities and events
- Travel

Students were also asked how they described the interrelation between their academic and socio-cultural experiences and whether they were separate or complementary. While four students believed their experiences were separate, four identified them as complementary while the remaining four made no distinction between their academic and socio-cultural experiences (see Graph 1).

Table 3: Interrelation between academic, social, and cultural experiences
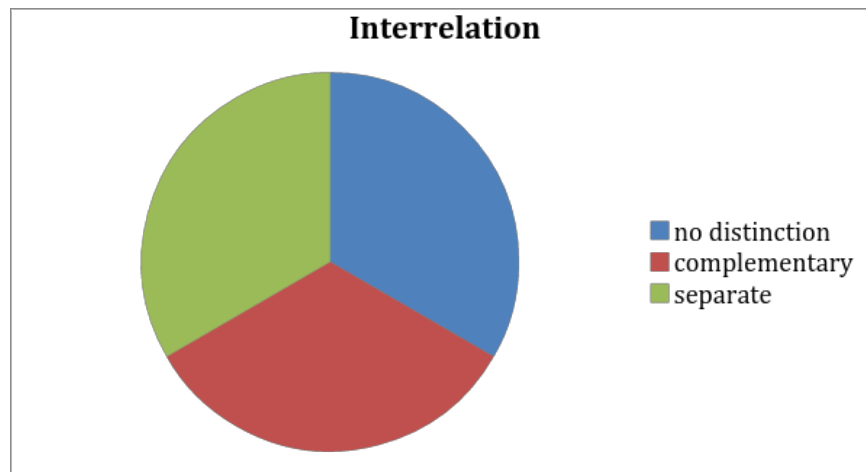
1. Separation: academics versus social and cultural relations

Four participants (three Canadians and one German) categorized their academic component of studying abroad as separate from their social and cultural experiences. Daniel believed that students could not be successful in both one's academics and social or cultural experiences. He described the relationship between the different contexts as "jarring" and attributed this to the full course load requirement and course load of the physics department:

> You can't have it both ways so you have to decide. Something is going to suffer whether it's your mark or whether it's your sightseeing. You have to make a decision on why you're there and what you want to do with your time. Unless you decrease the course load...I see that the way it is they have to be quite separate... you just have to make that choice: am I finishing that assignment or am I having a good night out.

Ben attributed the separation due to the limited amount of class time and interactions. He explained that with the one essay and one exam per course, there was not

much to discuss with his friends in regards to course work and felt his academic time and social time as very partitioned. As a result, he noted how his course load abroad affected his ability to frequently travel. He said:

> I was actually kind of happy that the coursework was so light because it gave me a lot of time to just go out and do things that I wouldn't have if I had the same sort of work that I had in Canada it wouldn't have been feasible. I was able to go almost every weekend to do you know something even if wasn't like a day trip to a different city it was still always something that you could always find to do.

> Haley commented on how she was only on campus for her courses and that she perhaps did not invest too much time on her academics in comparison to her travels. She said, "I didn't hang out [and campus] and I didn't spend a lot of time there just for courses. My social life was definitely different than my academic life in that I would usually just go to class and then afterwards if I were to hang out with someone I would go downtown or go somewhere else."

> Similar to Haley, Patrick also only went to his classes to do the course rather than socialize. Simply put, "I went there and did my studies and went home and there was my source of like social life." However, Patrick also attributed this to his group work experiences that occurred outside the classroom. He explained:

> To be honest, [group work] was rather like negative like it was kind of stressful like the work attitude was kind of difficult. In the first year, the first year group seminar, they were more like whatever so that was annoying and not on time... so that was annoying and I was not too keen to meet with this group outside of my course.

Thus, when asked specifically how they view the relationship between one's academic and social or cultural experiences, the three Canadians noted a distinction predominantly between one's academics, in regards to the coursework and grades, and their social/cultural experiences, particularly their travel experiences. Patrick, the German student, separated his experiences due to the lack of socializing with classmates outside of class.

2. Lack of distinction: university town and cultural interactions both on and off campus

Adam noted that he did not distinguish between the academic, social, and cultural experiences due to living and studying within a university town. He said, "Tübingen was such a university town where it's small but the majority of people there are students and so like students run everything. Kind of like the rest of the town exists to be there for student needs" and mentioned how there were fewer students working and studying at the same time compared to his experiences at home. He also mentioned how this sense of a student community influenced his own approaches to his academics, saying, "I kind of got into the flow of okay, everyone else is gone to study right now even though the exam is in four months. I'm going to do that as well."

In a similar manner, Maddie also noted how her main goal was to meet German students and how the university served as a social space in which she would develop friendships. She explained, "I guess making friends with [German students] at school was more of my goal so I think for me, there was like school was kind of a social area for me."

Finally, both Christine and Tom commented on how they also do not distinguish between the academic, social, and cultural because one is engaged with cultural interactions both on and off campus. In this regard, every interaction served as a means to develop their cultural understanding of Canada and Canadians.

3. Complementary: interconnection between one's academic, social, and cultural interactions

Anna categorized the different contexts as complementary because she felt that the academic context provided the foundation for social and cultural interactions to develop. She said, "I think complementary in a way yes because it's giving you the foundations of those relationships that you're able to build sort of outside the classroom" and explained how her academic language courses "did a good job at opening the opportunities there, the different learning experiences through the culture and the social aspect." In this regard, Anna's academic context led to social and cultural interactions and opportunities outside of the classroom.

Similarly, Jenny and Steph noted how their activities and engagements within the academic, social, and cultural contexts whether through one's assignments, intramural sports and working on campus, or living with Canadians off campus all contributed to her cultural understanding and knowledge of Canadians.

Finally, Liz also categorized the contexts as complementary because she engaged in discussions about her course work in social settings with her roommates and engaged in social and cultural activities on campus such as an animal and cosmetic workshop, at which she developed a very good friend. In this regard, the academic classroom provided her with the academic knowledge and background to engage in social interactions and

discussions outside the classroom and the institution provided various academic and social workshops, thereby combining academic and social interactions and activities.

While the students described the relationship between the academic, social and cultural as separate, complementary or as not distinctive, common themes could be identified that differentiated how they associated their learning in each of the three arenas: academic, social and cultural.

Academic Context

Exposure to different approaches to learning within one's discipline

Students across the three groups, those who distinguished between the different contexts, recognized the contexts as complementary or did not differentiate between the contexts, referred to experiences that occurred within the classroom such as their exposure to different approaches to learning, teaching styles, and engagement with new subject matter within one's academic discipline that influenced their cultural understanding of their host institution and intercultural development. For example, Adam, who majors in psychology, was exposed to a different perspective, the European approach to psychology. He explained how Europe uses a different diagnostic manual than North America and how he "learned to view and understand psychological things, concepts, and diagnoses from a different perspective." His class discussions noted the differences in approach between Europe and North America, which lead him to reflect on those differences as well as how one can "negotiate" between the two perspectives and approaches within the field of psychology.

As mentioned above, Daniel experienced a difference in regards to the role of tutorials at his host institution. Rather than relying on the tutorial as a space to bring

questions and be taught how to work through the material, he had to adjust his own approaches to learning and "rely more on self-learning, much more."

Jenny also noted differences in regards to evaluation and the new experience of being marked on one's participation in class. She explained how she felt that due to this degree of evaluation, students came more prepared to class and felt that "it's embarrassing if you can't say anything if you are asked by your professor." Due to the degree of interaction required and expected of students, Jenny found not only that she had to spend more time in the library after class in order to read and prepare for the next class, but that she also greatly enjoyed participating and interacting with her professors and fellow students during class.

Engagement with new academic disciplines

Students also noted how studying abroad provided them with the opportunity to engage with new disciplines. Patrick explained how he had the opportunity to study biology, a subject not offered at his home institution. Additionally, he noted, how his biology courses provided him with the opportunities to partake in field trips and take advantage of the different institutional resources available to students. He explained:

> The [University of Guelph] had their own forest like the university had a forest just for educational purposes and so it was just really cool to see wow, they provide you with this opportunity and I guess some people might really take advantage of it. So I thought it was also, for me, cool to know that they really care about giving the best kind of education at that point not just letting you study twigs and everything in the course but also providing a forest to go into.

Anna, who majors in Zoology, took the opportunity to learn about her host culture and take elective courses outside her discipline like literature, history, and law courses. She also made a distinction between the courses she took in the first and the second semester. She explained how in the first semester, she took a German law course that was taught in both English and German. She took this course "law in the first term which was good because it was sort of an introduction into the German courses in German". However, in the second term, her language proficiency has improved and she was able to take a German history course taught in only German. She noted, however, "[The course] was more for me to practice my German and to learn a bit about German history. I didn't actually take that for credits, I was just present."

Steph and Jenny also commented on how their academic content contributed to their cultural understanding. Steph took Canadian literature and history courses and explained, "at university I also learned stuff about Canada but theoretical stuff because of my courses… I would say for literature, it was really important for my personal knowledge. I didn't know anything about Canadian literature before...so I felt I know much more about Canada now than I did before."

Jenny noted how her course content focused on Canadian sleep culture and so she learned a lot about Canadian sleep disturbances and problems. She also noted how listening to her professors and exposure to their teaching, such as sharing their personal experiences, contributed to her cultural knowledge and understanding. Finally, she commented on the importance of group work and how she saw it as an opportunity to interact with her Canadian peers. She said, "Like whenever a question came to my mind

how do you guys do that or how do you study and all like lifestyle or culture and I always asked even in class so it was not only social life also in class."

While the majority of students noted that they successfully received credits for their course work completed while abroad, Liz did not transfer any credits towards her degree. She explained that in order to transfer credits, she would have to take the exact same courses at her host that are offered at her home institution. As a result, she explained her decision to take elective courses saying, "I could just choose my own courses and then I would do an extra year" and "[the extra courses] would open up some I don't know or like tone my knowledge or stuff like that so that it would really give me a lot for my degree even though they don't really count in."

Yet, despite not receiving credits and taking courses offered outside her home department of Psychology, she did take courses related to her studies and was exposed to different approaches to one's studies. She clarified:

> I didn't actually take classes of the department of psyc but I went to classes during the first week to like have a little insight as to what topics they would cover and stuff like that and I feel like it was more interdisciplinary because in Germany I feel like it kind of totally lost this social component, it's very much only about individuals and I don't know like clinical stuff and cognitive psyc and neuroscience and stuff like that and I talked to people doing psyc in North America and I know that the case there as well that you have to do a lot of statistics and stuff like that but I still feel like it's more extra stuff included as well like there's the new college offers the Jungian course that I took that's very closely related and it's really hard to get things like that at my university. We

don't have any analytical psyc courses. Yeah so I feel like there were more

different courses, yeah courses that were more interdisciplinary and the

professors were more open to bring in another aspect.

Liz commented on how her academics contributed to her ability and confidence to

engage in discussions with her Canadian roommates. She explained:

So I definitely feel like the courses helped me in my own community to discuss

stuff and stuff like that. Also because in my house we discussed all kinds of

social things or political things or philosophical things and I feel like the courses

really gave me a good theoretical background for that and that was really

awesome because some of my housemates were in like in the equity studies

program or one of them was doing a PhD in philosophy and I felt like that made

it much easier for me to really participate in those discussions as well because I

mean sure I had read on those subjects as well before but it was great to be able

to do it on an academic level as well not only doing it in my free time as well.

So I felt like the content was much more relevant personally as well.

Engagement with extracurricular academic activities on campus

When describing their experiences that occurred outside the classroom, many

students also commented on the activities and events that they participated in on campus.

Liz participated in multiple extracurricular workshops and activities on campus. For

example, she partook in a Jungian society conference, did workshops on organic farming,

an animal cosmetic workshop, and went to the University's Hart House Farm, outside of

Toronto for a weekend trip.

Patrick learned a lot due to programs that focus on supporting first year students. He discussed "O-Week", an orientation week for new students, as well as general programs, like library programs, that were offered to first year students. He said, "I also took advantage of [the programs] for example they had a big library program where you could get help with essays and learning structure and… I mean I was in my fifth year, but it helped me a lot to structure myself better and to learn how to study in a certain way. So really good experiences as well."

Individuals that mattered: professors and peers
Sense of belonging, support, and validation

Many students commented on the support that they received from their professors. For example, Jenny explained how she felt that her professors and peers did not differentiate her from her fellow Canadian peers. Likewise, Liz explained that she found it very easy to connect with her classmates and professors on a personal level, that she was not treated differently for being an exchange student, and that she often went to her professor's office hours to discuss not only topics related to the specific course, but also to receive advice and support for papers written for other courses. As a result, Liz had the support and the personal interactions that she found to be very helpful in regards to her overall coursework and academic experiences.

Haley found her professors to be very understanding and supportive and believed that they influenced her academic development and engagement with the course material. She said:

I would describe it as very encouraging. I found a lot of my professors were not lenient but understanding and understood if maybe I needed an extension or some

extra help understanding something they were more than happy to help me and

give me that extra assistance that I might not have gotten here in Canada. They

also took into account the fact that I was getting used to a new culture and new

surroundings so they kind of helped guide me through that process and they were

very overall very understanding and it was a very smooth transition into the

academics because there's a lot of academic support from the professors and other

students and just overall.

She also referred to one instance in which she had submitted a paper and her professor

had returned it, providing feedback and guided Haley in the right direction for

resubmission. In this regard, Haley said, "[My professors] were more encouraging so I

felt that maybe I could go up to them or felt more comfortable around them because it

was a very more positive environment there was no power hierarchy like I could come to

them and approach them and they all they wanted was for me to perform my best and do

my best."

Ben very much enjoyed his classes and found that he was actively contributing to

discussions and engaging with his professors and classmates. He said:

Actually lots of [my classmates] would come to me because I was sort of the

oddity being pretty much the only exchange student and of course being fluent

in English was a big help when the course material was all in English so they

actually, I felt very comfortable there...Um, what happened a lot was that they

would kind of defer to my readings of the work because I had just a deeper

understanding of the English language and the professors noticed it too. It was

kind of like having a native speaker to be able to explain like some rare words

that would come up or like maybe double of meanings to words they wouldn't

have thought of. It felt pretty good you know, it felt like my contributions I felt

like I was actually contributing to the course in a way that other people were

able to say it wasn't just me writing my essay and then having the professor say

good job the students also noted my achievements so that was nice.

Tom also shared a similar experience to Ben being a native German speaker in his
linguistics course:

It was especially because as I do linguistics and I was a German native speaker

and so whenever there were language examples and as a German I had a kind

of advantage because they always asked for German examples or something.

The professors kind of knew me already because yeah I could contribute a lot

of linguistic stuff...It was like there was one class where we looked at different

languages and it was mostly in that class but it was always a little bit you

would always stick out as a foreigner a little bit because you would just get to

talk about it...I was always felt welcome.... it was definitely encouraging

Information networks

Three students commented on how their peers and professors assisted them in learning

about understanding various academic processes and opportunities outside the classroom.

Anna commented on how she found her German professors to be helpful but very

intimidating. As a result, she was reluctant to speak with her professors and noted how

she did not speak with most of them. However, she did approach her classmates, both

international and Germans, for assistance on institutional academic procedures and

processes like one's course registration. She explained:

I went to sort of for the final word I went to the German students because they

actually knew what was going on it wasn't this is what I figured out. So I went

to one friend that I met in the literature courses, I talked to her and just like

what's going on here, how does this work and she was able to explain it to me.

Adam and Tom also discussed how their professors introduced them to other

opportunities on campus. Adam noted how he came across the opportunity to work in a

psychology lab through one of his professors. He explained:

I had first contacted an abnormal psyc prof because it's that type of direction of

psychology I was wanting to get more experience in so I thought I'm in his

class I'll ask him. He wasn't directly involved in the research. It was two

psychologists, I guess? They weren't really professors at the university who

were heading their research. But I got to know them pretty well and I could tell

that they were very invested in me getting the most out of the opportunity

where they went out of their way to make sure my questions were answered

and that like I could do every part of the research that I wanted to and we also

would go out for coffee afterwards and like have lunch together before going to

the lab and we kind of just chat about things. Then I got a letter from them

being like Adam did this and you know they said to keep in contact and

everything. So while they weren't necessarily related to my studies I could tell

like within the realm of my research opportunity that they were really helpful

that way... I was able to learn more about grad life and research life there.

Adam also noted how this experience in turn helped him overcome personal barriers:

And as cheesy as it sounds I learned more about me as a person. I guess

different learning skills. It was really hard at first to be okay putting myself out

there knowing that I would make mistakes in saying things and everything

because here I want everything to be perfect and that holds me back from

things. Whereas there I learned how to, this is also like cliché, but you learn

more to be like it's okay to make mistakes to put myself out there. Be more

flexible and that kind of stuff...the key thing for me was my lab experience

where I know I'm not going to be perfect in this. And they knew that as well.

But I worked directly with the participants and they knew like they were all

adults research participants and they knew my German wasn't great and

sometimes we had difficulty communicating with each other...that was a key

area where I learned to do that and just learn how to speak and act in a German

work environment with people who were not students so that was a good

opportunity.

Tom also commented on how he had learned about the opportunity to become a teacher's

assistant through one of his professors. He said, "I learned about [the course with the

teaching opportunity] from a professor [in another class]... She heard that I was German

and so she proposed that I could do that German course...and I went to the course

afterwards after I heard about it." He commented on how this opportunity to be a

teaching assistant contributed to his understanding of how Canadians learn German and

their challenges and difficulties with the language:

What was probably the biggest new experience was that I got to be kind of a

teaching assistant for a German course. While I mainly visited the German

course and took notes on how they were giving and I would sometimes help the

teacher and I think that was a big experience to see how people in Canada learn

the German language which is my mother tongue. So it's interesting to see it

when people learn the language and that was pretty interesting...and what the

differences and difficulties are for learning German especially.

Additionally, he noted how this experience enabled to develop a relationship with others

within the German department. He said, "Yeah I think like with the whole German

department I got to know some people and I went to their Christmas party and it was

pretty nice with them."

Social Context

Group work

What was interesting to note was the consistent mention of the classroom as the

context that helped students establish and develop friendships and social networks. Jenny,

Daniel and Patrick commented on their experiences with group work. Jenny saw group

work as an opportunity to interact with her Canadian peers. She said, "Like whenever a

question came to my mind how do you guys do that or how do you study and all like

lifestyle or culture and I always asked even in class so it was not only social life also in

class." Likewise, Daniel also noted how working with German students in class

contributed to his cultural understanding. He said, "Because I was working with them in

groups. So because of that I started understanding their jokes. I was around them all the

time so yes it did."

However, Patrick, as mentioned above, had a negative experience with group work that affected his social interactions with his classmates outside the classroom. He explained:

> To be honest, [group work] was rather like negative like it was kind of stressful like the work attitude was kind of difficult. In the first year, the first year group seminar, they were more like whatever so that was annoying and not on time... so that was annoying and I was not too keen to meet with this group outside of my course.

Peer relations developed within class

At the beginning, Daniel found it difficult to integrate due to the language barrier within class. However, he found one classmate who was able to help him:

> I found a guy who's ironically is an immigrant but not really. He's from Turkey but he was born and raised in Germany but I found that and he laughed about it and he talked to me about this he's just like, because he has a kind of outside mentality, that he was more he understood the struggle, put it that way, and he was willing to reach out and make a difference and he also saw the benefit for him because he could work on his English.

Haley also commented on how it was intimidating to be the only native English speaker in one of her classes. She said:

> To be the only English native speaker I was a little bit uncomfortable at first definitely intimidating walking into a class full of students and not knowing what they're saying or unsure of how to interact with them or what's acceptable what's not acceptable. But I got to know them like

really well and it worked out really well like some of them I became

really good friends with them... we would get coffee or sit by the lake

and relax and do different things.

Ben noted how he lived in secluded international residence, which was a barrier in regards to his ability and opportunities to interact with domestic students. He explained that all the Germans he met were from class and that these friendships extended beyond the classroom. For example, "In the Canadian fiction course I had [a classmate] come up after class and asked if I was really Canadian. I said yeah, I was. I just thought that was so cool because she actually had just gotten back from Newfoundland doing an exchange there. And so she invited me out to Frühlingsfest." He also went with her German classmates to Christkindl markets and was invited by a friend to her parents' house for a "sort of Christmas pre-Christmas" dinner with them.

Like Ben, Anne's friends were primarily from class and she provided an example of one of these friendships that extended beyond the classroom:

One it was cool she's German but is also taking French classes and I also took

French immersion in school so we took a French class together, oh, that's another

thing I took a French class while I was there, forgot about that. So we took a

French class together and outside of class she took me around the Freiburg area

and showed me like there's a café that's along the lake or on the river and just all

the different parts of Freiburg that she loved, that she wanted to share with me. So

that was really cool.

Ben explained how his language proficiency improved during the first semester due to his language courses and his social interactions with Germans outside of class. He explained, "The first semester was entirely English courses I think and then once I met more Germans and was able to practice my German a bit more then I decided to try and take some courses in German [in the second semester]."

Christine also noted how interacting and socializing on a daily basis with Canadians affected her academics in regards to her language proficiency and academic motivation. She explained, "Yeah maybe not like the society but the language skills so the more I talked to Canadians in my free time the better I found I could understand classes as well because my English was improving of course" and in regards to going to class, "I knew that I would see [my Canadian friends] there and we would talk or I knew I could do my group exercise with them so yeah I think that's pretty much motivation to know the people doing classwork."

Jenny found that one of her friends from intramural was also in her psychology classes. She said:

> I met for example a girl at intramural and we were playing volleyball and we met and I spent time with her at her house she was living off campus and then after a while I was like what are you studying? She's like oh psychology. And I was like oh wow, me too. And then we found out that we were in the same class where 100 people are so then I saw her and then we sat together and we studied together, spent more time together because we had everything together.

Liz also explained how living with Canadian roommates also influenced her

academic work. She explained:

When I had to write a paper or something I would discuss it with my housemates

or they would look over it or I would be like, I've just read this article and they

were like oh yeah, I've read something similar and we would discuss it...and also

one of my housemates had taken the literature course before and she was like you

have to take this class, the professor is so great, the class is awesome. So I took it

and so obviously we were able to talk about the class and she was like, oh what

books are you reading? Oh yeah we did this, or we didn't do this, like it has

changed in regards to the books and stuff like that so that was really cool. I

definitely feel like I got to talk a lot about my courses because the content was

really relevant for my life and so yeah.

Institutional programs

Most students commented on the importance of the international office and OBW

program office as facilitators for social relationships and cultural understanding. Patrick

and Daniel described the various trips and activities and both noted how these trips and

events contributed to their integration because they were not only oriented towards

getting to know the host culture, but also provided a social platform for them to meet

students from other faculties and strengthen current friendships.

Likewise, Maddie and Jenny commented on how the international office provided

opportunities for them to interact with domestic students. Maddie explained how she met

a lot of her German friends through programs like the TANDEM partner and buddy

program that paired international students with domestic students. Jenny also noted how

the international office was very welcoming and helpful in accommodating her wish to change from her initial international residence to one in which she was living with Canadians.

She also described how the international office enabled exchange students to interact with other members and organizations within the local community:

I had like lots of offers from the international office too, I think it was supported by the Christian fellowship in Sudbury. They offered like skiing days at completely different places with Canadians not like other international students but also Canadian people or you can eat with Canadians and we were on a Christmas party with only Canadians and multicultural kind of I don't know what it was, like a party or festival, and we got invited and had like our own table and yeah, it was awesome. And we felt completely integrated.

Additionally, the international office offered an intensive summer language program for international students and many of the Canadians students took part and noted how their involvement in this program contributed to their overall integration. For example, Anna said:

I felt that I was attending university and that I belonged. It didn't take very long to get to that point either I think that was pretty quick to sort of get into the feeling comfortable and feeling you know generally accepted...I'm going to say having been so the university courses didn't begin until mid to late October but because I had been in Germany since September and I did that language course, going to the university it wasn't a I'm going to university but I'm in a strange country. And I sort of gotten used to the country itself and then so going into the university it

wasn't a matter of total cultural shock it was more just getting used to the

university itself because I had already spent so much time in the country already

before. I think that's one of the huge like I think if I had arrived day one and gone

to class right away, I think it would have been a bigger adjustment just because

there would be so much more so many more new aspects to what was going on.

Haley noted how the September intensive language program gave her opportunities to

network and gather her bearings. She said, "I found the September course over the

months of September the intensive course to be really helpful with that. They kind of

gave me my bearings and I got to network and meet a lot of different people and met

friends through that so that is what kind of helped me the most in terms of integrating

into the school."

In addition to the international office, Haley described how important the OBW

program was in regards to being able to integrate and travel with other Canadians:

I guess meeting other students, other Canadian students through the OBW

program, we got to travel a lot and do a lot of things together. Which made it a

little more comfortable or easier to ease into the culture when you're surrounded

by people who are similar to you and understand kind of where you come from.

And then also just connecting with other international students at my host

university and being able to make connections with them and do things together

with them in the context of German culture. That was good.

Finally, Patrick also remarked how knowing other participants in the OBW program,

having an orientation in Toronto, and having time in general prior to one's studies helped

him integrate into the host institution and culture. He said,

I felt really integrated like after 2 weeks already and I thought it was really good that we had this long preparation. I mean even 2 weeks before or 1 week before the introduction for international students at Guelph started we had this meeting in Toronto, right. This just gave you the feeling of being in the school for one week, you were living there for quite a long time and also knowing people through the OBW program was an assistance as well for sure because it's just helping if you know some people at your university and like the people actually the people I met through OBW in Toronto we became really good friends actually. Like I did a lot of travelling with these guys and one of them visited me recently and actually all of them became really good friends. So that already helped in the integration. So I was really happy about having these steps you know, being in Toronto for some time and not rushing, then having one week which we used for travelling with all the Germans, so we went travelling for a bit, and then there was the three days in Guelph we had and then there was one week with the, so basically it was 3 weeks before we started studying and for me that felt like it was taking it really slowly and helping you to integrate. For me that was really helpful.

Activities and events on campus

Patrick, Ben, Jenny and Adam also highlighted the various social activities available for students living on campus during the semester. Patrick and Ben highlighted more social activities like football matches, pub crawls, open-stage on Wednesdays, sports facilities, and the large open areas on campus where international students in the would meet and socialize.

Jenny spent a lot of time on campus and highlighted the importance of participating in intramural sports teams and how friends from these sports teams introduced her to other activities on campus like Airbandz:

> I think I spent like 80% on campus and maybe 20% outside where 10% is travelling within Sudbury…Like I participated in soccer and volleyball and basketball, all kinds, like you can do so many things. And that was like I think twice or three times a week so it was really continuously and so I think the team like we were all like growing together and at the end we were a big group of friends. And then the second week I think I was at volleyball, this girl Laura asked me if I wanted participated in Airbandz that would be in February. So that was like in September and the event would be in February and she told me about this Airbandz thing and that you collect money for cancer and I was like yeah sure, I really want to dance and participate and then we started doing these dancing lessons from like September on or October and that was really helpful because I met a lot of people like from other classes who wanted to join Airbandz group too. We were like twenty people and we trained like we studied all the dance choreographies every week and at the end every day and then we had the event in February and by then we were friends. And so we stayed friends even after that. So that was a really helpful event for me.

Finally, Adam also commented on how he lived with other students who were not studying psychology. As a result, he was aware and was able to attend different departmental events on campus and experience the "more social side of the university" and "get to know the different things people were studying at the university".

In addition to living on campus and being exposed to various residential events and activities, many students also lived off campus. Liz, for example, lived off campus in a coop community, explained how she participated in various activities off campus like potlucks, movie nights, and outreach programs and fundraisers for certain youth groups. In doing so, Liz demonstrates how living off campus involves similar social activities to those who lived and participated in events on campus.

Cultural Context

Work on campus

In addition to social activities and events on campus, two students worked on campus. Jenny noted how she learned to write a Canadian resume at the university's career centre and later got a job at Starbucks, which was an important part of her study abroad experience. She said, "I think the only additional thing was work because at work I learned friends too and they weren't at my classes. One of them didn't even study. So it was only these two parts like friends and social life I got through work and academics."

When asked if she would categorize work under the cultural component of studying abroad, she replied, "Yeah...There was only me and two other girls I knew who studied at Laurentian and worked at the same time. All the other people were employed from like they came from downtown and they were only working like I saw them there every day like adults working."

Additionally, Jenny noted how her friends in the extracurricular activities such as intramural sports and her colleagues at work influenced her engagement with her academics and academic success. She explained:

I didn't feel homesick at all. Like at no point had I ever felt homesick while I was

in Canada and I feel like that was just one reason because I worked like I had so

much to do like I worked a lot and there were my friends and then in school there

were my friends so I never had to feel homesick. And that's maybe because of

course if you're not feeling homesick and you're not feeling sad all the time you

can focus and study. And that's why I got some really good grades.

Adam also worked on campus in a psychology lab, which provided him the opportunity

to engage directly with locals in the community. He explained:

I worked directly with the participants and they were all adults research

participants and they knew my German wasn't great and sometimes we had

difficulty communicating with each other…That was a key area where I learned

to do that and just learn how to speak and act in a German work environment

with people who were not students.

In this regard, both Jenny and Adam categorized working on campus as a cultural

experience because of the opportunities to engage and interact with non-students

and local members of the host community.

Participating in cultural celebrations and holidays off campus

Off campus experiences also included the opportunities to celebrate cultural

holidays and events with their domestic friends. Liz celebrated with the family of one of

her housemates and Anna likewise noted how she celebrated the Christmas holidays with

a family of a friend and participated in different cultural events within her host city. She

said:

[Freiburg] has so many cultural events and so at one point there was a carnival parade where they had all these people dressed in costumes parading through the centre of town. Now I didn't know what the purpose of this was at the time but it seemed to be something that everybody was into. So I went and I thought it was amazing. The costumes were amazing, the music was amazing. So that's just one thing you happened to be in the old city and suddenly there's a parade going through. So that was cool. Over Christmas I stayed it was about half an hour, 40 minutes outside of Freiburg there's a family of a friend of mine knew so we stayed with them. And so we got to experience sort of the German Christmas but also the German New Year in that you look over the Black Forest and people are shooting fireworks for about 45 minutes straight at midnight at New Year's. So that's another you know that's not something I was expecting but something I was glad to have experienced.

Ben also commented on his participation in cultural events and traditions. He said, "I learned about most of the traditions actually from interacting with Germans because I would go to Germans I went to both Oktoberfest and Frühlingsfest with Germans and I went to a couple of Christkindl markets during Christmas and had a couple of just German dinners."

Steph, who lived with Canadians off campus, found opportunities to partake in cultural events and celebrations as well as share her German culture. She related: "Once, we actually did a late Thanksgiving dinner together and some did the mashed potatoes and we bought a chicken, we didn't do a turkey, and I made the dessert the German dessert and I baked German Christmas cookies...and I did glühwein".

In additional to specific cultural activities and celebrations, Liz and Anne positioned and integrated themselves into their local communities. Liz discussed how she lived on a farm for a month and sold the products that she produced in a farmer's market while Anne commented on how she was involved with a local church in a number of outreach programs and large scale community events like helping with the annual Easter egg hunt.

Additionally, she noted the experience of attending a Catholic church. She said, "I attended the Münster so there's the big Catholic Church right in the middle of the old city. I'm not Catholic but I went to attend a couple of their services just to get the experience of being in that massive building which was cool."

Travel

Finally, most of the students spoke of how one's travels were both a social and cultural experience. Ben, as noted above, travelled almost every weekend. He said:

I was actually kind of happy that the coursework was so light because it gave me a lot of time to just go out and do things that I wouldn't have if I had the same sort of work that I had in Canada it wouldn't have been feasible. I was able to go almost every weekend to do you know something even if wasn't like a day trip to a different city it was still always something that you could always find to do...I spent most of my weekend travelling. And then whenever we had a break in between courses we'd take a longer trip. I took a trip to Denmark I think it was in March for a week… I met a lot of Australians for some reason, they love travelling through Germany. I met lots of Germans too just going on day trips or

weekend trips just a couple of towns over just to have a fun time with their

friends.

Like Ben, Adam also noted on his many travels. He explained: I hit up Sweden,

Denmark, some of the major cities in Germany, Italy, Croatia, Czech Republic,

France, I'm trying to think if there were any further places. Well those were the

main ones and then a lot of the time I spent a lot of time going to the different

German cities like the major sightseeing things.

He also commented on the trips organized by student departments at his host institution:

And then there would be these awesome trips to different countries and cities.

Like oh, we're all going to Hamburg for two days this is what it will cost, it's all

run through like one of the student departments, right. And the prices were

incredible and you know, it was a great way to strengthen the friendships you had

or make new ones because there would be students from other faculties you didn't

have a chance to see for example.

Haley also commented on how her travels involved visiting various museums. For

example, "I actually got to visit Freud's apartment where he used to live and where he

did his practice and like there was a museum and there was a lot of information on his

theories and kind of the work that he did."

Inga also commented on her travels with her boyfriend through the country, her

Canadian friends, and how her host institution facilitated trips. She explained:

I travelled quite a lot just basically the surrounding of Ottawa or the East coast so

I didn't go to the West coast but I did do like a road trip when my boyfriend came

to visit, we went for whale watching and Algonquin Park and to Toronto and

Montreal…I went with some of my Canadian friends for it was a birthday of one

of the girls so we went for the weekend to Montreal that was a lot of fun… I did a

lot of travelling with the university as well. They offered a lot of trips for

exchange students or students in general so yeah, that was always really cool… I

did one trip where we went snowshoeing and dogsledding, that was a weekend

trip from the international office, that was really cool.

Adam also commented on how his weekend trips provided him with opportunities to

engage in stereotypical cultural activities, like "go visit this place and then go and eat this

food experience."

For Anna, this was her first time in Europe and so she tried to travel as much as

she could. Like Steph, Anna travelled with her parents throughout Switzerland,

Amsterdam, and the Netherlands. She also travelled to visit friends. For example, "So I

went to Ireland to visit a friend, and I went to Scotland and England on a different trip to

the UK, I went to France and Switzerland...I made a friend on exchange in first semester

and so second semester I went to Finland to visit her".

Findings 2: Interrelation and influence of one's study abroad experience upon one's return to their home institution and country

Research question 2: In what ways do students connect their study abroad

experiences to their return home?

i)   In what ways do they see the application of their study abroad experiences

to their personal, academic and/or professional development?

ii) Do they differentiate between the value of their academic, social and/or cultural experiences to their personal, academic and/or professional development?

When asked how students were able to incorporate their international experiences and knowledge gained abroad back into their academics and experiences outside the academic institution, students spoke of the credits transferred, incorporating coursework and experiences in one's assignments and class discussions at their home institution, a continuation of one's academic studies from their host institution, an increase in motivation towards one's academics, personal development such as being more relaxed, flexible, self-confident, and open-minded, as well as its influence on future job prospects and career opportunities. Under each of the three categories: the academic, social, and cultural contexts, the different learning experiences are highlighted.

Academic Context

Many students referred to instances in which their language proficiency positively influenced their engagement with their academics, how one was able to incorporate his/her international experiences back into their academic assignments, in-class discussions, degree, and/or general understanding of one's academic discipline as well as how one's international experiences and academic engagements abroad influenced one's future academic pursuance and studies, and their sense of confidence.

English texts are easier to understand

Christine and Tom commented on how their improved language proficiency influenced their academics. Christine said that living and studying in an English speaking

country made it significantly easier for her to study English texts upon her return and Tom noted how he decided to write his thesis in English. He explained:

> I actually wrote [my thesis] in English so I think that's one of the major things that helped me because I had to write some papers in English at Carleton which I hadn't done before and so that helped a lot with my thesis because I got some feedback on my academic writing...Yes, like they gave me my paper back with comments in it like in the document and they also talked about some stuff that I actually had in my writing style that were yeah, they just pointed out some stuff in my writing that I could improve so it was really helpful.

Internationalizing assignments, class discussions and expanding one's understanding of academic disciplines

Christine also noted how she was able to incorporate her international experiences back into an assignment by comparing Canadian newspapers and German newspapers and Steph noted how she wrote her bachelor's thesis on Canada. Steph explained:

> My bachelor's thesis was about Canada's identity and I only did that because I took those courses there. I wouldn't have chosen such a thesis if I wouldn't have stayed there so it had a huge impact actually, the literature class. And also the history class because in my thesis I included one novel I read there and another one I didn't read there plus two history parts where I put everything almost everything I learned in the modern Canadian history class. So I put almost everything I learned in one thesis and that was great.

Adam and Haley also noted how they were able to bring their international experiences into class discussions. As noted early, Adam commented on how he was introduced to the

European approach to diagnostics and was able to bring the European back into his classes back at home. He explained how he attempts to move away from the "North American centric way of thinking about things" and "acknowledge and introduce people to the other ways of thinking about things."

Likewise, Haley discussed how she was able to bring her own experiences and encounters with Germans in relation to her course that discussed the concept of nationalism. She noted how it was interesting for her to make the connections and differentiations between her experience in Germany, how they acted and behaved, compared to how experiences in Canada and the behaviours and attitudes of Canadians.

Tom also noted how his exposure to different streams and approaches to linguistics provided him with a larger grasp of his discipline. He said, "It definitely helped me just with my general experience with linguistics...like I learned about the about areas of linguistics that I didn't learn about earlier...and I continued doing Spanish in Konstanz so that helped as well."

Additional credentials

Patrick and Anna both commented on how they were able to add a minor to their degree. Patrick explained how he was able to get a minor in biology, a subject not offered at his home institution and Anna noted how she received a minor in German. She said, "So one of the biggest things is declaring German as a minor that wasn't something that I had done before I had gone on exchange... I actually had taken another German course at Guelph since then". Thus, after studying abroad, Anna was not only able to transfer her credits back to her degree as well as continue her studies and language development by engaging in language courses upon her return.

Tom noted how he is continuing with studying Spanish, which he began at his host institution. Maddie also wanted to continue with her German but was unable to continue with language courses due to the inability to fit the courses into her schedule and the "need to focus on other things." This inability to continue with one's studies from abroad was also echoed by Jenny and Liz. However, unlike Maddie's restricted course schedule, Jenny and Liz could not find a professor to support their topic of interest. Jenny remarked:

> I wanted to do my thesis on something like that because I liked it so much and my professor in Canada was like yeah, I'd support you like I can give you information you can just e-mail me when you're back home. But nobody here is doing kind of research on that. I didn't find anyone who could support me so I did my thesis in the same field like clinical psychology but not about this sleep and dreaming topic. But yeah it influenced me about my application process, my future application process, because we have to decide between clinical psychology, organizational, and there's like pedagogical like teaching. And like the sleep and dreaming course and a little bit the motivation course, it influenced me that I wanted to do this kind of research in my masters.

Likewise, Liz commented:

> So like I mentioned before I did this analytical psyc class at UofT and I was interested in Jungian analytical psyc before but I actually didn't know that much about it. And so because of this class I checked if there was any way that I could do stuff like that back at home and I can't at the University of Freiburg but we

have this partnership with other universities in the area and so I'm actually able to go to Switzerland to the University of Basel and so I'm doing two classes there in analytical psyc. And so I got in contact with the prof and at some point she was like at the end of the paper, she was like would you like to write your bachelor's thesis about an analytical topic and I was like whoa, yeah definitely. So I'm actually doing that. I'm writing my bachelor's thesis on dreams or dreams in psychotherapy so that's really exciting and that was something that I was interested from my courses at UofT...and also yeah actually so because I took humanities in Toronto, and I realized okay that's actually what I really like doing and have decided not to continue with psyc but to go into anthropology literature afterwards. So that actually had a big impression on me.

Adam also mentioned how he is interested in pursuing graduate studies in Germany. He said:

I didn't realize like it had never crossed my mind to do grad school outside of Canada until I realized how school runs in Germany and how much more, I don't want to say useful, but useful going to school there would be where I still feel like I would have more practical experience than here. At least in psychology the way you become a psychologist is different. So here you kind of go through a university the whole way and you get a PhD whereas after your masters in Germany you do an Ausbildung so you go to like specific school to learn how to become a psychologist so again you're not stuck doing research or teaching at a university while you're studying.

Adam also noted how he believes his lab experiences in Germany contributed to his ability to obtain a supervisor for his undergraduate thesis. He explained:

> It helped as well with like getting a thesis supervisor here where I'm like I worked in German in a lab especially, it's totally unrelated to your question, especially because I find that when you work in a lab here maybe at least at York you're an undergrad and your volunteering you're not doing anything special like here photocopy these papers and clean up the lab and you can like watch us do our work. Whereas there they were like, yeah like you're an upper year psyc student, your German is fine, we're going to train you to work directly with the research participants. And so I got to work a lot in the lab with the other researchers and do the research and not just watch and so that was an opportunity I wouldn't have had otherwise. And so when I come back and I'm like yeah, for four months I ran the tests and everything professors like to hear that… And I was like well 5 hours a week for a few months. But I really enjoyed it and I feel like that was just as important as the classes I took there in terms of what I learned and kind of coming back what was useful for my opportunities here now.

Enhanced motivation and commitment

Additionally, students noted how studying abroad influenced their motivation and engagement with their studies upon their return. Haley noted how her social and cultural travels to Freud's home and various museums on his works and life, a prominent figure within her field of psychology. Having these cultural experiences, she was able to make a personal connection with what she was learning and was able to make connections and draw on information that she did not learn from her textbook.

Patrick also experienced a renewed motivation in regards to his academics and identified this motivation as the main advantage of the overall experience. He explained how everything is new and interesting, which created a new motivation for his studies back at home as well as a new interest in the concept of community mental health, a topic he was introduced to at his host institution.

Additionally, many participants commented on how they noticed a degree of personal development. Liz felt that she had a broader view than some of her fellow students at home after she had returned and feels that while abroad, she gained and developed a different lens and approach to her academic work. She also noted how she has become more confident when tackling her assignments and course load when she returned home. She said:

> I think it has made me more relaxed. Before sometimes especially at university when it was like exam period and it was like oh my god, oh my god, but now it's like, yeah you wrote four papers in two weeks and it worked out. So I mean two exams, that's not hard. And so that's really nice that because of the heavy course load I'm sometimes like whatever, that's not much and before I would be like, oh my god, that's so much, it's not possible. So that's nice when you're able to make a year like that when you come back you're more self-confident I guess.

Christine noted how she had never known or interacted with an exchange student before she had studied abroad. By being an exchange student, she feels more open-minded and aware of exchange and international students at her home institution. As a result, she also

is now working with the international office and participating in the buddy program in which she is paired up with a fellow international student.

Social Context

Students also commented on how the friendships with their classmates, roommates, and other members within the OBW program continued even after their return home. Additionally, Adam commented on how his international experience resulted in his participation and engagement with other study abroad organizations while Liz and Patrick demonstrated how their supportive communities and peer relations within their host culture influenced their search and value of being part of a larger community upon their return home.

Friendships across the world

Patrick noted how his relationships with his fellow OBW peers and fellow students at his host institution continued to develop after his study abroad experience. He said, "I made many friendships which of course this has an effect on my life and visiting them and having them visit me."

Liz also commented on her friendships with people from all over the world. She said:

It's just great to have people all over the world. I have really good friends in Brazil now

because one of my housemates was from Brazil and she's going on exchange as

well and that was really cool and with my Canadian friends, some of them from

British Columbia also and when I travelled I met some from the U.S. and she's

moving to Berlin actually. She was there in winter as well but only for visiting but

now she's moving. And so we met around Christmas, we met in Berlin. And that

was so awesome. I was like, oh my god I met you there and now we're in Berlin.

It's so great and spending time together.

She also mentioned how she feels she would still have a supportive network of peers if she was to return to her host institution for graduate studies. She said, "I'm in contact with a lot of people from the university. I still have a lot of friends and we send a lot of e-mails and stuff like that."

Steph also explained how she is going to go back to Canada to visit one of her roommates. She explained, "Yeah and also one of them lives in Vancouver well actually both of them come from Vancouver but the one studies in Waterloo permanently so I'm also only going to see the one in Vancouver this year but I would love to see them both."

Furthering established networks

Adam also mentioned how he is currently now working with the DAAD, the German Academic Exchange Service. In his position, Adam promotes studying abroad in Germany to students at his home institution and discusses the different opportunities and funding available to go abroad as well as working with prospective students on navigating the process.

In regards to specific career focused, Adam remarked:

It's also my kind of personal interest in what I study I realized that a focus on that is kind of lacking in Germany. And I really started thinking is it really because they don't have as many mental health issues there or because like the public awareness of things like here at York or in Canada where we have all of these mental health awareness things and like much more people are using services at York whereas it doesn't happen in Germany as much. I'm like why is that? And

so I think there's still a lot more work to be done in Germany around preventative care and recognizing health issues. The reason I study sexuality studies is because I want to work with LGBT youth there's a lot of focus on that here at least in larger cities in Canada whereas it's lacking in Germany a little bit. It's still you know, where LGBT coming out they still have those struggles in Germany where there's less people dedicated to addressing those. So it's made me realize that maybe it might be more challenging but could also be more beneficial to people if I went to work in that field in Germany.

The value of community

Finally, Liz and Patrick both realized how important community is for them and their realization of this personal goal or value having experienced a strong and supportive community while abroad through their peer networks and relations. Liz said:

So I feel like it's been a little tough because my plan was to find this kind of community again because it was so special and I really really enjoyed that and realized how much I needed that and wanted that. I was hoping that I could continue some of this stuff and the kind of volunteer work I had done in Toronto but unfortunately, it hasn't really happened yet. So that's also the reason why I want to move to Berlin because I feel like it would be easier to find a community and I really hope that I can still include and integrate stuff that I did in Toronto in my private life as well. I mean as well it's still very present and will always be I guess. I mean I guess it has changed a lot for me and I guess if not for Toronto, I wouldn't be moving to Berlin and I wouldn't be doing humanities and stuff like that.

Similarly, Patrick said, "The community experience was something if you ask me something I learned for like my life in general or future, I'd say this is something I would seek because it was a really good experience."

Cultural Context

Concerning the influence of one's international experiences within the cultural context, students referred to how their intercultural experiences and knowledge of their host culture contribute to their professional opportunities at home and abroad, their expansion and development of international interests, and an increase in confidence and ability to succeed in culturally diverse environments.

Value and professional benefits of intercultural and international experiences

Likewise, Christine noted how her international experience influenced her internship. She felt that one of the reasons why she was offered the position was because her interviewees asked her many questions about Canada and Christine felt that it is important to have international and cultural experiences while working for German companies. She also explained how her international experience in Canada created an interest in Europe. She explained, "Before I went to Canada I was like oh no, I never want to do an exchange in Europe, I want to go far away and like do something different not where I can do on holidays as well. But now I'm really interested."

Also, in regards to careers and interest in future experiences in Europe, Ben commented on how his experience in Germany influenced his decision to go back. He said, "I was considering [teaching English in Germany before the exchange]. Part of the reason I went over was to see if I actually would even like Germany and I did... I feel that

once I'm back there being able to relate to the people learning English because I already know German as well it will help then."

The foreign is less scary

Many students also commented on how their overall international experiences influenced their perspective and sense of confidence in regards to their ability to succeed in foreign cultures and their desire to travel to other cultures and countries. Anna said how her view of the world is no longer the "foreign and scary and big wide world" but notes that her time abroad provided her with the skills, confidence, and connections to succeed in a foreign environment.

Likewise, Daniel noted, "By putting myself outside my comfort zone and going there I realized that yes, I can do it and if I needed to, I could do this in any other country in any other culture because I know the steps that I needed to take. I mean they'll change a little bit depending on where you go but I know it's possible and I know that I can be successful."

Developing international interests

Christine also explained how her international experience in Canada created an interest in Europe. She explained, "Before I went to Canada I was like oh no, I never want to do an exchange in Europe, I want to go far away and like do something different not where I can do on holidays as well. But now I'm really interested."

Chapter V: Discussion

Discussion 1: Understanding the interrelation between the academic, social and cultural contexts of study abroad experiences

Students within this study understood and differentiated between their learning experiences within the academic, social, and context contexts. The academic context predominantly referred to one's pedagogical experiences in terms of exposure to different approaches to learning within one's discipline, engaging in a new academic discipline, and the influence of one's professors and peers, in regards to instances of belonging and validation, on their learning and academic, personal, and intercultural development. In doing so, students identified how the academic classroom contributed to their social and cultural development, thereby demonstrating an interrelation between their social and academic (socio-academic) relations and their academic and cultural (aca-cultural) experiences.

Interestingly, I had not expected the students to distinguish between the social and cultural contexts. The social context referred to their peer networks both in and out of class and how these peer relations and support systems influence one's subjective cultural learning experiences, language proficiency, understanding of the host culture, and one's academic motivations and engagements. The cultural context is referenced differently to one's direct interactions and engagement with non-student members of the local community, thereby contributing to instances of personal development in regards to one's confidence, intercultural development in terms of one's willingness to engage with locals, enhanced language proficiency, and a sense of support and community all of which ultimately influences and enhances one's academic experiences.

When asked how they understood and/or differentiated between the different contexts, four students identified a separation between their academic, social, and cultural experiences. Three of the four students in particular highlighted a distinction by emphasizing their travel as core to their social and cultural experiences/learning and distinct from their academic learning/experiences. For example, Daniel, Ben, and Haley, three Canadians, clearly made distinctions between studying and traveling. It remains unclear as to why these three Canadian students identified a separation between one's academic and socio-cultural experiences in regards to travel when compared to Patrick, a German student, who attributed his separation due to the lack of socialization with classmates outside of class.

Why did Canadian students perceive their participation and engagement in travels as key to their socio-cultural learning but a factor that ultimately inhibited their level of academic engagement? Why did Canadians, rather than both German and Canadians, specifically refer to this factor as inhibitory? Could this raise questions about how Canadian institutions promote study abroad? Is travel predominantly highlighted as the learning experience in study abroad? What travel discourses circulate within study abroad programs? In fact, what discourses on study abroad are perpetuated within Canadian universities? Who contributes to these discourses? Academics? Administrators? Students? Are the students and academics' voices reflected in these discourses and could these perhaps reflect the separation of academic, social, and cultural learning from student abroad as discussed by these students?

Or, are these differences a reflection on how demographic variables, such as one's socio-economic status, age, gender, and programs of study etc. influence one's

engagement within the academic, social, and cultural context and how these variables may or may not influence certain degrees of interrelation? Stebleton et al. (2013) argue that studying abroad develops interculturally sensitive and competent students regardless of the students' pre-college backgrounds, educational aspirations, or college experiences. But, could this study suggest that students with particular characteristics such as higher socio-economic status or from a particular discipline are more likely to travel while abroad and engage less with their academics? Do students who travel more while abroad reflect less academic and intercultural development than those who predominantly remain within their host city? Further research is needed to be able to understand perceptions of students and their separation of the academic, social and cultural learning experiences.

Despite instances of distinct separations between one's academic, social, and cultural experiences, students in this study provided some interesting insights into just how they saw the connection between the academic, social, and cultural contexts while on study abroad and how these contexts provided experiences that contributed to their academic, personal, professional and/or intercultural development. The following four themes highlight instances of interrelation: (I) cross-cultural learning and student development within the foreign academic classroom; (II) social and cultural activities outside the classroom and student motivation; (III) supportive and validating learning communities and programs; and (IV) peer relations and information networks that extend beyond the classroom.

Theme 1: Cross-cultural learning and student development within the foreign academic classroom

Teichler (2004) noted how studying abroad programs provide students with the opportunity to engage with different approaches to learning and content within one's academic discipline. Many of the students in this study reinforced the importance of exposure to different approaches to learning and academic studies by describing cross-cultural learning experiences (Adler, 1975) that influenced their behaviour, affective, and cognitive dimensions of intercultural competence (Williams, 2009). For example, Adam demonstrated the opportunity to engage with different approaches to learning and perspectives in psychology (his discipline) when discussing his exposure to the European approach and perspective and the use of a diagnostic manual that differs from his North American education. He explained how this exposure to the European approach to diagnostics and the comparison between the European and North American approaches within lectures led him to critically reflect on the cultural differences and ways in which to negotiate between the different approaches. In doing so, Adam demonstrates intercultural development in terms of the behaviour dimension in his use and development of critical skills to understand and negotiate cultural differences. Additionally, he also reflects cognitive intercultural competence in his development of knowledge and understanding of different cultural behaviours, issues, and values within the field of psychology.

Daniel and Jenny also noted how their tutorials and lectures were structured differently from at their home institution and, in turn, adjusted their learning and engagement with their course material. Daniel had to rely more on self-learning and

engage with new tools and approaches to learn the material prior to tutorial while Jenny spent more hours within the library in order to prepare for the following class and meet the expectations of her professors and peers in regards to participation. In doing so, both Daniel and Jenny demonstrate the practice and development of the three dimensions of intercultural development: behaviour, affective, and cognitive.

Behaviourally, Daniel and Jenny demonstrate resourcefulness and self-reliance in terms of engaging with different study methods in order to adapt and adhere to culturally appropriate academic behaviours and attitudes in tutorial and class (Williams, 2009). Thus, by adapting one's behaviour and attitude, Daniel and Jenny also demonstrate the affective dimension in their motivation, will, and openness to adapt to new cultural situations and values as well as cognitively in their understanding and recognition of the cultural norms, values, and behaviours to which they needed to adapt (Williams, 2009). In this regard, Daniel and Jenny demonstrate not only the existence of the various dimensions of intercultural competence within the academic context, but also the interaction of the three components that enable one to develop, interact, and understand culturally different environments (William, 2009).

Teichler (2004) also noted that studying abroad provided students with the opportunity to study new disciplines, an opportunity of which many students took advantage. Patrick was able to study biology, a discipline that was not offered at his home institution. Anna, who majors in Zoology, took language, literature, history, and law courses while Liz, a psychology major, also took a variety of courses in the humanities. In doing so, the students' educational decisions were based on personal reasons, such as a desire to understand the host culture or broaden one's perspectives,

rather than academic-specific in terms of credit transfers, and contributed to one's personal development.

Patrick explained that he had liked studying biology in high school and as the discipline was not offered at his home university, he took the opportunity to study biology at his host institution. Of the various instances in which his courses and professors implemented different teaching styles and approaches to learning, Patrick specifically noted how fieldtrips were incorporated into his science courses. He explained how the fieldtrips provided him with the opportunity to apply the course material he learned in the classroom to a forest at the university.

While this particular example of short-term experiential learning was not the purpose or focus of his international experience, by studying abroad, Patrick was able to take advantage of the opportunity to engage in experiential learning practices. In doing so, not only his personal understanding of the academic field of biology developed but also his personal and general understanding of the various teaching styles and activities that support and influence how students transform experiences into knowledge and how a foreign environment and institution can facilitate a heightened sense of learning based on the different institutional tools and activities available to students.

Students also noted the opportunity to engage in academic content that specifically focused on their host culture, thereby suggesting the value of Bennett's (2009) concept objective culture learning and Stier's (2006) concept of content competences. Objective culture learning or content competencies refers to the 'textbook' knowledge, such as the understanding of one's economic, social customs, and political structures, as well as the arts, customs, and literature of a culture, that one develops when

a culture is the specific object of one's study. Knowledge of a culture and even the understanding of different ways of thinking, however, does not equate to one's understanding of subjective culture (Bennett, 1993; Stier, 2006; Grünzweig & Rinehart, 2002). Subjective culture refers to the psychological features, such as the ways of thinking and behaving and shared values maintained by a group of people (Engle and Engle, 2003; Bennett, 2009). Nevertheless, Jenny, Daniel, and Anna referred to instances in which their culture-specific courses contributed to their subjective culture learning and personal development through their engagement with their course content, lectures, group work, and in-class discussions.

For example, Jenny took a course on Canadian sleep culture. She explained how she not only learned a lot about Canadian sleep disturbances and problems, but by having a Canadian professor teach the course material and relate personal experiences, she also felt that she developed a cultural knowledge of how Canadians think and behave. In this regard, studying abroad within a foreign environment contributes to one's understanding of their host culture that extends beyond their 'textbook' knowledge as it involves interactions and engagement with members of the host culture.

Daniel and Jenny commented on the importance of group work in regards to the development of their cultural understanding. Daniel noted how working with German students in groups provided him with opportunities to become familiar and understand their sense of humour while Jenny took the opportunity within her group to ask questions about the Canadians' lifestyle and culture. In doing so, group work served as a mechanism that leads to subjective culture learning experiences and cognitive

intercultural competence (Engle and Engle, 2003; Williams, 2009), thereby demonstrating an interrelation between one's academic and cultural development.

Additionally, Anna took German language courses as well as courses on German history and law and specifically made a distinction between the courses she took in the first and second semester. In the first semester, she took courses that were English and German language courses. The second semester, however, included courses taught in German. In this regard, Anna's courses that specifically focused on her host culture not only contributed to her understanding of her German history and law structures but also her German language proficiency. Thus, Anna's academic courses contributed to both her cultural knowledge and language proficiency.

Anna's experience addresses Vande Berg et al.'s (2009) concern about the integrated university study. Vande Berg et al. (2009) challenged the integrated structure of study abroad programs due to language barriers that would prevent students from taking courses alongside domestic students. After taking German as a foreign language courses in the first semester, Anna was able to integrate into the immersive structure by taking courses alongside Germans in the second semester. In doing so, Anna highlights the advantages of studying abroad for the full academic year as well as demonstrates that studying abroad programs do not need to exclusively offer an integrated structure or courses designed specifically for international students. Rather, her experience suggests that a combination, for students who do not have a high language proficiency at the start, could provide an environment of both challenge and support that supports student development (Sanford, 1966). In this regard, institutions that facilitate and engage in student abroad programs need to ask: What resources or programs of support are

available to students who may not have a high level of language proficiency both prior and during their study abroad experience? And how do these resources and programs work towards integrating students into the immersive structure in which they can study and participate alongside host nationals?

Liz, like Anna, spent her academic year abroad taking courses outside her discipline. However, unlike Anna who took one noncredit German history course to improve her cultural understanding and to practice her language skills, Liz noted that she did not transfer any of her credits. Liz's decision to take courses not for credit but to broaden her overall personal knowledge and development challenges how institutions commonly recognize and value one's academic competence and academic component of studying abroad. As noted by Anderson and Lawton (2011), institutions commonly measure and evaluate a student's academic competence and study abroad experience based on the student's grades and credits accredited. As a result, there is a discrepancy between students' academic experiences and their value of these academic experiences and what institutions' recognize and value, in this regard grades and credits transferred, in the study abroad experience. Therefore, one needs to ask, do or should institutions recognize and value participation in academic courses that students do not transfer back and accredit towards their degree? And if so, how can or do students receive recognition, value and support?

Pedagogy within the classroom in terms of one's exposure to different approaches to learning within one's discipline, engagement in new academic disciplines, engagement in group work with domestic students, culture specific course content and language courses provided various learning experiences for the students. These learning

experiences ranged from academic and personal development in terms of a broader understanding and knowledge of one's own discipline or other disciplines as well as language proficiency, and intercultural development through subjective culture learning and increasing understanding and knowledge of their host culture. In doing so, the students experiences support and reflect Teichler's (2004) work on how one's academic opportunities contribute to one's overall development. Additionally, the students' experiences reflect the importance and possibility of subjective culture learning by participating and engaging with domestic students and professors within the classroom whose culture differs from one's own, thereby demonstrating the importance and effectiveness of the integrated university study structure.

Theme 2: Social and cultural activities outside the classroom and student motivation

Astin's (1999) student involvement theory suggests that activities that occur within and outside of the classroom are significant in regards to one's motivation and behaviour towards one's learning and development. Jenny, Adam, and Liz discussed the importance of social and cultural interactions on and off campus on their academic engagement and motivation. For example, Jenny commented on how one of her friends that she met through intramural sports also studied psychology and they found out later in their friendship that they were in classes together. As a result, they would go to class together, spend more time together, and study together.

Additionally, Jenny noted how these social relationships and her relationships with her colleagues at Starbucks, prevented her from feeling homesick. Jenny believed that these relationships and her social and cultural communities contributed to her ability to focus on her studies and achieve good grades. Working abroad, within the literature of

international education, is discussed predominantly within the context of internships (Gault et al., 2000; Toncar and Cudmore, 2000; Ali and Smith, 2015) and community-based services within international service learning programs (Bringle et al., 2012) that focuses primarily on one's professional, personal in terms of one's self-confidence, and intercultural development. However, Anna's experience of working abroad as part of her study abroad experience, an experience that is not commonly addressed in the literature, contributed to her academic development and success. Thus, further research is needed on understanding the influences and learning experiences that develop for students who work while studying abroad.

Adam also commented on how living within a university town also influenced his academics. He mentioned that there would be periods in which all of his friends would be studying, even though the exam was months away, which in turn influenced his decision to also prepare and review his course material. Patrick and Liz also noted this sense of student and academic community. Patrick also spoke about the student-student interactions he experienced from living on campus. He explained that he felt part of a large community with the library nearby and always having friends to study with supported his own motivation to study.

Patrick, however, also commented on the disadvantage of being in this community. He described living on campus as an isolated community and did not feel part of the general Guelph community, as a "citizen of the city". Thus, while the classroom and campus can serve as a supportive learning environment in regards to a student's sense of belonging and motivation within the academic context of studying abroad, Patrick highlights challenges in regards to the degree of integration. In this

respect, living on campus and having that support of the university can also detract or limit one's ability to integrate into the host culture outside the institution.

Nevertheless, Liz experienced a student community with her roommates while residing off campus. She noted how she discussed academic articles with her roommates and those roommates offered to look over her papers and recommended courses in which Liz enrolled. In doing so, Liz's household and roommates not only offered academic support by looking over her papers, but also engaged in academic discussions, and influenced the choices Liz made in regards to her courses. In doing so, Jenny, Adam, Patrick, and Liz demonstrate how one's social and cultural interactions outside of class can influence one's academic work, engagement, and, in Liz's case, even selection of courses within the academic context.

Additionally, Christine and Ben noted how their social and cultural interactions outside the institution influenced their language proficiency and contributed to their academic engagement. Christine explained that speaking English outside the institution also made it easier to follow English within the class because her language proficiency was improving. Ben, similarly, explained how taking language courses and being able to socialize and practice his German with locals within the first semester developed his language skills and confidence to engage with courses in the second semester solely taught in German. Thus, Christine and Ben's experience reflect how one's engagement and interactions within the community in turn influence one's engagements with their academics. Due to their improvement in language skills, not only did course materials become easier to grasp and understand for Christine but Ben's language skills broadened

and expanded his academic opportunities by providing Ben with the skills needed to partake in courses taught in the host language.

Finally, while the above students noted how their social and cultural interactions influenced their academics, Anna explained how this interaction is not unidirectional. She described how her academics, in turn, influenced her cultural integration. For example, she explained how an assignment in her September intensive language course required her to speak to locals within the community. As Anna noted, this experience changed her preconceived thoughts about Germans' receptiveness and lack of interest in exchange students and provided her with the confidence and experience to speak to the locals and develop relationships with them outside the institution by becoming involved with the local church and different local community events.

This assignment also reflects the importance of experiential learning for intercultural education /learning. Dewey's theory of experiential learning concerns how an individual learns and creates meaning (Kolb, Boyatzis and Mainemelis, 2001). In the case of Anna, she engaged in a concrete experience of approaching and speaking with a German individual outside the institution. Upon interacting with the German, Anna's experience challenged her pre-conceived notions concerning the receptiveness of the community, thereby contributing to Anna's sense of confidence and community that enabled her to become an actively involved member of the host community. In this regard, Anna's assignment to improve her language proficiency by interacting with a local outside the academic institution provided her with the opportunity to actively and critically examine her experience, which shaped her future experiences and overall development (Smith, 2010).

Anna's experiential learning experience correlates to Blair's (2011) and Wagenknecht's (2011) experiential learning programs in regards to not only the importance of instructors designing and facilitating authentic, settings outside the traditional classroom, learning experiences but also the importance of the foreign environment. In Anna's case, the foreign culture and society provided her with an environment, outside the classroom, that enabled her to create meaning and develop an understanding and sense of confidence towards interacting with her host culture. As a result, her increase in understanding and confidence extended beyond her academic study of the German language and influenced her interactions and involvement with the host culture. In doing so, Anna's experiential learning expands upon the work of Blair (2011) and Wagenknecht (2011) in that her academic experiences lead to increases in her motivation and sense of confidence that extended beyond the academic context and affected her social and cultural interactions and integration.

By drawing on Astin's (1999) student involvement theory and the importance of examining the effects of activities within and outside of the academic context, the study highlights various student experiences and activities not commonly discussed in study abroad literature and their effect on one's learning and development. For example, participation in intramural sports, working on campus, and the importance of student communities demonstrate the positive interrelation between one's social and cultural interactions and one's academic motivation and development. Additionally, by examining the interrelation between the experiences within the academic, social, and cultural contexts, Anna's experiential learning experience expands upon research within the study abroad literature. Academic learning experiences, in particular integrated

experiential learning experiences, can also affect one's ability and desire to integrate and become involved in the host community, thereby suggesting learning experiences that begin with academic purposes can extend beyond one's academic motivations, activities, and context. Thus, it is important that research be conducted to examine students' experiences both within and outside of the academic context and attention be given to experiential education as a vehicle to strengthen the interconnection between students' learning across academic, social, and cultural contexts as this ultimately influences student's academic motivation, engagement, and overall development.

Theme 3: Supportive and validating learning communities and programs
Professors and peers

Deil-Amen (2011) speaks of 'socio-academic integrative moments' in which the social and academic integrate to provide support and feelings of belonging, a sense of identity and academic and social competence. Such integration occurs when feelings of social inclusion and comfort are present within the academic setting and are produced through positive student-student interactions or student-professor support and approachability within the classroom. Many students referred to the support they received from their professors and how this support influenced their integration into the host institution and culture. Liz and Jenny commented on how they felt that their professors and peers did not make a distinction between them and their fellow Canadian students. For example, Liz referred to being welcomed in class, how easy it was for her to personally connect to others and how she was accepted as a student just like everyone else while Jenny noted how her professors and fellow classmates were supportive and did not draw attention to her linguistic or cultural mistakes in class. Liz's and Jenny's

experience reflect instances of 'socio-academic integrative moments' by identifying their sense of social inclusion and support from professors and peers. This sense of social inclusion and support within the classroom minimized feelings of being differentiated as an exchange student and culturally different, a factor that contributed to their personal development and sense of ability and confidence in regards to interacting and engaging in academic work with domestic students and their professors.

Haley commented on how she found it intimidating to be the only native English speaker in her course and not knowing how to interact with her German classmates and professor. However, she explained how she became very good friends with classmates and how her professors were very understanding and provided extra academic support knowing that she was adjusting to a new culture. By referring to instances in which Haley's professors recognized the challenges of integrating into a new cultural environment and provided her additional support, Haley's experience correlates to Rendon's concept of validation (1994). Validation refers to incidents, both in and out of the classroom, in which an individual takes the initiative to recognize, encourage, and/or support the students academically or interpersonally. This validation affirms the student's capability of academic work and supports their academic endeavours and social adjustment. Thus, Haley's professor served as a validating individual that supported her cultural transition and contributed to her academic performance and success.

Likewise, Ben and Tom also commented on the sense of validation they received by being distinguished as an exchange student by their professors. Ben and Tom's unique position of being an exchange student and having background knowledge or a different take on one's course content was welcomed and encouraged by fellow students and

professors. Both students felt that their contributions, their personal knowledge and culture, to the course were recognized and supported by their professors and peers. In this regard, Ben's and Tom's culture and position as an exchange student and their sense of validation extended beyond Haley's academic performance to reflect Tinto's concept of collaboration within the classroom as a means to bring students and faculty together.

According to Tinto (1999), collaborative learning creates a network of support within the classroom that encourages a student's attendance and class participation, shapes and positively contributes to a student's sense of academic development and persistence, and enables students to connect their personal experiences to class content and "recognize the diversity and variance of views within the classroom" (p. 615) - a recognition that MacMillan (2009) believes to be missing within the North American classroom, thereby creating a barrier for students who wish to incorporate their international experiences into their academics.

Using the examples of Ben and Tom, both students were encouraged by their professors and classmates to draw upon their personal experience and knowledge in class discussions. In doing so, Ben and Tom's experiences contribute to Tinto's (1999) concept of collaborative learning and reflect the importance of supportive peers, professors, and collaboration within the study abroad context. Validation, the positive relationships between a student and his/her peers and professors, and the recognition of one's personal knowledge of culturally diverse students created a supportive environment and opportunities that enabled Ben and Tom to contribute their cultural perspectives and international experiences within the classroom. In this regard, by being able to draw upon

cultural differences, Ben and Tom were able to engage and integrate into their academic and social contexts.

Institutional programs

In addition to supportive peers and professors, almost all of the students commented on the importance of the international office and/or the OBW program office as a supportive office that influenced their integration into the host culture, institution, and cultural development. For example, Patrick and Daniel commented on how the international office organized numerous excursions and events that focused on the host culture and enabled them to meet, socialize, and develop friendships with international students within other faculties.

Maddie, Jenny, Haley and Anna noted the importance of the international office's programs and offices that initiated contact between exchange and domestic students. While Maddie referred to the Buddy program and TANDEM partner program in which Maddie could practice his/her English and Maddie her German, Jenny referred to how warm and welcoming the international office was and how they helped her change residences to live with Canadians as well as events that enabled interactions with Canadians and the local community.

Furthermore, Haley and Anna discussed how the September Intensive Language Course provided them with the time and resources to gather one's bearings and develop friendships with other international students that supported and assisted their overall integration into the cultural and institution. In doing so, the institution by offering a pre-semester course and program provided students with a transitional period that enabled

them to integrate and adjust to their host institution and culture prior to the commencements of their academic studies.

By providing social activities, cultural events, and providing resources for exchange students to reside with domestic students and gather one's bearing in their new cultural setting, the international office reflects an additional validating agent within the study abroad context. Members within the international office recognized, encourage, and support exchange students by providing activities and events to facilitate friendships and a sense of community among international students and domestic students (Rendon, 1994). In doing so, students received social and cultural support that contributed to and affirmed their ability to socially and culturally adjust and integrate into the host institution and culture.

Similarly, students discussed how the OBW program office was also a supportive factor that began prior to and continued during one's academic studies. Haley noted how it was important for her to meet other Canadians, at the OBW orientation and while abroad, who were also participating in the OBW program. She explained that she travelled a lot with fellow OBW participants and found it easier and more comfortable to ease into the culture when surrounded by others going through the same experience. Like Haley, Patrick also made a lot of friends through the OBW program, at the OBW's orientations, and travelled a lot with his fellow Germans. He also noted how these friendships and the OBW orientation held in Toronto before classes began provided him with support that helped with his overall integration.

In this regard, Haley and Patrick experiences reflect call to mind Sanford's (Vande Berg et al., 2009) concept of a challenging and supportive environment in regards

to a student's ability to integrate into the host institution and culture. The OBW program provided opportunities for participants to develop relationships with fellow Canadian or German exchange students prior to the commencement of their studies. In doing so, they provided a supportive social platform of students within the same culture that participants could rely on when experiencing and encountering challenges of integrating and understanding the host culture but also in regards to traveling beyond one's host city. In this regard, a supportive group of students who share cultures and common experiences is conducive and contributes to one's ability to develop and succeed in a challenging foreign culture.

Thus, the international and OBW office recognized the academic, social, and cultural adjustment of exchange students and provided supportive events and programs prior to and during the academic year that not only assist in developing and strengthening friendships between exchange/international students, but also culturally facilitating relationships and interactions between exchange/international students and domestic students/locals within the host culture. In this regard, institutional support outside the classroom context, acts as a validating agents that positively influences and contributes to a student's social and cultural interactions and integration.

Theme 4: Peer relations and information networks that extend beyond the classroom

Peer Relations

Tinto (1997) and Karp et al. (2010) also explore the importance of the classroom in providing a sense of community and proximity in which relations develop among peers and extend beyond the classroom. For example, Tinto (1997) suggests that classrooms serve as "academic and social crossroads" in which students are able to blend the

academic-social contexts of college (p. 613) and Karp et al (2010) found that many social relationships often begin rooted in academic processes. In doing so, Tinto (1999) and Karp et al. (2010) suggest that academic pedagogy and processes lead to the development of social relationships.

In this study, many students noted how their peer relations extended beyond the classroom and developed into social relations that influenced their integration and engagement in social and cultural activities outside the institution. Ben noted how a secluded international residence was a barrier in regards to his ability and opportunities to interact with domestic students. However, he explained that the classroom served as a space to interact with domestic students. He noted how all the Germans he met were from class and that he learned about the German culture and traditions by going with his German classmates and friends to cultural events and celebrations like Christmas, Oktoberfest and Frühlingsfest.

Similarly, Haley also lived with other international students and likewise noted how her friendships with domestic students began in class. She explained how it was first intimidating to be the only native speaker in her course, which was taught in English, because she was unsure of how to interact with them and was unfamiliar with the language. Nevertheless, she explained how being in class with them provided them with the time to get to know each other and she became very good friends with them and would do things together outside of university.

Both Ben's and Haley's experience demonstrate how one's international residency can pose barriers to integrating with domestic students while highlighting the importance of the classroom as a means to overcome this barrier. Both demonstrated how

the classroom not only provided an environment and opportunity for exchange and domestic students to interact but also how relationships that began in class extended and developed beyond the classroom. These relations developed within the social context outside the institution while Ben's experiences specifically refer to learning about cultural traditions and celebrations, thereby developing and contributing to his understanding and knowledge of the German culture. Thus, the classroom serves as an academic space that can lead to social relationships that develop outside the classroom and contribute to one's ability to integrate and engage with the host culture.

Additionally, both Ben and Haley took courses in Germany that were taught in English and each commented on being the only native English speaker within the class. In doing so, their experiences challenge Vande Berg et al. (2009)'s reservations with the integrated university study model. Vande Berg et al. (2009) argued that language is a barrier for students who do not have a high level of language proficiency in the host language. As a result, the students would need to take courses taught in English, alongside other international students, and therefore, be removed from associating and interacting with members of the host culture. However, with the rise of students learning English and courses and subjects being taught in English in non-English speaking countries, enrolling in English taught courses, in the case of Haley and Ben, did not limit their contact with domestic students. Rather, their English courses were their primary resource and point of contact for meeting and developing relations with domestic students, thereby highlighting the importance of the integrated study abroad structure.

Ben and Haley's experiences also support Savicki's (2011) and Jackson's (2011) work that challenges the correlation between high language proficiency and contact and

interaction with members of the host culture. As Ben and Haley participated in predominantly English courses rather than courses taught in the host language, they still developed significant friendships with domestic students and engaged in social and cultural interactions outside of the classroom. In doing so, this study suggests that rather than language proficiency, the integrated structure of study abroad programs and the role of the classroom is important in providing proximity and opportunities to facilitate interactions that lead to social relations between exchange and domestic students.

Information networks

Another instance in which academic relations lead to social and cultural engagements is through information networks. Information networks refer to "information-seeking process and/or information chains" that involve college-based social relationships with other faculty or classmates in which students learn about resources available outside the classroom (Karp et al., 2010, p. 8). These information networks and social connections not only made the campus more enjoyable and provided students with a reason beyond academics to come to campus but also increased their sense of confidence and sense of belonging. In this regard, information networks provided three benefits: campus connections, social contact, and personal resources that encouraged students to feel connected to the college and engage in activities and resources outside the classroom.

Anna commented on how she found her professors to be intimidating and was not only reluctant to speak with her professors but also noted how she did not interact with most of them. As a result, Anna approached international students as well as her German classmates for assistance such as how to register for class. In this regard, Anna's peers

125

served as information chains that contributed to her understanding of different institutional processes and her ability to successfully integrate into the academic culture of the host institution.

Adam and Tom also experienced information networks in regards to learning of other academic, social, and cultural opportunities outside of their class. Adam approached his professor about potential lab opportunities and his professor, in turn, referred Adam to a colleague who supported and encouraged Adam to take part in their lab work. Adam specifically noted how this work experience provided him with the opportunities and interactions to overcome personal and cultural barriers. He explained how his working directly with non-student German research participants improved his German language proficiency, which in turn contributed to his ability to integrate and interact with members of the host culture. Additionally, Adam noted personal developments in his ability to overcome his fear of making mistakes and be more flexible, thereby increasing his sense of confidence. In this regard, Adam's professor within the academic context contributed to Adam's experiences within the cultural context, which in turn contributed to his personal and cultural development.

Tom also experienced the effects of information networks and stated that one of his professors learned he was German and suggested that he enroll in a course on learning pedagogies that would include being a teacher's assistant in a beginner's German language course. Tom noted how this experience as a teacher's assistant contributed to his cultural understanding of difficulties Canadians experience when learning the German language. In this regard, Tom's experience reflects Engle and Engle's (2003) concept of subjective culture learning in that he was able to learn and understand Canadian patterns

of thinking, behaving, and their difficulties and challenges when engaging with the German language.

Furthermore, Tom noted how his experience as a teacher's assistant enabled him to meet and socialize with members of the German department and noted how he attended their Christmas party. As a result, Tom's experience, like Adam's, demonstrates how one's professor within the academic context can provide information on other educational opportunities available to students on campus that, in turn, influence and develop relations and experiences within the social and cultural context.

Thus, information networks (Karp et al., 2010) are also evident and important in the study abroad context. Adam and Tom demonstrated how one's academic relations contributed to their social and cultural experiences while Anna demonstrated how her social and academic relations with peers influenced her academic and cultural understanding of and integration into the host institution. In doing so, information networks are mechanisms that integrate and connect one's academic, social, and cultural interactions and experiences.

Discussion 2: Interrelation and influence of one's study abroad experience upon one's return to their home institution and country

Students did recognize various ways in which they were able to incorporate their international and intercultural experiences back into their academic, social, and cultural contexts upon their return home. The following themes highlight the different learning experiences and how they relate to the current literature on international education and student learning and retention within higher education.

Theme 1: Personal, Intercultural and Academic Development in the Academic Context

Personal and intercultural development

In conjunction with the study abroad literature on personal development, students identified instances of personal development in regards to an increase in self-confidence and developed patience and flexibility (Cisneros-Donahue et al., 2012; Clark et al., 2009; Anderson et al. 2006; Black & Duhon, 2006; Hadis, 2005). Additionally, while these developments are often portrayed in the literature of international education as general outcomes, students also demonstrated how these personal developments were attributed and directed towards one's academics and engagement at one's home institution. For example, Liz believes she has a broader view when engaging with her academics due to the different lenses and approaches she was exposed to while abroad, and she in turn feels more relaxed and confident towards her studies. Patrick also noted that his motivation towards his studies has increased and that his time abroad re-stimulated his interest for his academics. And Christine noted a sense of open-mindedness and awareness specifically towards international students and is actively engaged with the international office, thereby also reflecting an increase in student engagement in regards to participation in activities in college (Gonyea, 2008; Stebleton et al., 2013).

Language Proficiency

In a similar manner, language proficiency is often identified as a general, personal, and/or intercultural outcome of studying abroad in regards to language proficiency and linguistic competencies (Stebleton, Soria and Cherney, 2013; Savicki, 2011; Jackson, 2011; Deardorff, 2008). However, students within this study also

identified language proficiency as a specific academic outcome. Christine noted how she found it easier to engage in her English texts upon her return home and Tom stated that he decided to write his thesis in English. In this regard, students identify how their language proficiency and social and cultural interactions abroad directly influence their ability to engage with their academics as well as the desire to directly apply one's language proficiency directly back into their assignments and studies.

Internationalizing one's academic work and class discussions

Sutton and Rubin (2004) recognized the academic development of study abroad participants when evaluating their academic performance in terms of the student's academic work and assignments. They found that study abroad participants demonstrated better functional knowledge such as an awareness and knowledge of cultural practices and a better context of realism and conceptual learning in regards to the ability to interpret and demonstrate course knowledge conceptually by taking different political and social contexts (Redden, 2010). In this regard, Sutton and Rubin's (2004) concept of functional knowledge correlates to Engle and Engle's (2003) concept of subjective culture learning: the assumptions, values, and patterns of thinking and behaving that are shared by a group of people.

In support of Sutton and Rubin's (2004) study and Engle and Engle's subjective culture learning, participants within this study also commented on an awareness and knowledge of cultural practices and social contexts when engaging in their academic coursework and in class discussions upon their return. For example, Haley noted how she was able to contribute her experiences and understanding of Germans in class discussions concerning nationalism. She used her interactions with Germans, based on mannerisms

and histories, to compare mannerisms and behaviours of Canadians, thereby shaping her understanding and knowledge of nationalism as a concept.

Likewise, Adam commented on how he added to his class discussions the European approach to diagnostics and noted how he remained conscious of differences in perspectives while engaging in his course work, thereby demonstrating an awareness of not only other assumptions, values and patterns of thinking and behaving in regards to diagnostics, but also the assumptions and approaches within a North American context. In this regard, both Haley's and Adam's experiences not only support Sutton and Rubin's (2004) study on how study abroad participants are able to demonstrate an increased understanding and awareness of social and political contexts when engaging with their academic work, but also demonstrate that Engle and Engle's subjective culture learning from abroad continues upon a student's return to their home institution. In doing so, the students' experiences support the educational benefits within study abroad literature and speak to the value of study abroad programs in regards to both one's academic and intercultural development upon their return to their home institution.

Student involvement theory and academic motivation

Additionally, Haley commented on how her socio-cultural experiences influenced her academics upon return by creating a personal connection. She stated that by travelling and visiting Freud's home and museums focused on his life and work, a prominent theorist within the field of psychology, she was able to make a personal connection with her studies. This personal connection between one's social and cultural experiences and her academics upon her return increased her academic motivation and engagement with her studies. In doing so, Haley highlights the importance of Astin's (1999) student

involvement theory and not only the importance of social and cultural experiences outside the classroom but also accentuates how these experiences are transferable and affect one's academic development and engagement when a student returns to his/her home academic institution.

Theme 2: Personal and Professional Development in the Social and Cultural Context

Students referred to personal development in regards to a change in perspective or recognition of new values. For example, Christine commented on how she never thought about travelling through Europe but now has an interest in exploring and understanding the cultures and countries closer to home. Similarly, Liz and Patrick also commented on a change in their values having both experienced influential and supportive communities while abroad. Both Liz and Patrick remarked on how the search for a community has become an important goal for them. Liz and Patrick's examples highlight the importance of Astin's work on the interconnection between in and out of classroom experiences and Rendon's (1994) concept of validation to understand factors that influence student motivation and behaviour towards their academic, social, and cultural learning experiences

Professional opportunities at home and abroad

Professional development is also identified as an outcome of studying abroad and how one's international experiences influence professional and career development outside the institution (Franklin, 2010) that correlates to many of the students' experiences. Christine, for example, was offered an internship position upon her return, which she attributed to her international experience. Ben also noted how he would like to

return to Germany to teach English and believes his experience will help him relate to his students. Adam is now volunteering with the DAAD office promoting studying abroad in Germany and is considering working in Germany after realizing the limited amount of individuals and programs dedicated to help LGBT youth in Germany compared to in Canada. Additionally, Anna and Daniel have the confidence that they can succeed abroad in the future in regards to living within a different culture. Thus, the students' understanding of how their international experiences influence employment opportunities and professional careers in regards to one's location and field support and correlate to the current study abroad and international education literature.

While Tiessen (2012), within the field of international education, notes that important motivations for participating in the volunteer programs include the desire to test an academic background or career choice and study abroad literature refers to influences of one's international experiences on one's professional and career development upon a student's return home (Franklin, 2010), Ben also demonstrates how studying abroad can likewise test one's pursuance of international careers with one's academic background and engagement. For example, he stated that one of the reasons he chose to study in Germany was to see whether or not he would want to return to teach English in Germany. Due to his positive experiences, Ben has decided to return to Germany, thereby demonstrating how one's academic pursuits and experience within a foreign culture can influence one's decision to return for professional opportunities.

Theme 3: Academic pursuance and future academic studies and research

Nevertheless, lacking in the study abroad literature are studies and research that examine the effects of one's international experiences on a student's further academic studies and research. This study seeks to address this gap by identifying experiences in which a student's international experience influences one's academic pursuance in regards to the pursuance of interdisciplinary studies and other academic research opportunities abroad and at home.

Interdisciplinary studies

While the majority of students commented that their credits were successfully transferred, students also referred to how their academics abroad influenced their degree back at home beyond the mere incorporation and transferability of one's grades and credits (Anderson and Lawton, 2011). For example, Anna and Patrick both noted how they were able to declare a new minor upon their return to their home studies. While one can argue that this correlates to credit transfer, it also extends beyond credit transfer. Patrick was able to declare a minor in biology, a field of study that is not offered at his home institution, and Anna was able to acquire a minor in German and continued her studies in the language upon her return. In a similar manner, Liz also noted how her opportunity to study in humanities influenced her decision to pursue another degree in anthropology literature in Berlin.

In this regard, their study abroad experience enabled them not only to partake in disciplines outside their major but also altered their degree to reflect an interdisciplinary approach to education. In doing so, Anna, Patrick, and Liz's experiences demonstrate the importance of pursuing and incorporating one's personal experiences and personal

academic interests, such as academic areas of interest beyond one's academic major, and how one's personal experiences influence one's academic discipline. By drawing upon one's academic studies from abroad, students are able to bridge conventional disciplinary studies and demonstrate their ability, in terms of number of credits, and desire to expand their original educational scope, academic focus, and degree requirements.

Other academic research opportunities abroad and at home

However, many students noted how they were unable to continue with topics they studied abroad. Maddie noted that she was unable to continue with her German language due to her schedule constraints at her home institution. Jenny was unable to pursue her interest in sleep and dreaming because there were no professors at her home institution studying the topic, and Liz noted how she was unable to continue with analytical psychology because it was a stream not offered at her home institution. These experiences, the desire but inability to continue one's studies from abroad, not only highlights the importance of new academic exposure and opportunities available within study abroad programs (Teichler, 2004), but also suggests that current academic structures and requirements of one's degree may not have the flexibility to support the continuation and extension of one's international experiences and studies upon their return.

Although Jenny could not pursue her interest in sleep and dreaming, her experience in that field influenced her decision to apply to master's programs in clinical psychology. Thus, in contrast to Anna, Patrick, and Liz who expanded their academic focus, Jenny's exposure to the different streams in psychology while abroad enabled her to narrow her focus and future research. Thus, the narrowing of one's focus and interests

is also important and demonstrates an additional influence of how one's international academic experiences shapes one's interests, values, and future academic research.

Liz also explained how her desire to continue with her studies from abroad led her to research other partnerships within her university and she is now completing courses and her thesis at the University of Basel, in Switzerland, in analytical psychology as well as a desire to return the University of Toronto for graduate studies. In doing so, Liz demonstrates academic initiative in her ability to identify and pursue alternative means outside her home institution to engage and continue with her academic area of research from abroad.

Like Liz, Adam also demonstrated a desire to return to his host country to pursue graduate studies. He explained how his knowledge of the German approach to graduate studies within the field of psychology, when compared to Canadian institutions, reflect and adhere to his values and professional development. In this regard, Adam demonstrated international comparative thinking and the importance of understanding not only different institutional approaches to learning but also the influence of cultural implications of the institution, city, and country in regards to both the academic studies, life in general, and professional careers.

Finally, Adam also explained how his cultural experiences abroad and his work in the lab contributed to his ability to find a professor willing to supervise his undergraduate thesis as well as his work with the Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst (DAAD), a different organization from the OBW that also provides study abroad opportunities for Canadians to study in Germany. In doing so, Adam demonstrates how one's cultural and out of classroom experience influence his academics at home in regards to his thesis but

also how his studies abroad within the academic context lead to social, cultural, and to an extent, professional initiatives outside the institution through his volunteer work with the DAAD.

Chapter VI: Conclusion

How do academic, social and cultural experiences converge to shape the international education of German and Canadian students on the Ontario-Baden-Württemberg exchange program?

Despite my own and Montrose's observations on how study abroad participants do not seem to recognize or value the learning experiences within the academic context compared to their socio-cultural experiences and their apparent lack of incorporation of one's international experiences into their academics upon their return, students in this study did recognize and identify various learning experiences that occurred within the academic, social, and cultural contexts of studying abroad. Learning experiences within the academic context were associated with pedagogical learning experiences in terms of one's exposure to different approaches to learning or engagement in culture specific content. The social context referred to social interactions and relations with peers both on and off campus while the cultural context involved interactions and participation in activities with non-student members of the host culture. Additionally, while the students differentiated between these three contexts, they also referred to instances in which the academic, social, and cultural contexts interrelated, thereby contributing to what I label as "aca-cultural," socio-academic, and socio-cultural experiences.

Aca-cultural experiences referred to the following interactions and interrelations between one's academic and cultural contexts: (I) pedagogical factors in regards to one's exposure to different approaches to learning or engagement in a culture specific content contributed to students' affective, behavioural, and cognitive intercultural development, and academic knowledge and personal development in regards to one's confidence and

ability to engage in discussions and interactions with members of the host culture; (II) professors and peers in regards to information networks and academic opportunities and interactions leading to cultural interactions such as working on campus and engagement in experiential learning strategies; (III) as well as cultural experiences such as working on campus that created a supportive environment that contributed to one's ability to academically focus and achieve good grades.

Socio-academic experiences refer to peer relations developed within class, such as through group work and social relations that extended and continued to develop outside the classroom. These social relations contributed to one's intercultural development in regards to one's understanding of the host culture and their ability to engage in cultural events and celebrations. Additionally, one's social relations also influenced students' academic development in terms of student communities that provided academic support and motivation, as well as increasing one's language proficiency.

Socio-cultural experiences refer to interactions predominantly outside the academic classroom that contribute to the development of friendships and cultural understanding. In this regard, many students referred to the role of the international and OBW office as facilitators in the development and strengthening of friendships between exchange/international students as well as culturally facilitating relationships and interactions between exchange/international students and domestic students/locals within the host culture. Additionally, students referred to instances of working on campus, such as at Starbucks and a psychology lab that contributed to a student's sense of confidence, understanding and interactions with members of the host culture, and increasing one's language proficiency. In doing so, the students demonstrated various experiences and

interrelations between the academic, social, and cultural contexts that re-affirms the effectiveness and importance of study abroad programs in contributing to a student's overall academic, personal, intercultural, and professional development.

In addition to the various experiences and instances in which the different contexts interrelated to contribute various academic, personal, and intercultural learning experiences, the differences in the students' experiences reflect various degrees of interrelation. For example, the majority of students referred to aca-cultural experiences within the classroom. In this regard, the importance of the foreign academic environment and integrated university study was illustrated as an environment that supported the interrelation between one's academics and intercultural development.

For example, by participating alongside domestic students and according to cultural approaches to learning, Daniel's exposure to the different structure of tutorials resulted in his engagement in new approaches to learning and understanding the course material while Adam's exposure to the European perspective also contributed to his understanding of cultural differences in regards to one's approach to academic content and disciplines. In doing so, the different approaches to tutorials and learning within Germany resulted in having to interculturally develop by demonstrating resourcefulness, self-reliance, an increase in motivation and understanding of cultural norms, values, and behaviours in order to adapt and adhere to the culturally appropriate expectations within his host institution. As a result, Daniel and Adam's experiences correlate to the educational and intercultural benefits, within the study abroad literature, of studying alongside host nationals within an academic institution.

Furthermore, the concern for language proficiency was not an issue or barrier for the German participants. However, while some Canadian students did note how their language proficiency created challenges in integrating into the German society, their proximity and interactions with domestic students was not inhibited. For example, Haley and Ben who took courses in English developed relations with their German peers and even Anna, who took a course in French, was able to meet fellow German students in their class, which lead to social-cultural interactions and experiences. Furthermore, living and interacting with members of their host culture, while taking language courses, contributed to Anna and Ben's language proficiency that enabled them to take courses in their host language and contributed to their understanding and engagement with their host culture. Thus, further research is needed to understand the effects and influences of language support programs and systems in place prior to and during a student's study abroad experience.

Additionally, students also referred to experiences discussed within the literature of student learning and retention in higher education. By drawing upon the literature of Tinto (1997), Astin (1999), Rendon (1994), Karp et al. (2010), and Deil-Amen (2011), the study was able to understand and highlight different learning experiences in which the academic, social, and cultural interrelated beyond the academic classroom. For example, Astin's (1999) student involvement theory contributes to the understanding of the socio-academic experiences in which one's social interactions with peers or involvement in student activities like intramural sports outside the classroom provided a student-focused community and social interactions that influenced and increased some of the students'

sense of motivation, academic engagement with their studies, and improved one's language proficiency.

Likewise, Rendon's (1994) concept of validation, Tinto's (1997) collaborative learning, and Deil-Amen's socio-academic integrative moments reflected instances in which important socio-academic relations with one's peers and professors contributed to the students' sense of belonging, confidence, and academic capability that not only supported their academic endeavours but also contributed to social relations that developed outside the classroom by creating feelings of inclusion and belonging. In doing so, relations that often began as academic processes resulted in aca-cultural and socio-cultural experiences that extended beyond the academic classroom. This included the works of information networks that enabled two students to engage in academic and cultural experiences within a psychology lab and German as a foreign language classroom as well as eventually leading to the inclusion of socio-cultural events like celebrating Christmas with the German department. Additionally, many of the students' social relations with domestic students began within the classroom and extended beyond as well as the institutional support from their international and OBW offices that facilitated social relations and cultural interactions, thereby enabling students to participate in local cultural activities and celebrations.

Thus, this study highlights the importance of the academic classroom, the particular pedagogy adopted within the classroom as well as that of the institutional support structures and systems in regards to both facilitating student learning and development. Additionally, the study demonstrates the importance of both individuals (professors, peers) and programs and services (the international and OBW offices) in

providing support systems that enhance students' sense of confidence, validation, and inclusiveness that contribute to their motivation and engagement in academic, social and cultural learning experiences.

In doing so, the study draws attention to the importance of study abroad research referring to literature on student learning and retention in higher education as a means to understand the diverse and numerous processes and interactions that serve as a platform in which study abroad participants can continue to apply and develop their academic, personal, intercultural, and professional development. As a result, further research combining study abroad literature and the literature concerning student learning within higher education can contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of student learning that not only supports the learning of international students at one's own institution, but also contributes to the understanding of how institutions can recognize and support the learning and development of their students who return after engaging in activities within the realm of international education.

Importantly, students demonstrated the influence of their various academic, social, and cultural experiences upon their return home. Within the academic context, students referred to instances of functional and subjective culture learning, broadening of one's disciplinary perspective and focus of interdisciplinary studies, an increase in one's motivation and engagement with their academic studies, and the pursuance of further academic opportunities both at home and abroad such as pursuing additional academic programs that relate to one's studies from their host institution.

Within the social and cultural contexts, students also referred to personal development in terms of an increase in confidence, an understanding and recognition of

new values, and professional development in terms of job and volunteer opportunities both at home and abroad. In this regard, students support the literature on the effectiveness and benefits of study abroad programs within the field of international education. While the vast majority of the literature in international education focuses on personal development, intercultural competence, and professional development, many students were able to demonstrate how one's international experiences influenced their further academic studies and research interests. In this regard, further research is needed to understand and recognize the presence of experiential learning and how the various study abroad contexts and experiences shape future academic studies and research pursuits.

By reflecting on how one's international experiences and activities have influenced personal, professional, and academic development, students demonstrate the importance of experiential learning and the ability to transform experience into knowledge that contributes to a change in an understanding of his/herself, one's practices, and future experiences. In doing so, the study demonstrates the importance of not only allowing students the time and space to reflect on their international experiences but also the importance of specifically asking students to reflect on their learning experiences within the different contexts. Thus, in hindsight, my own and Montrose's interactions with students may not have drawn as much understanding and engagement from students through general and shorter interactions in comparison with this study's in-depth questioning.

Finally, while this study is limited in scope in regards to examining the experience of 12 German and Canadian students from two specific regions, Baden-Württemberg and

Ontario, further research is needed to understand why specific demographic characteristics might contribute to specific outcomes when it comes to study abroad. For example, why is it that three Canadians, when compared to one German student, identified a separation between one's academic and socio-cultural experiences in regards to travel. Why did one's participation and engagement in travel appear to students to be a determining socio-cultural factor that inhibited one's academic engagements? How is travel situated within the circulating study abroad discourse in Canada versus Germany? Who are the main contributors to these discourses? Is there an equal representation of academics and administrators? Do students have voice in this discourse?

While study abroad programs may be effective strategies to educate and develop interculturally competent students, the sample is too small to differentiate between individual characteristics, institutional characteristics, and the importance of pedagogy such as instances of experiential learning that make study abroad effective educational strategies. Furthermore, further research is needed to understand the interrelation and learning experiences of study abroad experiences in different cultures and countries. In this regard, for example, would students who study abroad in other countries such as India or China have similar experiences? What other factors or forms of pedagogy may exist in other cultures?

This study highlights the importance and relevance of the theory of student involvement and the practice and principles of experiential learning to research on study abroad. Most importantly, it reinforces the relevance and uniqueness of study abroad as an effective strategy for student learning and development. It highlights the value of study abroad for both short and long term personal, intercultural and professional

development, but it also highlights the many ways study abroad impacts and influences student's academic development. It raises fundamental questions about circulating study abroad discourses and how travel is envisioned in the context of students' learning while on study abroad. Where and how do students get messages about their academic, social and cultural learning experiences while on study abroad? How does this influence their perception on the separation or interconnectedness between these contexts, their engagement within them and ultimately the value they place on these experiences? Perhaps the theory of student involvement and experiential education can further contribute to research, policy and practice in international education, thus strengthening and integrating student's aca-cultural, socio-academic and socio-cultural experiences ultimately preparing making them to be interculturally competent global citizens.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Researcher's E-mail

Hi,

My name is Amy and I studied at the University of Konstanz last year through the Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst (DAAD). I'm currently working on my thesis for my Master's in Education at York University and was wondering if you would be willing to participate in a Skype interview about your experience in Ontario through the OBW program. I'm interested in understanding your intercultural and learning experiences within the academic and social context of studying abroad.

The interview will take approximately 45 minutes and I would send you the questions beforehand. Would you be interested? And if so, is there a day and time at which you are available within the upcoming week?

Looking forward to hearing from you.

Expectations of program:
1. What were your reasons for participating in the program
2. Did the host institution and cultural experiences fulfill your expectations? In what way?

Academic experience:
3. How would you identify or describe the academic component of your study abroad experience?
4. Did you participate in courses related to your major field of study?
5. Did you recognize or experience differences between your host and home institution in regards to their expectations and approaches to learning?
6. Do you feel that you were able to integrate into your host institution? What factors influenced this integration or lack of integration? What opportunities did your institution provide to support or inhibit this integration?

Cultural experience:
7. How would you identify or describe the socio cultural component of your study abroad experience?
8. Do you feel that you were able to integrate into the host culture? What factors influenced this integration or lack of integration?

Interrelation between academics and socio cultural experiences:
9. Do you perceive the academic and socio cultural experiences as separate components of the study abroad programs? Why or why not?
10. Would you describe these experiences as complementary, distinct or inhibitory in regards to your overall intercultural learning and international experiences? Why?
11. Do you think your involvement in an academic institution and coursework contributed to your understanding of the culture of your host country?
12. Do you feel that your ability or inability to integrate into the host culture influence your integration into the host institution and your engagement with your academics? In what way?

Post-Experience:
13. How have you been able to incorporate your international experiences or knowledge gained abroad back into your academic work?
14. How have you been able to incorporate your international experiences outside the academic institution?

Informed Consent Form

Study name

How study abroad facilitates subjective learning experiences: A study of the social and academic experiences of German and Canadian students on the Ontario-Baden-Wuerttemberg program

Purpose of the research

The purpose of this research is to understand the social/cultural and academic experiences of Canadian and German students who participate on the Ontario-Baden-Wuerttemberg student exchange program.

The research will be conducted using interviews and the data will be compiled as a final thesis to fulfill the program requirements.

What will you be asked to do in the research

Participants will be asked to participate in an interview that will last approximately one hour. The interview questions will be distributed beforehand to allow time for reflection.

Risks and discomforts

Participants may feel uncomfortable or experience discomfort if relating and remembering negative situations and experiences that occurred while studying abroad.

Benefits of the research and benefits to you

Participants have the opportunity to relate and discuss experiences that occurred while studying abroad. This research will contribute to the current literature on understanding the social/cultural and academic experience of study abroad participants.

Voluntary participation

Your participation in the research is completely voluntary and that participants may choose to stop participating at any time. Indicate that a participant's decision not to continue participating will not influence their relationship or the nature of their relationship with researchers or with staff of York University either now or in the future.

Withdrawal from the study

You may stop participating in the study at any time, for any reason, if you so decide. Your decision to stop participating, or to refuse to answer particular questions, will not

affect your relationship with the researchers, York University, or any other group associated with this project. In the event that you withdraw from the study, all associated data collected will be immediately destroyed wherever possible.

Confidentiality

Interviews will be recorded and transcribed by the researcher. Once transcribed, the interviews will be deleted from the recorder. The transcribed data will remain on the researcher's laptop, will be password protected, and will be destroyed after one year. Confidentiality will be provided to the fullest extent possible by law and participants will remain anonymous.

Questions about the research

This research has been reviewed and approved by the Human Participants Review Sub-Committee, York University's Ethics Review Board and conforms to the standards of the Canadian Tri-Council Research Ethics guidelines. If you have any questions about this process, or about your rights as a participant in the study, your may contact the Senior Manager and Policy Advisor for the Office of Research Ethics, 5th Floor, York Research Tower, York University, telephone 416-736-5914 or e-mail ore@yorku.ca

Legal rights and signatures

I _____, consent to participate in how study abroad facilitates subjective learning experiences: A study of the social and academic experiences of German and Canadian students on the Ontario-Baden-Wuerttemberg program.

I have understood the nature of this project and wish to participate. I am not waiving any of my legal rights by signing this form. My signature below indicates my consent.

Signature: _____   Date: _____

Participant name:

Signature: _____   Date: _____

Principal Investigator: