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*NOT UPGRADED TOURISM*: A CASE STUDY OF

THE EFFECTS OF A SHORT-TERM STUDY ABROAD EXPERIENCE IN ISRAEL

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EMMANUELLE SARAH CHIOCCA
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*NOT UPGRADED TOURISM*: A CASE STUDY OF
THE EFFECTS OF A SHORT-TERM STUDY ABROAD EXPERIENCE IN ISRAEL

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BY

Dr. Lawrence Baines, Chair

Dr. Neil Houser

Dr. Jiening Ruan

Dr. Stacy Reeder

Dr. Benjamin Heddy

à ma mère qui m'encouragea pour mon premier séjour,
et à mon père qui me poussa au second.

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# Abstract

International education has been evolving in the past decade, with short-term study abroad programs gradually growing to be the dominant type of program. With this growth comes the need to develop a concentrated and impactful curriculum and to provide supportive environments for deep learning abroad that is more than upgraded tourism but rather focused on educational outcomes.

This qualitative case study investigates the experiences of five study abroad participants in Jerusalem and the potential changes they perceive to have undergone during their sojourn, in the hopes of providing insights for international curriculum development. Drawing from multiple data sources within an interpretive framework, such as surveys, documents, observations, and interviews of the participants and their instructor, the purpose of this study is to understand the types of experiences and subsequent change in relation to the curriculum abroad. Data was analyzed inductively and thematically. The findings suggest that the holistic experience was anchored by (1) directed and diverse conversations, (2) hermeneutical reflections, (3) emotional disequilibrium, (4) cross-cultural competence development, and (5) student engagement in a classroom culture, which acted together as a *gestalt*. Change emerged in the forms of (1) intercultural sensitivity, (2) change as a student, (3) ideological shift, and (4) career refinement.

Findings highlight the connections between experiential learning, intercultural competence development, and perspective transformation. They encourage international educators to provide instructional frames that encourage students to engage with the host

culture in critical ways via experiential pedagogy to increase their critical cultural

awareness.

Keywords:  international education, study abroad, intercultural development, intercultural sensitivity, transformative learning, perspective transformation, experiential learning

# Chapter 1: Introduction

*"[Y]ou needn't let that slightly funny feeling you have from time to time about exploitation, oppression, domination develop into full-fledged unease, discomfort; you could ruin your holiday"* (Kincaid, 1988, p. 10).

## Genesis

I never thought I would study abroad, I never thought I would develop the interest in foreign languages I have been developing, and I certainly did not think I would do research on the holistic influence of studying abroad. My interest in international education was probably instilled in me during the early years of my college education, but I did not develop ownership and awareness of this interest until recently. Upon studying abroad as an exchange student at the University of Oklahoma in 2009, I developed a nearly unconditional love for places and people I had barely encountered. Four months in Oklahoma had initiated a first change, but the extent of my infatuation developed only much later, through individual reflection about my experiences, and through conversations, making me almost idealize the place and its people. In a way, I convinced myself that the impact of my four months in Oklahoma had been even greater than what it probably was. Oklahoma became a kind of myth.

In 2013, I returned as an international student, thinking that my life was finally about to begin because I had finally chosen where I wanted to live and grow. I was uprooting myself from France to plant myself elsewhere. During my first semester in the college of education, I took a class about understanding other cultures. This class allowed me to go beyond my then comfort zone: I had to interview a cultural "other," and my

partner and I naturally picked each other because we were sitting next to each other on the first day, and because we knew we came from different countries.

Ming was from China. Interviewing her sparked a first layer of interest in China and awareness of my ignorance and lack of sensitivity to other cultures. Realizing I was not as openminded as I thought I was created an earthquake in me: embarrassment, shame, and guilt. As Alain Finkielkraut (2013) puts it, many people take pride in a touristic openness which is limited to a certain exotic context, and they perceive their so-called open-mindedness to be a victory against chauvinism and preconceptions. Upon reflection, this is where I was: thinking of myself as open-minded because I had traveled to a few countries outside of the West. The same semester I met Ming, I started teaching English as a Second Language to international students, and the majority of my students were Chinese. An email from the Confucius Institute convinced me to enroll in a free Chinese language course, and two and a half years later, I participated in a short-term summer program in Beijing. I would not have imagined when I first started learning the language that I would study in China. This very short overall experience of meeting Chinese people, observing the life of various neighborhoods, and gaining more awareness of my positionality, allowed me to reflect on my own life, beliefs, and how I envisioned otherness and in a certain way, my consumption of other cultures. The following year, I had originally planned to participate in a short-term summer study abroad program with a service learning component, but I ended up finding out about another opportunity in Jerusalem with the possibility of studying immigration. While I now believe that I was unconsciously preparing myself to be transformed by new encounters and by a new environment, I took a class as a researcher participant, keeping notes, not only about the

content I was being taught and observing about the host country and what I was feeling, but also about what I was seeing in my classmates and in my instructor, who remains one of the most influential educators I have had the privilege of taking a class with. My summer in Jerusalem moved me to the core for many reasons. My initial intention was not to be an active researcher participant, but I rapidly decided to approach the experience from a different perspective. My personal journal as well as my collection of notes represented interesting data which I thought about eventually using for a research project. The present project turned into this dissertation.

<div align="center">

**Research Problem**

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In the context of a globalized world and growing conflicts, it is more vital than ever to foster understanding of cultural diversity and educate students capable of not only negotiating intercultural challenges but also of identifying issues both at home and abroad. Indeed, international travels for both leisure and business continue to increase, impacting relationships between cultures, with travelers (whether willingly or not) becoming representatives of their cultures while abroad. In this climate, the increasing belief that the single metric of the extent of one's world travels is tantamount to global citizenship has threatened to reduce international travel and study abroad to a consumable good.

For the past few decades, an ideological shift has been encouraging institutions of higher education to systematize international education programs to meet the new needs of a global economy. Businesses have been emphasizing the importance of holistic intercultural competence (IC), specifically the subcategory of intercultural sensitivity (IS), recognizing that these attributes can improve competitiveness and the bottom line (IIE,

2018; Tillman, 2012). While employers in the public and private sectors continue to demand international experiences from their employees, universities increasingly encourage their students to gain international experiences—the most common not just in the United States, but in other countries as well, being via study abroad (Take & Shoraku, 2017). In 2014 the U.S. Department of State created the Study Abroad Office, to help foster international education, revealing the growing importance of a type of education which for a long time remained the preserve of a socioeconomic elite.

Internationalizing higher education is not limited to accepting international students and sending domestic students abroad, for this process of internationalization requires a deeper and broader philosophical understanding of education. Study abroad (SA) programs have diverse goals, focus on different academic aspects (language or otherwise), and differ in activities, giving rise to myriad effects on participants. Studying abroad can lead to "linguistic, cultural, personal, professional, academic, and intercultural outcomes. Some researchers would also include identity development among these outcomes, or perhaps view it is an overarching category for developments under other headings" (Benson et al., 2013, p. 41).

While some programs focus on language learning, others are more focused on content – and only sometimes content-related to the host country. Studying abroad used to be reserved for the most privileged students, who would study languages in Western European universities for a schoolyear. Lately, universities have been promoting international education as an experience that all students should pursue, despite the financial burden study abroad represents. Although economic privilege continues to play an important role, study abroad has been opening to less privileged students, via short-

term programs. However, ethnic and racial minorities continue to have low enrollment (Institute of International Education (IIE), 2017). Though language majors used to be the primary cohort and language learning the primary field of study abroad research, this is no longer the case (Deardorff & Jones, 2012). Students in humanities and STEM have surpassed language majors, and European destinations, though they remain the majority, do not have a monopoly (IIE, 2017). As Lewin (2009) puts it, "the revolution of study abroad is thus not only numerical, but indeed philosophical" (p. xiv). However, while universities have been focused on quantitative results by trying to send more students abroad every year, the learning outcomes have been in flux. Little is known regarding curricula, pedagogy, or the effects of programs (Strange & Gibson, 2017).

Higher education institutions have been challenged to evaluate the success of education abroad programs not only in terms of the proportion of students participating in such programs, or through "consumer-oriented, student satisfaction-based" surveys, but qualitatively (Engle, 2013, p. 118). Thus, linguistic and intercultural competencies such as attitudes, knowledge, or beliefs, including how students change after international experiences have progressively attracted researchers' attention. Another criticism made of institutions that encourage international education concerns the push towards short-term study abroad programs. Some study abroad researchers argue that international education has progressively become a source of monetary profit allowing institutions to claim high numbers of students who go abroad, resulting in trivialization of holistic outcomes of studying abroad (Engle & Engle, 2003).

In 2015-2016, there were 325,339 students who participated in a study abroad program, a 3.8% increase from the previous year (Institute of International Education,

2017). Although high in terms of historic enrollments, those students who go abroad in any given year still represents less than 2% of the students enrolled in US higher education institutions. Sojourns are typically divided among university exchange, direct enrollment, and faculty-led programs, and the degree of involvement of the alma mater varies tremendously, as well as the goals and length of programs. Indeed, according to IIE Open Doors (2017), over 60% of students enrolled in a study abroad during the 2015-2016 academic year participated in programs shorter than eight weeks. Semester and year-long programs no longer represent the majority choice for study abroad participants.

Speaking about study abroad in terms of how it impacts "language fluency" or "cultural sensitivity" or even "personal perspective" is to attempt to dissect what, for many, is a holistic life-changing experience. Removal from the sociocultural and linguistic contexts in which one was raised, even for a relatively similar cultural climate (North America vs. Western Europe, for example), can force a re-examination of life. While intercultural sensitivity has become a central theme of studying abroad, it is difficult to fully disentangle intercultural growth from general personal "growth."

*Intercultural Competence and Intercultural Sensitivity*

Intercultural sensitivity (IS) is defined as the "active desire to motivate [oneself] to understand, appreciate, and accept differences among cultures." (Chen & Starosta, 1998, p. 231). It is conceptualized as the affective branch of intercultural competence (IC), as it tackles questions regarding interest and curiosity about other cultures, the awareness of cultural differences, as well as the conscious behavioral change to display respect (Bhawuk & Brislin, 1992; Hammer, Bennett, & Wiseman, 2003). IS impacts student

perceptions of other cultures and their socialization with people from diverse cultures, and pushes the boundaries of otherness, but also potentially alters the sense of identity and professional goals (Bassot, 2013; King, 1998). In spite of advances made in understanding study abroad experiences, fundamental questions persist regarding its genuine impact. Intercultural competence seems to be facilitated by language-related components, such as international experiences including length of study abroad (Anderson, et. al, 2006; Engle & Engle, 2004; Medina-Lopez-Portillo, 2004; Jackson, 2008), program structure (Paige, Cohen, & Shively, 2004; Vande Berg, 2007), housing conditions, socialization with native speakers, and types of activities while abroad. These findings continue to contribute to the improvement of study abroad programs, but the growth and perceived causes for such growth vary tremendously from context to context, program to program, country to country, and individual to individual. Understanding how individuals think of their study abroad experiences and how they think it affected them is important.

## *Transformative Learning and Study Abroad*

Transformative Learning (TL) is defined as "the process of becoming critically aware of how and why our assumptions have come to constrain the way we perceive, understand, and feel about the world; of reformulating these assumptions to permit a more inclusive, discriminating, permeable, and integrative perspective; and of making decisions or otherwise acting upon these new understandings." (Mezirow, 1991, p. 167). The expression "perspective transformation," coined by Mezirow (1978), refers to the structural change experienced through adult development. This transformation affects how people see themselves and ultimately influences behavior through action. Because

of its challenging character, study abroad can trigger disorienting experiences and create conditions for which learning about another culture in an unfamiliar country can induce not only increased knowledge of differences, but also transformation of worldviews. Identifying which activities study abroad participants believe impacted their perspective transformation could help study abroad specialists better understand what happens during study abroad. Transformative learning implies "irreversible changes in the way a person experiences, conceptualizes, and interacts with the world" (Hoggan, 2016, p. 71). In this sense, transformative learning leads to permanent change, also known as perspective transformation (PT).

*Experiential Learning and Inquiry-Based Learning*

Experiential Learning (EL) refers to "a wide range of educational approaches in which formal learning (in institutional contexts) is integrated with practical work and informal learning" (Kohonen, 2001, p. 22). It is characterized by "learning from immediate experience and engaging the learners in the process as whole persons, both intellectually and emotionally" (Kohonen, 2001, p. 23), and it supposes a learner-centered paradigm in which the goal of education is personal growth rather than mere training for a specific set of tasks (Dewey, 1938; Noddings, 2013, 2015). Further, because the emphasis is not on cognition but rather on affect, it presupposes a reflective dimension. In international education contexts, experiential learning can take various forms, such as ethnographic research, anthropological observations, or service learning. Although experiential learning is associated with positive outcomes in terms of intercultural learning (Jackson, 2011; Yan Lo-Philip et al., 2015), it remains a relatively neglected dimension of international education (Strange & Gibson, 2017).

**Intercultural Sensitivity, Transformative and Experiential Learning, and Study Abroad**

Students participating in study abroad programs might experience a change in intercultural competence (IC) during their international experiences. International experiences and intercultural interactions are not always associated with positive emotions, but they can force a reevaluation of preconceived ideas about culture and "foreigners." Even difficult experiences can turn into opportunities for growth that might manifest long after the international experience. Consequently, understanding the lived experiences of students participating in study abroad programs can help identify the real effects of study abroad.

## Significance of the Study

Increasing intercultural competence (IC) --and intercultural sensitivity (IS) in particular-- continues to be a growing interest not limited to international education contexts. Indeed, intercultural competence and intercultural sensitivity remain concepts at the center of much theoretical debate across disciplines. However, there is a paucity of research specifically on intercultural sensitivity change in relation to study abroad. Indeed, intercultural sensitivity seems to be improved by activities revolving around critical self-reflection and self-awareness through writing (Hunter, White & Godbey, 2006; Weigl, 2009) and discussions (Biagi et al., 2012), but very few studies investigate the pedagogical contexts of study abroad. Still, most studies focus on non-language disciplines or English as a Second Language (ESL) as demonstrated by King (2000) in the context of perspective transformation experiences. Research regarding the

experiential learning during study abroad experiences is not abundant, because most study abroad experiences do not encompass such activities. Although research has explored intercultural sensitivity growth (Hammer, Bennett & Wiseman, 2003) in language classrooms while abroad (Biagi et al., 2012; Bracci, 2013; Liu, 2009), to date, much remains to be learned regarding the influence of experiential learning on the perceived quality of experience.

## Research Purpose and Contribution to the Field

In this study, I identify and describe aspects of short-term study abroad experiences. I investigate whether students perceived they changed, and the nature of their change. I am particularly interested in the perceived disruption study abroad can have on students' positionality in their own cultures and abroad.

## Research Questions

This study investigates the following research questions:

1. What were the participants' experiences in a short-term study abroad program in Israel?
2. In what ways, if any, do study abroad participants perceive that they changed?

## Definitions

**Study abroad** refers to the act of pursuing educational activities at a higher education institution in a country different than one's own.

**Short-term study abroad** refers to programs shorter than 8 weeks.

**Intercultural sensitivity (IS)** is defined as "an individual's ability to develop a positive emotion towards understanding and appreciating cultural differences that promotes an appropriate and effective behavior in intercultural communication" (Chen & Starosta, 1997, p. 5).

**Perspective transformation (PT)** is defined as "the process of becoming critically aware of how and why our assumptions have come to constrain the way we perceive, understand, and feel about the world" (Mezirow, 1991, p. 167).

**Experiential learning (EL)** refers to "a wide range of educational approaches in which formal learning (in institutional contexts) is integrated with practical work and informal learning" (Kohonen, 2001, p. 22).

**Law of Return** refers to the 1950 text allowing Jews from the diaspora to "return" to Israel. The law allows people with a Jewish grandparent, as well as spouses of people with a Jewish grandparent to move to Israel.

**Making Aliyah** refers to the immigration of Jews from the diaspora to Eretz Israel (the Land of Israel).

**Oleh (plur.: olim)** refers to the Jews having made Aliyah to Israel; the new comers.

**Falashas** refers to Ethiopian Jews.

**Haredi/Haredim** refers to the Ultra-Orthodox Jewish community.

**Hasidic Jews** refers to a branch of the Ultra-Orthodox Jewish community.

**Taglit-Birthright** refers to a program funded in the United States to support 10-day sojourns of young Jewish adults to Israel.

**East Jerusalem** refers to Arab towns on the East side of Jerusalem, in which inhabitants are stateless "residents of Israel," citizens of neither Israel nor of the Palestinian Authority.

**Palestinian citizen of Israel** = Israeli-Palestinian = Israeli-Arab = Arab-Israeli citizen = Arab citizen of Israel, unlike Palestinian residents of Israel and Palestinians from the West Bank and the Gaza Strip (Palestinian territories under Palestinian Authority).

**Nakba** means "catastrophe" in Arabic and refers to the expulsion and murder of Arabs in 1948. On the Israeli-Jewish side, people refer to it as the War of Independence.

*Figure 1: Map of Israel, West Bank, and Gaza Strip (Map No. 3584 Rev.2, January 2004, UNITED NATIONS)*

## Chapter 2: Literature on Study Abroad and its Impacts on Students

This review of the literature investigates the relationship among study abroad, intercultural sensitivity, and perspective transformation. The following pages include overviews of the different study abroad characteristics, as well as aspects which influence intercultural sensitivity or perspective transformation discussed in the literature.

### Study Abroad or Tourism

*"The thing you have always suspected about yourself the minute you become a tourist is true: A tourist is an ugly human being" (Kincaid, 1988, p. 14).*

Historically, traveling and learning has been a tradition reserved for a certain elite. In the middle ages, the "*peregrinatio academica*," or academic peregrination, later called the "Grand Tour" during the 16th-18th centuries, was originally popular among the European aristocracy who would study Humanities in various European universities in order to be considered a genteel man. The Tour was an intellectual formation by touring commonly visited sites, giving access to a taste of arts, knowledge of political systems and differences in the practice of power, but also of cultural differences, and it allowed for the formation of international friendships among young men from affluent social environments. The tour was in a sense a way of reinforcing social ties among people from the same social environment. Goethe, for example, spent a significant amount of time "on tour" in Italy in the late 18th century. After the First World War that the Institute of International Education (IIE) was founded upon the potential of cross-cultural understanding and the belief that many international conflicts could be avoided if we

knew more about each other. In 1923, the first American study abroad program, created at the University of Delaware, began sending students to France.

Since the 1990s, international education has been "democratizing," opening its doors not only to the most privileged students but to lesser privileged, and not only to students working on their humanities but to STEM majors as well. Study abroad has expanded in geographic scope, with students going to many locations other than Western metropolises. Indeed, US Higher education institutions have been increasingly sending students on study abroad programs (IIE, 2017). A common belief is that study abroad provides experiences leading to positive outcomes that could not be attained if students stayed on their home campuses (Tarrant, Rubin, & Stoner, 2015). Interestingly, study abroad programs have taken many forms, both in length and in content, and what is being studied in academic courses varies greatly.

In its last report, the IIE (2016) published that 63% of programs were summer or short term, whereas 34% were mid-length and 3% long-term programs. While the literature does not agree on the terminology, most short-term study abroad programs are shorter than a semester (IIE, 2017), whereas mid-length programs refer to one semester abroad, and long-term programs to an academic year or longer. Students are no longer expected to have proficiency in the target language. Indeed, most study abroad programs are delivered in English, and language learning is often not a major focus. Monolinguals can now study petroleum engineering in Lima, or chemistry in Budapest. This evolution of the nature of study abroad, moving from language-focused to a new purpose, reveals shifting goals and assessment have drastically changed. A recent turn in research argues that mere contact with cultural "others" is not sufficient for leading to significant change,

thus challenging programs' elitism, ethnocentric curricula, outcomes, assessments, and the industrial consumption of international education focusing on the discursive prevalence of touristic over educational experiences (Engle, 2013; Jooste & Heleta, 2017; Michelson & Valencia, 2016; Pipitone, 2018; Savicki & Brewer, 2015).

*Study Abroad Programs and Paradigms*

Study abroad programs can take many forms. University exchange usually involves a partnership between universities who send an equal number of students to each other's institution. Direct enrollment refers to students enrolling in a host university without necessarily going through their own university. Faculty-led programs are usually content-focused, short-term programs with lectures in various locations.

Three different schools of thought or paradigms on study abroad are popular (Vande Berg, et al. 2012). The first is the "positivist paradigm," which argues that learning is solely through experience, and that language proficiency is beneficial to increase learning. This paradigm perceives study abroad as a merit-based experience. Students who have good grades deserve to go abroad and are trustworthy since they are good students on their home campuses. The second is the "relativist paradigm," which argues that all cultures are equal and that simply being immersed in a new culture will create conditions for some sort of transformation. Programs abiding by a relativist paradigm try to send as many students abroad as they can and encourage longer immersive sojourns with host families. If students return with limited transformation, the students, not the program or study abroad professionals, are considered to have failed. The relativist paradigm is the most prevalent type of program in US universities (Vande

Berg, et al., 2012). Finally, the "experiential/constructivist paradigm," argues that learning occurs best through a combination of immersion and cultural mentoring. As Vande Berg, Paige, and Lou (2012) state, "the primary goal of learning abroad is not, then, simply to acquire knowledge but to develop in ways that allow students to learn to shift cultural perspective and to adapt their behavior to other cultural contexts—knowledge that will allow them to interact more effectively and appropriately with others through their lives." (p. 18). In this sense, the main preoccupation of the constructivist paradigm is clearly associated with intercultural competence: "acquiring knowledge" referring to intercultural awareness, "shifting cultural perspective" referring to intercultural sensitivity, "adapting behavior" referring to intercultural effectiveness or adroitness, and finally, "interact more effectively and appropriately with others" referring to intercultural communicative competence.

**Experience and Learning**

Study abroad programs are constantly sold as educative environments providing experiences outside of the classroom. However, experiences outside of the classroom are not necessarily experiential. As noted by Strange and Gibson (2017), although international education has the "potential to provide experiential learning" (p. 88), some experiences can be "mis-educative."

According to Dewey (1916), learning refers to the "continual reorganization, reconstruction and transformation of experience" (p. 50). This hermeneutical dimension of education supposes that meaningful experiences affect the way we understand our previous experiences in a continuous cycle of reinterpretation, an idea that Piaget (1959)

also supports in that learning occurs through cognitive disequilibrium and accommodation. What is already "known" is confronted by new ideas, which create an imbalance, and learning results from the re-arrangement of the former scheme integrating the new ideas. Further, Dewey (1934), argues that we only learn through experiences, by doing and reflecting on the experience.

Considering that learning is framed by some level of experience, Kolb (1984) drew on theories of learning, borrowing primarily from Dewey, Piaget, Lewin, and Freire (Kolb & Kolb, 2005; Passarelli & Kolb, 2012) and identified six propositions for Experiential Learning:

| **Experiential Learning Theory propositions** (based on Kolb, 1984, and Kolb & Kolb, 2005) |
| --- |
| Learning should be thought of as a process, not just outcomes |
| Learning is continual "relearning" |
| "Learning requires the resolution of conflicts between dialectically opposed modes of adaptation to the world" (Kolb & Kolb, 2005, p. 194) |
| Learning is a continual process of holistic adaptation to the world |
| Learning occurs through the interaction of the person with their environment |
| "Learning is the process of creating knowledge" (Kolb & Kolb, 2005, p. 194) |

*Figure 2: Experiential Learning Theory propositions*

Kolb and Kolb (2005) argue that experiential learning theory is a "holistic model of the experiential learning process and a multi-linear model of adult development" (p. 194).

Learning, for ELT, follows a cycle composed of a concrete experience (CE), reflecting observation (RO), abstract conceptualization (AC), and active experimentation (AE) in a recursive process (Passarelli & Kolb, 2012, p. 140). Learning is thus defined as

"the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience. Knowledge results from the combination of grasping and transforming experience" (Kolb, 1984, p. 41), which is represented in the figure below (adapted from Passarelli & Kolb, 2012). ELT research supports the idea that ELT is applicable in cross-cultural contexts (Joy & Kolb, 2009; Passarelli & Kolb, 2012).
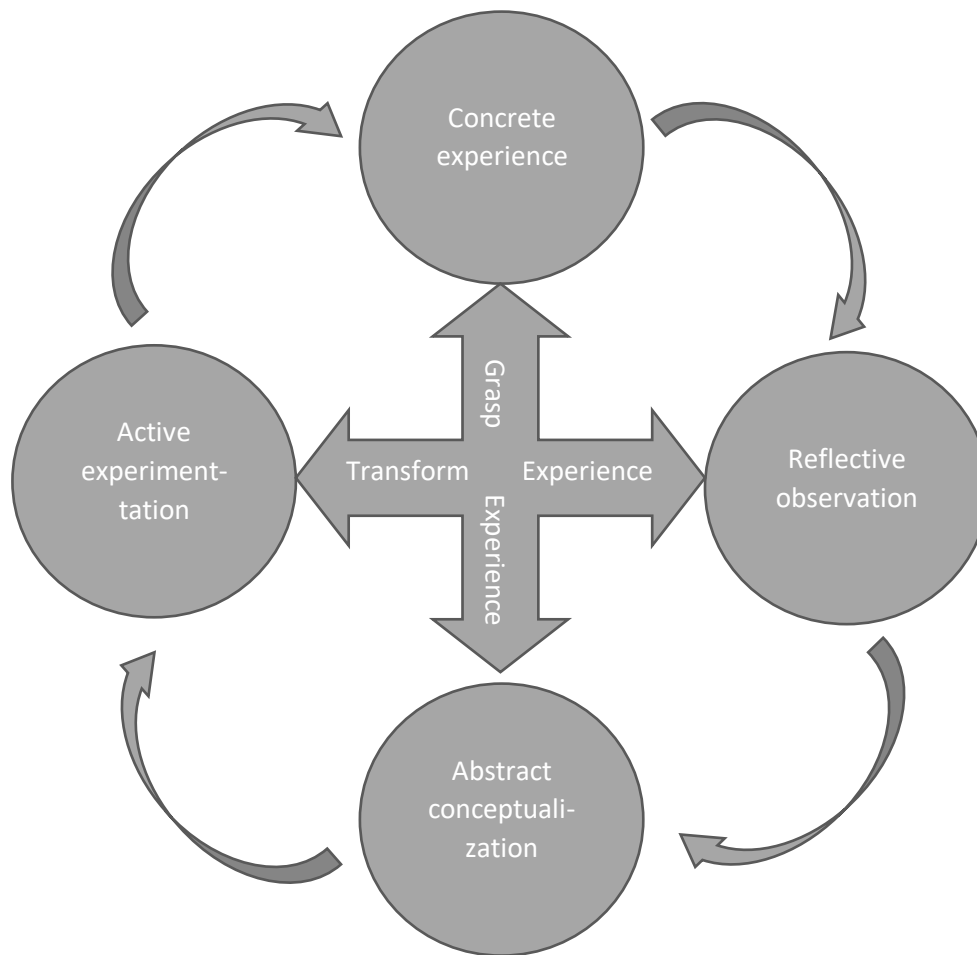
*Figure 3: Experiential Learning Theory based on Kolb*

## Cultural Distance

The definition of "culture" remains controversial as it takes many forms, depending on the context and discipline. For example, social psychologist Geert Hofstede

defines culture in a constructionist way as "the collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one category of people from another" (1984, p.21). The definition used by UNESCO is somewhat similar as it acknowledges that culture is "the set of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features of society or a social group, and that it encompasses, in addition to art and literature, lifestyles, ways of living together, value systems, traditions and beliefs" (2001, p. 10). However, anthropologist Edward T. Hall, considered to be a pioneer in intercultural communications research defined it more simply: "culture is communication and communication is culture" (1959, p. 186).

Awareness of cultural differences goes far beyond noticing differences with ones' senses such as physical differences in clothing, foods and smells, or even non-analogous sounds. However, if the sensual world stresses some level of differences, limiting one's awareness of cultural differences to this realm lacks diving into the much deeper and complex levels of culture which define communication and hence, thought processes and behavior.

Hofstede's work led to the identification of six dimensions of culture (Hofstede, 1980, 1997;).

| Dimension | Definition |
|---|---|
| Collectivism-individualism | "Individualism is the extent to which people feel independent, as opposed to being interdependent as members of larger wholes." (Hofstede, n.d.) |
| Power distance | "Power distance is the extent to which the less powerful members of organizations and institutions (like the family) accept and expect that power is distributed unequally." (Hofstede, n.d.) |
| Masculinity-femininity | "Masculinity is the extent to which the use of force is endorsed socially." (Hofstede, n.d.) |
| Uncertainty avoidance | "A society's tolerance for uncertainty and ambiguity." (Hofstede, n.d.) |
| Long-verses Short Term Orientation (LTO) | "Long-term orientation deals with change." (Hofstede, 1997) |
| Indulgence-Restraint | "Indulgence is about the good things in life." (Minkov, 2007) |

*Figure 4: Dimensions of culture*

As Hofstede puts it, the cultural dimensions described represent "patterns of thinking, feeling and acting" (Hofstede, 1997, p. 5), and impact intercultural interactions, but most research using his framework has focused on cultural comparison rather than looking at its potential influence on intercultural communication. Thus, intercultural competence development, and intercultural sensitivity more particularly, might be affected by these dimensions of culture one can more easily experience during study abroad.

## Intergroup relations

According to Savicki (2012), acculturation is one of the core elements and experiences of studying abroad, and students sometimes regret not being prepared enough for cultural differences of the host culture. They sometimes regret not being given a "recipe" of appropriate behavior to avoid cultural "faux-pas," suggesting that their understanding of the host culture remains at the surface. Behavior is indeed guided by

deeper cultural values, dimensions that short pre-departure trainings rarely address. However, psychological acculturation, or the "changes in an individual experiences as a result of being in contact with other cultures" (Sam, 2006, p. 14), are expressed in three distinct and yet overlapping dimensions: affective, behavioral, and cognitive, what Ward (2001) calls the "ABCs of acculturation." The affective dimension addresses issues regarding stress and coping mechanisms. In the context of study abroad students, large stressors can arise as a result of life changes such as moving abroad or being separated from one's family. While those stressors might still be significant in short-term study abroad programs, daily or chronic stressors are much more of interest to the literature, as they often provoke anxiety of intercultural encounters (Savicki, 2012). Such experiences can indeed act as disequilibrium forcing students to develop coping mechanisms which can lead to satisfaction and higher self-efficacy (Savicki, 2012).

## Intercultural Competence

As Vande Berg, Paige, and Lou (2012) state, "the primary goal of learning abroad is not, then, simply to acquire knowledge but to develop in ways that allow students to learn to shift cultural perspective and to adapt their behavior to other cultural contexts—knowledge that will allow them to interact more effectively and appropriately with others through their lives." (p. 18). The concept of intercultural competence has been at the center of a debate leading to a proliferation of terminology and names orbiting a constellation of similar themes, such as intercultural competence, intercultural communicative competence, intercultural communication competence, cross-cultural competence, global competence, global perspective, global citizenship, and various permutations thereof (Braskamp, Braskamp, & Engberg, 2014; Fantini & Tirmizi, 2006

created a nomenclature for the various concepts; Leung, et al., 2014; Spitzberg & Changnon, 2009). Spitzberg and Changnon (2009) listed over 300 different concepts under the overarching term of IC, an overwhelming number identified as personal characteristics that can be classified in three main categories: intercultural traits, intercultural attitudes and worldviews, and intercultural capabilities (Leung, et al., 2014).

Intercultural competence (IC) has been a concept of interest at the confluence of various disciplines such as communication, psychology, sociology, and more recently world language education, leading to the emergence of a new term: intercultural communicative competence (ICC). ICC is defined as "a complex of abilities needed to perform effectively and appropriately when interacting with others who are linguistically and culturally different from oneself" (Fantini & Tirmizi, 2006, p. 12). In fact, ICC specifically refers to interactions between people who do not share the same native language (Byram & Wagner, 2018), as opposed to intercultural communication competence which supposes a shared language but cultural differences.

Braskamp, Braskamp, and Engberg (2014) developed the Global Perspective Inventory (GPI), a growing instrument which explores growth holistically rather than compartmentalizing development, and therefore encompasses two theoretical frameworks: intercultural maturity and intercultural communication. The authors identified three main domains: cognitive, intrapersonal, and interpersonal. The cognitive domain corresponds to the question "How do I know" and focuses on knowledge and knowing. The intrapersonal domain addresses the question "Who am I" and revolves around self-identity and affect (respect for cultural diversity), whereas the interpersonal

domain reflects the question "How do I relate to others?" and centers on social responsibility and social interactions.

Using a different terminology, Chen (2010) argues that Intercultural Communication Competence, just like Intercultural Competence, is composed of cognitive, behavioral, and affective dimensions. The cognitive construct is associated with intercultural awareness; the behavioral construct with intercultural adroitness; and the affective construct with intercultural sensitivity (Chen, 2009; Chen & Starosta, 2003, 2005). Indeed, cultural awareness, also called intercultural knowledge, is a necessary condition of intercultural sensitivity, leading to intercultural adroitness, all three concepts being distinct within the umbrella of intercultural competence but interacting with each other as on a continuum in intercultural effectiveness.

Figure 5 compares the relative correspondence of terms and their components across the literature.

| Author(s) | Concept | Construct 1 | Construct 2 | Construct 3 | Construct 4 | Construct 5 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Bennett (1993) | Intercultural Sensitivity | Cognitive | Affective | Behavioral | - | - |
| Byram (1997, 2009) | Intercultural Competence | Savoir / Knowledge | Savoir être / Attitudes | Savoir comprendre / Skills | Savoir faire / Skills | Savoir s'engager / Education |
| Howard Hamilton, Richardson, & Shuford (1998) | Intercultural Competence | Awareness | Knowledge | Skills | - | |
| Chen & Starosta (2005) | Intercultural Communication Competence | Cognitive / Inter-cultural awareness | Affective / Inter-cultural sensitivity | Behavioral / Intercultural competence / adroitness | - | - |
| Braskamp, Braskamp, & Engberg (2014) | Global Perspective | Cognitive | Intra-personal | Interpersonal | - | - |
| Leung, Ang, & Tan (2014) | Intercultural Competence | Traits | Attitudes and worldviews | Capabilities | - | - |

*Figure 5: Comparison of Intercultural Competence Components*

For Byram (1997), IC encompasses five main constructs or *savoirs*:

1) *savoir* as knowledge,

2) *savoir comprendre* as interpreting and relating skills;

3) *savoir apprendre* and *faire* as discovery/interaction skills;

4) *savoir être* as attitudes of relativizing oneself and valuing others but also aspects related to beliefs and motivations (Piasecka, 2011);

5) *savoir s'engager* as political education and critical cultural awareness, which Byram (2012) later represents at the center of his model.

This study finds its particular interest in the affective dimension of IC -- *savoir être* or attitudes (Byram, 1997), referred to as intercultural sensitivity in this study (Chen & Starosta, 1997) --, and positionality or critical (cultural) awareness -- *savoir s'engager* (Byram, 1997).

"*Savoir s'engager,*" also referred to as Critical Cultural Awareness (CCA), was initially coined by Byram (1997) in the field of Second Language Acquisition. Referring to is as "an ability to evaluate critically and on the basis of explicit criteria perspectives, practices and products in one's own and other cultures and countries" (p. 53), it presupposes the opportunity to reflect on one's preconceived ideas about people from other cultures in order to build awareness and move away from stereotypes in a critical manner (Nugent & Catalano, 2015). Placed at the center of his model of intercultural competence, Byram (2012) argues that critical cultural awareness is the awareness of one's positioning, revealing not only a central but perhaps superiority of this factor above others within intercultural competence. However, his definition and model do not necessarily emphasize dimensions of power and hierarchy that exist in any type of

interaction, although Byram argues that *savoir s'engager* means being aware of one's own ideology, to unmask oneself to act in a more intercultural manner (Yulita, 2013). While Byram does not explicitly express it, critical cultural awareness posits that action is the ultimate phase of intercultural competence, and therefore echoes social reconstructionist frameworks whose aims are to disrupt and replace the status quo with a more just society (Freire, 1970; Freire & Macedo, 2005; Schiro, 2013), not only in one's community, but at the supra-national scale.

*Intercultural Sensitivity*

Intercultural sensitivity is a topic of interest in a large variety of fields and its definition seems to be constantly evolving to embrace the conceptual evolutions of intercultural competence and intercultural communicative competence.

The foundational work of Bronfenbrenner, Harding, and Gallwey (1958) focused on the concept of sensitivity and divided it into two types: sensitivity to the generalized other as a "kind of sensitivity to the social norms of one's own group" (Bronfenbrenner, et al., 1958, p. 241) and interpersonal sensitivity as the "ability to distinguish how others differ in their behavior, perceptions or feelings" (Bronfenbrenner, et al., 1958, p. 241). Chen (1997) argues that interpersonal sensitivity is similar to the concept of intercultural sensitivity because they both focus on awareness of cultural differences.

Much later, Intercultural sensitivity was conceptualized by Chen and Starosta (1997) as the affective dimension of intercultural communicative competence. It is also called intercultural attitudes, or *savoir être* by Byram, who defines it as:

> curiosity and openness, readiness to suspend disbelief
> about other cultures and belief about one's own. This

means a willingness to relativise one's own values, beliefs and behaviours, not to assume that they are the only possible and naturally correct ones, and to be able to see how they might look from an outsider's perspective who has a different set of values, beliefs and behaviours. This can be called the ability to 'decentre.' (Byram, 2002, p. 12)

This study will refer to the definition of intercultural sensitivity by Chen and Starosta (1997) as "an individual's ability to develop a positive emotion towards understanding and appreciating cultural differences that promotes an appropriate and effective behavior in intercultural communication" (Chen & Starosta, 1997, p. 5). Goleman (1995) argues that "all emotions are, in essence, impulses to act, the instant plans for handling life that evolution has instilled in us" (p. 6). Although not a researcher in intercultural matters, he posits that emotions trigger plans of actions. As noted by Chen (1997), IS is deeply intertwined with intercultural awareness, intercultural adroitness, and intercultural communication competence. In actuality, intercultural awareness (the cognitive dimension) is a prerequisite for intercultural sensitivity (the affective dimension), which is necessary for intercultural adroitness (the behavioral dimension). Chen and Starosta (1997, 1998, 2000) and Byram (1997, 2009) acknowledge that IS focuses on emotions, unlike Bronfenbrenner, Harding, and Gallwey (1958), whose definition embraced a larger set of concepts.

Motivation appears to be a central component, and the interest in other cultures seems to be a prerequisite for being interculturally effective. However, this requires being able to "notice cultural differences and modify [one's] behavior as an indication of respect" (Bhawuk and Brislin, 1992, p. 416.). Bennett (1986) conceptualizes IS as a change continuum from ethnocentric to ethnorelative stages in which individuals evolve not only

affectively, but also adapt their behavior as a way of demonstrating respect for another culture. Later, Chen and Starosta's definition (1997), added a conscious motivational aspect to the affective, cognitive and behavioral elements of ICC, emphasizing its dynamism, particularly the affective dimension, which the authors argue to be intercultural sensitivity within ICC. They defend the idea that interculturally sensitive individuals must cultivate their motivation and desire to acknowledge, understand, accept, and appreciate cultural differences in order to engage in successful intercultural communication. Chen (2010) also found that people who have high degrees of intercultural sensitivity are less ethnocentric and have less apprehension in intercultural interactions. Intercultural sensitivity requires reflection, as it is "the discovery of self through the discovery of otherness" (Alfred, Byram & Freming, cited in Deardorff and Jones, 2012, p. 285).

Therefore, acknowledging cultural difference, actively researching and accepting them while adapting one's behavior to demonstrate respect are elements found across definitions in the literature. They also attest to the great confusion regarding the concept of intercultural sensitivity which is mainly focused on emotions. Previous studies have highlighted that intercultural sensitivity is a prerequisite in effective and appropriate communication between people from different cultures (Chen & Starosta, 1997; Olson & Kroeger, 2001). Figure 6 compares definitions of intercultural sensitivity.

| Author(s) | Definition |
|---|---|
| Bhawuk and Brislin (1992) | ''To be effective in another culture, people must be interested in other cultures, be sensitive enough to notice cultural differences, and then also be willing to modify their behavior as an indication of respect for the people of other cultures. A reasonable term that summarized these qualities of people is intercultural sensitivity, and we suggest that it may be a predictor of effectiveness.'' (p. 416) |
| Bennett (1993) | "The construction of reality as increasingly capable of accommodating cultural difference that constitutes developments." (p. 24) |
| Chen and Starosta (1997) | "an individual's ability to develop a positive emotion towards understanding and appreciating cultural differences that promotes an appropriate and effective behavior in intercultural communication." (p. 5) |
| Chen and Starosta (1998) | "The active desire to motivate oneself to understand, appreciate, and accept differences among cultures." (p. 231) |
| Chen and Starosta (2000) | "A mindset that helps individuals distinguish how their counterparts differ in behavior, perceptions, or feelings in the process of intercultural communication." (p. 4) |
| Byram (2002) | "curiosity and openness, readiness to suspend disbelief about other cultures and belief about one's own. This means a willingness to relativise one's own values, beliefs and behaviours, not to assume that they are the only possible and naturally correct ones, and to be able to see how they might look from an outsider's perspective who has a different set of values, beliefs and behaviours. This can be called the ability to 'decentre'." (p. 12) |
| Hammer, Bennett, and Wiseman (2003) | "The ability to discriminate and experience relevant cultural differences." (p. 422) |
| Medina-Lopez-Portillo (2004) | "The worldview that establishes the way that an individual experiences or processes cultural differences." (p. 180) |
| Cushner (2009) | "an understanding that there exist multiple ways of viewing and interacting in the world, and that others may have approaches that are significantly different from one's own." (p. 155-156). |
| Leung, Ang, and Tan (2014) | "an understanding of cultural differences." (p. 507) |

*Figure 6: Comparison of definitions of intercultural sensitivity*

Much of the research in the field of intercultural competence has examined cross-cultural dimensions rather than individual competence with cultural "Others" on a larger scale. Students who study in China, for example, tend to develop sensitivity not to all Chinese cultures. They may develop positive emotions towards the Chinese students who attend the same university, who gravitate towards international areas and who are, to some extent, predisposed to interact with international students: people who belong to a similar socio-economic and cultural group or stratum. These so-called "sensitized" students may consequently remain relatively uninformed about ethnic and religious minorities (like Uighurs), rural Chinese peasants, or Chinese Buddhist monks. Nevertheless, "intercultural" is the accepted terminology in the field, even if it may be relatively narrow in scope.

*Assessing Intercultural Sensitivity*

Several instruments have been developed to try to measure intercultural sensitivity (for a list of instruments, see Deardorff, 2009).

One of the most notable instruments for assessing intercultural sensitivity has been the Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS), designed by Bennett (1986, 1993). DMIS lays the foundation for future instruments analyzing people's orientation regarding cultural diversity. Bennett conceptualizes intercultural sensitivity as a continuum of six stages, with the individual transforming themselves from ethnocentrism (denial, defense, minimization) to ethnorelativism (acceptance, adaptation, integration). The denial stage corresponds to the denial of cultural differences. The defense stage claims that the individual perceives other cultures as threatening and must

therefore defend their own. In the minimization stage, the individual minimizes cultural differences by emphasizing cultural similarities. In the acceptance stage, the individual acknowledges and starts to accept cultural differences from a cognitive and behavioral perspective, but not at the affective level. In the adaptation stage, the individual starts developing affective aspects to modify their behavior. Finally, in the integration stage, the individual accepts and appreciates cultural differences, and is able to navigate successfully and effectively from their culture to another. In its last stages, DMIS assesses cross-cultural sensitivity specifically rather than a general intercultural sensitivity. DMIS conceptualizes intercultural sensitivity as a progression (see figure 8), not necessarily linear, in which the individual moves from thinking that their culture is the only way of understanding reality, to understanding that culture is contextual. Ideally, the last stage means that the individual is a "global citizen" or "citizen of the world."
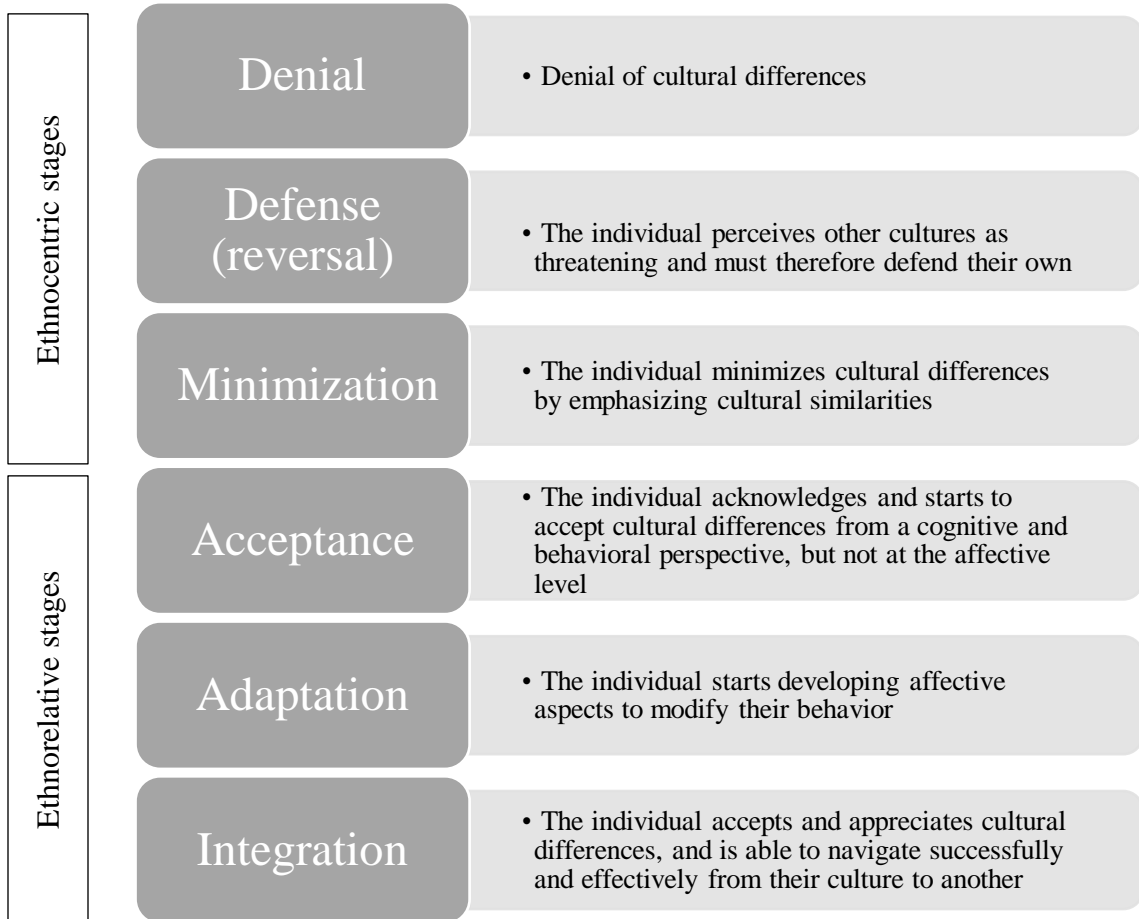
*Figure 7: Developmental Intercultural Competence Model adapted from Bennett (1996)*

However, it is difficult to argue that adaptation and integration can truly be intercultural—encompassing no given culture but all cultures. As noted by Chen (1997), the affective, cognitive, and behavioral transformations being conceptualized in this model of intercultural sensitivity by Bennett (1986, 1996) appear to define the boundaries of intercultural communication competence rather than intercultural sensitivity itself, adding to the confusion on the terms which both Chen and Starosta (1997, 1998, 2000) conceive as separate and distinct.

Sometimes, the DMIS is combined with the Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI) (Hammer et al., 2003; Hammer, 2012), a pen and paper test of 50 questions focusing

on intercultural sensitivity primarily. The IDI is a more comprehensive instrument as it can be used as a pre- and post-test and allows for both the collection of quantitative and qualitative data, while also conceptualizing intercultural sensitivity as a continuum. However, access to this instrument remains limited due to its cost, as the DMIS and IDI models must be purchased. If further studies use the IDI, preventing open access might limit unbiased reliability and validity from researchers who would like to compare this instrument with others.

Another commonly employed instrument, the Intercultural Sensitivity Inventory (ISI), was developed by Bhawuk and Brislin (1992), and measures intercultural sensitivity in terms of individualism and collectivism, still with a focus on cognitive, affective, and behavioral elements. Here again, the cognitive dimension was represented by the awareness of cultural differences; affective dimensions were associated with open-mindedness to cultural differences; and behavioral dimensions included the ability to adapt one's behavior in a different culture. Several empirical studies have investigated the development of intercultural sensitivity in a study abroad context using the DMIS within the IDI in order to identify whether IS grows during study abroad.

Another widely used instrument is the Intercultural Sensitivity Scale developed by Chen and Starosta (1997, 2000). It focuses primarily on the affective elements of ICC and is based on "self-esteem, self-monitoring, open-mindedness, empathy, interaction involvement, and suspending judgement" (Chen & Starosta, 2000, p. 5).

Chen and Starosta identified these six elements from the literature of each in order to build the dimensions of their intercultural sensitivity model. Interculturally sensitive individuals have higher degrees of *self-esteem*. According to the literature, self-esteem

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leads people in having positive images of others, but also confidence about themselves, necessary in interacting with people from other cultures and feeding positive emotions towards such interactions. Interculturally sensitive individuals have higher degrees of *self-monitoring* as they need to be more attentive to cultural differences, identify cultural cues, and adapt their communication and behavior to intercultural interactions (Spitzberg & Cupach, 1984, cited in Chen, 1997). Interculturally sensitive individuals are *open-minded* to cultural differences in that they understand and accept the existence of different views and behaviors from their own and therefore reject the idea that their views are superior. Interculturally sensitive individuals have higher levels of *empathy*, enabling them to seek understanding for situations, requiring them to observe, listen, more easily leading to sympathy as they express concern for others, which reveals its deep connection with self-monitoring. Interculturally sensitive individuals have higher degrees of *interaction involvement*, because they are responsive, perceptive, and attentive to cultural differences. Finally, interculturally sensitive individuals tend to be *non-judgmental* because they listen and wait before forming opinions due to their ability to empathize with others, which often leads to enjoyment of intercultural encounters.

Consequently, the instrument is built on five dimensions: interaction engagement, interaction enjoyment, interaction confidence, interaction attentiveness, and respect of different cultures, and it encompasses 24 Likert-type scale items from strongly agree (5) to strongly disagree (1).

Table 1 summarizes the five intercultural dimensions of intercultural sensitivity and their definitions, according to Chen and Starosta (2000).

| Intercultural Dimension of IS | Definition |
|---|---|
| Interaction Engagement | "Feeling of participation in intercultural communication" (p. 6). |
| Interaction Enjoyment | "The individual's evaluation of how positive or negative he/she feels when communicating with people from other cultures (p. 7) |
| Interaction Confidence | "How confident an individual is in an intercultural setting" (p. 7) |
| Interaction Attentiveness | "Concerned with the individual's willingness to exert "effort to understand what is going on in intercultural interaction" (p.7)" |
| Respect for Cultural Differences | "An individual's evaluation of his/her tolerance to another's culture and opinion" (p.7) |

*Figure 8: Intercultural sensitivity dimensions and definitions based on Chen & Starosta, 2000.*

ISS remains widely accepted in the field, as many follow-up studies have recognized its validity and reliability (Fritz, et al., 2005; Fritz, et al., 2002). However, several researchers have been challenging this instrument in the past few years, contending it may not necessarily be applicable in non-western cultural learning environments (Tamam, 2010). Despite these critiques, modified versions of the instrument have been developed to address other cultural environments such as China (Wang & Zhou, 2016) and the Balkans, but all studies acknowledge that intercultural sensitivity can be enhanced through intervention. Additionally, Arasaratnam and Doerfel (2005) identified common characteristics of competent intercultural communicators across cultures, by interviewing participants from fifteen different countries. Their findings encompass five variables, namely empathy, intercultural experience/training motivation, global attitude, and the ability to listen.

*Intercultural Sensitivity and Study Abroad*

Studying abroad seems like a perfect environment for developing IS, and IC as a whole. Indeed, being abroad allows one to experience cultural differences first hand, to develop intercultural knowledge (Czerwionka et al., 2015) and to become aware of such differences. Langley and Breese (2005) reported in their study of American students' out-of-class engagement in Ireland that "Most students reported that their attitudes toward other cultures have become less judgmental and that they stereotype people of other cultures less. Some reported a more critical and, at the same time, more appreciative view of their own culture. Others expressed an increased desire to learn of other cultures" (p. 319).

Studying abroad is often believed to impact emotions leading to appreciation of the people and culture experienced, and emotions, as argued by Goleman (1995), trigger both cognitive and behavioral responses. However, researchers in international education argue that studying abroad must meet certain criteria to lead to positive outcomes (Allport, 1954). Indeed, simply being abroad does not necessarily lead to intercultural sensitivity change, which is why study abroad professionals have been increasingly asking for intervention programs to make sure students reach the appropriate learning outcomes (Jackson, 2015). In a study of fostering higher-order learning outcomes of a short-term study abroad program, Landon, Tarrant, Rubin, and Stoner (2017) argue that learning outcomes need to be clearly identified to be able to be assessed, and that pedagogy on site needs to be grounded in sound theory. This supports Vande Berg and colleagues' (2004, 2007, Vande Berg, Connor-Linton, & Paige, 2009), and Pedersen's (2010) findings on

the necessity of "cultural mentoring." While students are often satisfied with their experiences, evaluating the outcomes remains difficult.

Empirical studies on the development of intercultural sensitivity emerged primarily in the 2000s (Pedersen, 2010; Vande Berg, 2012; Jackson, 2008, 2012, 2015). These studies have used several instruments, including the DMIS and the IDI (Hammer et al., 2003). Vande Berg et al. (2004) used the IDI and the SOPI in a "pre-post-post" test and found that immersion alone did not necessarily lead to higher gains in intercultural effectiveness, intercultural sensitivity, or language proficiency, compared with students who stayed on their home campuses. The study identified seven "defining components," or variables leading to higher IC and IS. These components are (1) length of the program, (2) language competence prior to studying abroad, (3) use of the language in class, (4) context of classes (with host country students; only US students, only international students including or excluding US students), (5) housing, (6) "provision for guided/structured cultural interaction and experiential learning, and (7) guided reflection on cultural experience" (Engle & Engle, 2003; Vande Berg et al., 2012, p. 36).

Some longitudinal studies argue that intercultural sensitivity constantly evolves, a continuum (Bennett, 2013) positively influenced by self-reflective awareness activities such as journals and group dialogue (Biagi et al., 2010; Bracci, 2013) used not only as "assessment of learning [but also as] assessment of learning" (Brewer & Moore, 2015). Reflections are considered to be most effective when paired with cultural mentoring (Paige & Vande Berg, 2012; Vande Berg, Connor-Linton, & Paige, 2009; Vande Berg et al, 2012).

*Program Length*

Length of time spent abroad has been of increasing interest (Anderson, Lorenz, & White, 2016; Heizmann, et al., 2015; Yan Lo-Philip, et al., 2015). A common belief is that the longer the stay in the host country, the more likely intercultural sensitivity develops. Medina-Lopez-Portillo's (2004) found that intercultural sensitivity tends to be more developed in students who stay abroad the longest. In their study comparing students who had been abroad and those who had not, Behrnd and Porzelt (2012) argue that the longer the program, the larger the effect on intercultural competence. These findings have led to criticism of short-term programs considered to be too short for students to change their attitudes towards cultural diversity (Medina-Lopez-Portillo, 2004).

Interestingly, Engle & Engle (2003) and Dornyei and Csizer (2005) add to the complexity and argue the opposite. They found that students who had participated in mid-length programs (one semester) had higher scores compared with short (fewer than 12 weeks) and long-term programs (one academic year). Engle and Engle's (2003) findings indicate that short-term study abroad programs can lead to positive intercultural sensitivity, whereas longer programs can in return lead to negative attitudes. They argue that students who participate in short programs might experience the "honeymoon stage" (Oberg, 1954), have access to "interesting scenery" (Heinzmann et al., 2015), but do not have enough time to dive into deeper stages, because "gain only comes at the expense of a certain pain" (Engle & Engle, 2003, p. 5). Assessing the outcomes of short-term programs can be deceitful: while intercultural sensitivity can appear to be higher, it could

remain shallow as such length does not allow students to move on towards more complex phases on the process of becoming more ethno-relative.

Dwyer (2004) argues that a minimum period of six weeks is critical for in-depth outcomes to arise, and to allow the experience to be more than simply an upgraded form of tourism with college credit. Chieffo and Griffiths (2004) argue that "short-term programs, even as short as one month, are worthwhile educational endeavors that have significant self-perceived impacts on students' intellectual and personal lives" (p. 174). An important argument made in favor of short-term programs resides in the financial aspect –which allows more students to participate (Tarrant, Rubin, & Stoner, 2015)—, and allows for the possibility of several short-term programs during a student's college life (Chieffo & Griffiths, 2004).

However, some researchers argue that, beyond the length of time spent abroad, program design and curriculum, as well as the nature of interactions play a larger role (Gardner, 1985). Indeed, socializations with local communities (in the target language or not) are important in increasing awareness of cues and cultural differences (Tonkin & Bourgault du Coudray, 2016).

*Cultural Mentoring*

Many studies stress the importance of mentoring students via culturally-related programs as a way to positively influence intercultural competence (Almeida, Fantini, Simões, Costa, 2016; Behrnd & Porzelt, 2012; Engle & Engle, 2003, 2004; Klak & Martin, 2003; Pedersen, 2010; Vande Berg et al, 2009; Vande Berg, et al., 2012). In the analysis of data, Vande Berg et al. (2009) noticed a significant difference between groups given "free reign" and groups who participated in a program which encompassed a

"comprehensive intervention strategy" (Paige & Vande Berg, 2012; Vande Berg, 2007; Vande Berg & Paige, 2009). The Georgetown Consortium study found the more time students spent with their host family, the higher their IDI scores, suggesting that interactions with people from the host culture had a significant impact on increasing students' intercultural sensitivity. Engle and Engle (2004) also argue that interactions with people from the host culture and cultural mentoring lead to higher IDI scores, and Jackson (2015) asserts that courses scaffolding reflection before, during, and after a sojourn "deepen understanding of sojourn experiences" (p. 98) and enhance intercultural awareness as the impact of studying abroad is not necessarily immediate. In a study modeled upon the Georgetown Consortium Study, Pedersen (2010) compared three groups of students over a period of one year. Group 1 studied abroad and received particular trainings on intercultural topics, Group 2 was also abroad but in full immersion, while Group 3 was a control group of students staying on their home campus. Using the DMIS in the IDI, Pedersen found that the scores of Group 2 were similar to those of Group 3 but Group 1 had significantly higher scores. Pedersen found that "previous travel experience and the presence of intercultural pedagogy" positively impacted students (p. 76). While she found significant differences between study abroad participants who had received an intervention and those who had not, she concluded that students might need time to process and integrate what they had learned, suggesting a "possible delay of intercultural understanding (and thus growth) that might have occurred" (p. 76). Behrnd and Porzelt (2012) state that "being abroad without being prepared does not necessarily foster intercultural competence" (p. 218).

Jackson's (2008) study found that having some level of proficiency in a language did not always lead to higher intercultural communication competence and could even have a reverse effect on students' intercultural sensitivity. Some of her participants, despite their advanced level in the language, showed less flexibility, curiosity and risk-taking than some linguistically less advanced students. However, Jackson asserts that language proficiency is a necessary precondition for cultural fluency but not sufficient for intercultural competence. Some experiences abroad influence intercultural sensitivity more than language proficiency. Growth resulting from study abroad might be higher for a student whose study abroad program is the first international experience, though their general intercultural competence or intercultural sensitivity levels might be lower than those of students who have multiple international experiences.

Some research found that students can return from study abroad with a more ethnocentric perspective and have a lower intercultural sensitivity when their experience is not mentored (Lou, Andresen, & Myers, 2011; Pedersen, 2010, Vande Berg, 2007; Vande Berg & Paige, 2009). Vande Berg et al. (2004) argue that studying abroad can lead to higher IC when programs and students are mentored before, during, and after SA. The lack of intervention post study abroad can stop students from reflecting upon new knowledge (Jackson, 2012), and retards their intercultural sensitivity development; if students do not debrief and reflect on their experience abroad, their intercultural competence, including intercultural sensitivity, can decrease.

*Reflection*

According to Bennett (2012), "our experience of reality itself is a function of how we organize our perceptions" (p. 103). Savicki and Price (2015, 2017a, 2017b) define reflection in contrast to other types of thinking:

| Reflection is not | Reflection is |
|---|---|
| Rumination | Shifted perspective |
| Overgeneralized | Disaggregated and well differentiated |
| Universal or unchangeable | Contextual |
| Unidimensional, intellectualized, and disconnected | Integrates emotion, behavior, and cognition |
| Purely visceral | Descriptive |

*Figure 9: Characteristics of true reflection according to Savicki & Price, 2017b*

Savicki and Price (2017b) measured reflection through an instrument, the Linguistic Inquiry and Word Count (LIWC), in order to draw connections among specific components of written reflection. They found that "both cognitive and emotional components of reflection contribute to understanding how reflection might be impacted by the developmental process that students traverse" (Savicki & Price, 2017b, p. 60). Engle and Engle (2003) identified "guided reflection on cultural experience" as a central component in study abroad. Integrated into various study abroad programs, reflection has been increasingly perceived as crucial to student's growth abroad. Reflective essays, i.e. blogging or journaling, have been at the center of much research in relation to intercultural learning and transformation (Lee, 2012). Paige (2015) asserts that "virtually every program identified in the research literature being effective in helping students

develop their intercultural competence embraces reflection as a key principle of learning" (p. 566).

Biagi, Bracci, Filippone, and Nash (2012) explain that the Intercultural Center for Intercultural Exchange in Siena developed a curriculum for international students which aims at community engagement via service learning. The RICA (Reflective Intercultural Competence Assessment) Model was developed to measure the impact of the curriculum, and, similarly to the DMIS, it conceives of intercultural competence as a continuum from ethnocentric to ethnorelativistic perceptions of the self and others. Unlike the DMIS, the RICA Model focuses on engagement with the community in which students are learning. The RICA model therefore conceives of intercultural sensitivity as ranging from being a total foreigner to being integrated into society during SA. Bracci, Owona, and Nash (2013) argue the existence of seven stages, which are (1) pre-contact, (2) contact, (3) culture shock, (4) superficial understanding, (5) deep understanding, (6) social acting, and (7) glocal acting. They gave weekly prompts to students on gender interactions, religion, and other topics to guide not only their reflections, but also their observations every week. Findings revealed that participants increased their intercultural literacy, knowledge of culture(s), and their "reflective intercultural competence."

Savicki and Price (2017b) contend that reflection is a central component in both Experiential Learning Theory (Kolb, 1984) and Transformative Learning Theory (Mezirow, 2000), and therefore at the confluence of both theories. Savicki and Price (2017b) state that "descriptions of experiences devoid of emotional content (feelings, values, attitudes) lead to intellectualized, disconnected, and unidimensional statements that lack the full richness of human response" (p. 53). However, Strange and Gibson

(2017) found that reflection was not required for overall transformation. Of course, when one gains cultural literacy, increases intercultural sensitivity, and adapts behavior to intercultural situations, such gains in intercultural effectiveness may result in change in identity (Savicki, 2012; Savicki & Cooley, 2011).

## Study Abroad and Identity

Students often return from study abroad claiming they had a life-changing experience, that their identity was changed via their international peregrinations. In the broadest sense, many students may alter their identities with the fact that "they are people who have studied abroad" and seek to emulate many of the cultural attachments that accompany such status, as some students may feel sociocultural pressure as a level of change is expected. Does studying abroad really alter identity?

Identity is a complex and multifaceted concept, and the definition varies across disciplines. A dominant movement in second language acquisition and study abroad literature defines identity in a social-constructivist way, arguing that identity is both the product of social interactions (of one's culture and environment, of experiences), and that individuals also play a role in the construction of their identity, which are therefore multiple, dynamic, fluid, contextual and multidirectional (Ellwood, 2011), not linear or monolithic (Benson et al., 2013; Pellegrino Aveni, 2007). Block (2007) argues that "identities are about negotiating new subject positions at the crossroads of past, present, and future. Individuals are shaped by their sociohistories but they also shape their sociohistories as life goes on. The entire process is conflictive as opposed to harmonious, and individuals often feel ambivalent." (p. 27). With study abroad, the identity of

participants is destabilized by the immersion in a culture in which, even what students might take for granted, can surprise and disorient them (Kinginger, 2013). Experiences abroad can cause discomfort, anxiety (Schumann & Schumann, 1977), and pain due to the questioning of their *habitus* (Bourdieu, 1991), and invite students to recreate their identity by shaking their perceptions of self and of others.

Identity change and intercultural sensitivity change are intimately related. For example, Kinginger (2013) concentrates on several categories of identity (nationality, foreigner identities, gender, linguistic identity, age status, and ethnicity), arguing that identity conflicts "can have significant consequences for both the overall quality of language learning experiences abroad and for the development of a specific domain of communicative competence, namely pragmatics" (p. 352). The many examples showing identity-related pragmatic abilities not being developed, even after a full semester abroad, reveals how being aware of cultural differences (including pragmatic competence), but lacking respect for such differences (intercultural sensitivity) hinders one from embracing them as new practices of L2 identity.

Studying abroad allows students to learn about the host culture, and reflexively, to look at their own culture and at themselves. In a narrative study of Finnish students in the UK, Larzén-Östermark (2011) argues that 'the intercultural sojourn begins as a trip abroad – to learn the language and discover another culture – but ends in learning most about oneself' (p. 455). As noted by Savicki and Cooley (2011), when an individual is immersed in a culture that is not theirs during a study abroad program, "an acculturation process begins that impacts that individual's social identification" (p. 340). The contact hypothesis (Allport, 1954) argues that contact between people from different cultures

might lead one to explore one's identity by being exposed to the host culture and learning about different ways of living.

The Bourdieusan "habitus," which Ellwood (2011) prefers to refer to as the Deleuzian concept of "molar," such as gender roles, or teacher/student roles, is part of our identities. Ellwood (and Deleuze) conceptualizes the molar as "what is fixed and limiting: the 'knots' in our identities" (p. 964), a sort of cultural core of someone's identity. She argues that to shake the molar, or our core cultural identities, we need to interact with people who have different molars. Therefore, molarized aspects of identity make change difficult, and studying abroad can challenge molarized identities by being in contact with cultural difference and being a foreigner. Ellwood (2011) argues that "identity change is a process of movement involving a letting go of molarised roles and rigid identifications in response to being affected" (p. 964). Therefore, being affected socially - or "molecularised" - allows change in identity— "reterritorialization" (Ellwood, 2011). In her study of four students in Australia, Elwood posited that all students interviewed began the semester with the expectation that their identity would change, but not all interviews at the end of the semester displayed the expected change. Indeed, while students became more aware about themselves and their self-identity, not all of them changed their identities. Those who did, however, had connections with other students, creating what she (and Deleuze) calls a "line of flight," dissolving their identities (molars) and opening to the unknown.

*Global Perspective*

Not surprisingly, a significant portion of the literature on the effects of study abroad on identity focuses on national and supranational identities, as studying abroad is perceived to expand one's worldview to develop global citizenship. Some recent research has challenged the notion of "global citizenship" (Jooste & Heleta, 2017), arguing that it creates epistemological and philosophical tensions in higher education, as not all institutions place global citizenship as a goal of education. National identity can be altered by immersing in another culture. While there are other layers of identity such as race and ethnicity (Coleman, 2013) or gender (Polanyi, 1995; Patron, 2007), demographics on American study abroad participants reveal that about 73% of those surveyed identified as white during the 2014-2015 schoolyear (Institute of International Education, 2016). In a study comparing US national identity of 59 students participating in a semester-long program and 49 who had stayed on their home campus (control group), Savicki and Cooley (2011) found that study abroad participants, even prior to their SA, had a "more balanced commitment and exploration" (p. 346) of their US identity, perhaps due to their prior interest in other cultures. The study found that students became more aware of their US identities, while simultaneously becoming more ethno-relativistic. Data collected from the American Identity Measure (AIM) revealed that the "SA group had had their achieved identity disrupted by the study abroad" (p.344) suggesting that this could be what students mean when they say that study abroad experiences transformed them. Similarly, in their study comparing three study abroad program types (instructor-led topic focused, engagement activity instructor-led, and immersion with direct enrollment), Graham and Crawford (2012) found that participants in instructor-led and immersion

programs displayed "the highest rates of revision in their conceptions of nation and citizenship" (p. 108). However, in his review of Second language identities, Block (2007) notes that when US students experience situations challenging their culture and values, they usually "recoil into a sense of superiority" (Kinginger, 2013, p. 342), arguing that identity change is a rare phenomenon.

In contrast, Jacobone and Moro (2015) observed in their study of European students participating in Erasmus (EuRopean Action Scheme for the Mobility of University Students, the exchange program between European institutions), that one of the impacts of study abroad was "Europeanizing" students' identity compared with students staying on their home campuses. Through a pre- and post-study abroad test, they investigated how the program impacted students' skills, intercultural competence, personal growth, and European identity and found that study abroad participants had changed not only overall language proficiency, but also cultural awareness and "personal development." This corresponds to one of the foundational objectives of Erasmus, the European program of educational mobility of students between universities, namely "to strengthen the interaction between citizens in different Member States with a view to consolidating the concept of a People's Europe" (p. 2). Indeed, Erasmus was conceived and popularized as a force for crafting a spirit of European identity. However, it might be argued that students who participate in Erasmus are already inclined to feel European.

In her study comparing students participating in study abroad program with intervention (Group 1), students in full immersion abroad (Group 2), and students remaining on their home campus (Group 3), Pedersen (2010) investigated a variable regarding the "sense of being disconnected and not feeling fully part of one's culture"

(Hammer, 2007, p. 251, cited in Pedersen, p. 76). Findings revealed that some students felt less disconnected after studying abroad because the intervention guided them in their reflection on themselves, increasing their self-awareness, and of their culture, leading them to "hold a solid sense of cultural self while increasing [their] ability to navigate the complex realities of the culture of 'other'" (Pedersen, 2010, p. 77).

In their research on students from Hong Kong studying in the UK for short and mid-length terms, Benson, Barkhuizen, Bodycott, and Brown (2012; 2013) found that participants demonstrated modest change in identity, but that the most susceptible development was in "identity- related L2 proficiency, linguistic self-concept, and L2-related personal competence" (2013, p. 42). They also noted that variations in identity development were due to program length and student goals abroad and in relation to their language learning experience, suggesting that individual differences were at the chore of identity change in the context of study abroad.

Paige, Fry, Stallman, Josić, and Jon (2009) surveyed over 6000 individuals who had participated in study abroad programs over several decades. While quantitative data indicated that study abroad had impacted several constructs of global engagement, the qualitative portion of the study revealed that participants perceived study abroad to be a major turning point in their lives, impacting their academic and career choices, sometimes leading to drastic change. Further, Weigl (2009) argues that cultural self-study and reflection on one's emotions while abroad seem to be an "antidote to naiveté" (p. 357).

The following sections investigate specific dimensions of identity being altered by SA, namely psychosocial identity and L2 identity, and identifies how disorienting experiences often trigger such identity change.

*Identity and language learning*

In her research on psychosocial identity development of international students in US universities, Kim (2012) proposes a six-phase model of international student identity (ISI) in relation to acculturation processes, in which students progress from (1) pre-exposure (inheriting self), (2) exposure (opening self), (3) enclosure (securing self), (4) emergence (disclosing self), (5) integration (internationalizing self), to (6) internationalization (globalizing self). In her model, she highlights how social interactions with native speakers or students from the host country, length of stay in the new environment, and individual differences impact students' identity and how they progress through the phases.

Benson et al. (2013) argue that "Some proficiency developments are clearly more closely related to identity than others. (p. 43). Pellegrino Aveni (2005) defines identity in study abroad as an "overarching experience of self-presentation in a second language and the maintenance of security (i.e., status, validation, safety, and control) in a second culture." (p. 7) and asserts that students demonstrate a discrepancy in their L1 and L2 identities. L2 identity is defined as "any aspect of a person's identity that is connected to their knowledge or use of a second language." (Benson et al., 2013). Pellegrino Aveni points out mismatch between L1 and L2 identities, because students immersed abroad are

> stripped of the comfortable mastery of their first language and of cultural and societal adroitness" and they "often report feeling as if those around them may perceive them to be unintelligent, lacking personality or humor, or as having the intellectual development of a small child. Accents, incorrect intonation, grammatical errors, and unsophisticated lexical choices, all a natural part of a developing linguistic system, contribute to this "inferior" presentation of the individual. (2005, p. 9).

Students' L2 proficiency is sometimes so limited that when they participate in SA, their L2 ideal or desired identities do not match their real identities because they are not able to express themselves like they would in their L1 and receive recognition for such identities (Benson et al., 2013; Pellegrino Aveni, 2007). For example, Pellegrino Aveni (2007), reports on the story of Leila, a sociable and outgoing person in her L1. However, in her L2, she felt linguistically and personally misunderstood, which affected her sense of self-esteem, because of her lack of linguistic skills to express herself, making her feel that "others thought her to be stupid, childish, or inadequate in some way" (p. 99). However, Pellegrino Aveni also argues that the length of study abroad affects the development of pragmatics which in return affect both linguistic and psychological aspects of study abroad participants. Shorter study abroad programs seem to have less time to change students' identities.

Pellegrino Aveni's concern is shared by other researchers who argue that short-term study abroad programs usually entail little impact on identity and therefore little change, as students might resist negotiation of cultural differences and not be able to understand such differences or to appreciate them (intercultural sensitivity) from the perspective of the host culture (Kinginger, 2013; Shively, 2011).

**Transformative Learning and Transformative Experience: History and Definitions**

Although there is a substantial body of literature on theories regarding disorientation, confusion, or discomfort leading to cognitive and identity changes, empirical research remains limited (Cranton, 1997; Mezirow, 2000; Pintrich, 1999). Disorientation is believed to impact knowledge and reflections leading to new meaning

structures also called "transformation" (Mezirow, 2000), or "conceptual change" (Pintrich, 1999; Sinatra, 2005), which can lead to new behaviors (Mezirow, 2000). Mezirow's Transformative Learning Theory (1978, 2000) is a foundational work on TL in adult education. It argues that a "disorienting dilemma" impacts learners and leads to a series of 10 phases, from experiencing disorientation to reflecting on oneself and reintegrating the newly learned competence or skill into one's perspective. The ten phases are (Mezirow, 2000, p. 22):

| Transformative Learning Theory Phases |
|---|
| 1. A disorienting dilemma |
| 2. Self-examination with feelings of fear, anger, guilt, or shame |
| 3. A critical assessment of assumptions |
| 4. Recognition that one's discontent and the process of transformation are shared |
| 5. Exploration of options for new roles, relationships, and actions |
| 6. Planning a course of action |
| 7. Acquiring knowledge and skills for implementing one's plan |
| 8. Provisional trying of new roles |
| 9. Building competence and self-confidence in new roles and relationships |
| 10. A reintegration into one's life on the basis of conditions dictated by one's new perspective |

*Figure 10: Transformative Learning Theory Phases*

Mezirow (1991) based his theory on research he conducted on middle-aged women returning to college. He defines transformative learning as "the process of becoming critically aware of how and why our assumptions have come to constrain the way we perceive, understand, and feel about the world" (p. 167). He argues that

transformation "refers to a movement through time of reformulating reified structures of meaning by reconstructing dominant narratives." (2000, p. 19). He describes that learning occurs "by elaborating existing frames of reference, by learning new frames of reference, by transforming points of view, or by transforming habits of mind." (2000, p. 19). Indeed, the entire process involves the learner in a critical reflection on their systems of reference, or beliefs, values, and understanding of the world (King, 2009), and when the cycle is fully achieved –although not all phases need to be experienced—, the learner's perspective is transformed.

Interestingly, while many educators have advocated for Transformation as being the goal of education, or the ideal frame of learning, some researchers have warned about potential negative effects of perspective transformation. For example, some researchers, building on Mezirow's transformative learning theory, argue that perspective transformation -and the use of reflection in particular- might not necessarily be the best for all situations, because personal change through PT can potentially lead to alienation (Brookfield, 1994; Hoggan et al., 2017; Mälkki, 2010; Mälkki & Green, 2014). While Hoggan, Mälkki, and Finnegan (2017) remind that Mezirow and other contributors to transformative learning theory do not explicitly claim that perspective transformation should be set as an ideal to strive for in education, they (Hoggan et al., 2017) note that the literature rarely takes interest in the negative consequences of perspective transformation.

*Assessing Transformation*

Measuring perspective transformation is a laborious enterprise. Some research is qualitative and associates peoples' statements with transformative learning phases, a quantitative instrument, the Learning Activities Survey (LAS) was developed by King (1998) for educational contexts. The LAS (2009) is composed of four parts divided into 14 questions. The first part consists of yes/no questions regarding transformative learning phases, to assess which TL phases participants experienced. The second part consists of detailing experiences, letting participants explain what happened. Part three focuses on questions related to what triggered the various phases, and what activities learners engaged in that influenced the change. Finally, the fourth part concerns demographic information (King, 2009, p. 243-246). It is then followed by interview questions to expand on survey answers. The instrument has been used in various studies in education, but rarely in relation to SA. In order to assess the validity and reliability of her instrument, King (2009) explains that the Learning Activities Survey is often paired with follow-up interviews, allowing the matching of data and participant, therefore increasing instrument validity and reliability. However, the retrospective self-report nature of the survey might prompt participants into thinking that they were transformed, and the survey might lead them into digesting the terms used in the survey and integrating them when answering interview questions. Finally, due to the widely accepted idea that transformation is positive, research participants might present themselves as being transformed to some degree, leading to response distortion and inflation in self-presentation because of social desirability (Paulhus, 2002; Spencer, 1938).

Perry, Stoner, and Tarrant (2012) argue that "exposure to new places, cultures, and learning environments where a student's preconceived and established notions and beliefs are tested, may act as the catalyst or impetus for bring forth a transformative experience" (p. 682), suggesting that studying abroad have a potential for transformation.

Oberg (1954) introduced the now-pervasive concept of "culture shock," a situation in which someone enters a different culture and experiences discomfort, confusion, and anxiety. In the classic formulation, the process starts with a "honeymoon stage," disrupted by a "crisis in the disease," overcome gradually in two phases, from normalization to equilibrium. While the stages have been challenged, with researchers arguing that that the adjustment stages are not linear but rather experiences as a "U" (early adjustment which drops and rises again) or a "W" as an effect of returning to one's culture (reverse culture shock), the theory remains widely accepted in the study abroad field and has even entered common usage. While the number of phases or stages differ (4 vs 10), it seems, however, to be triggered by similar experiences as Mezirow's transformative learning theory ("disorienting dilemma" and "crisis in the disease"), and to lead to some sort of perspective shift, affecting either one's self concept or external concept, similarly to transformative learning theory. King (2009) even argues that transformative learning takes place as learners "begin to and ultimately transition to a significantly new place in their understanding of values, beliefs, assumptions, themselves and their world" (p. 4), suggesting that transformative learning is associated with identity, as well as perceptions of others and of themselves, suggesting a potential overlap or relationship between intercultural sensitivity and perspective transformation.

Study abroad seems to be a particularly good environment for triggering perspective transformation, as study abroad is, in essence, experiential and provides the ground for disorientation. In the context of study abroad, the goal of transformative learning is to stimulate students to move from ethnocentric to ethnorelative worldviews (Strange & Gibson, 2017). As Perry, Stoner, and Tarrant (2012) comment, "exposure to new places, cultures, and learning environments where a student's preconceived and established notions and beliefs are tested, may act as the catalyst or impetus to bring forth a transformative experience" (p. 682). However, transformative learning and perspective transformation research in the context of study abroad remains limited, even though the term "transformation" is very often used in the literature of study abroad, without referring to the literature of transformative learning. Indeed, "identity transformation" is often used loosely, reinforcing the idea that contact with other cultures does change "something" in students. Research in transformative learning in the context of international education, while limited, has been dominated by quantitative approaches (Stone, et al., 2017; Strange & Gibson, 2017).

While we know about the process of transformation, we do not know much about what kind of experiences trigger transformation abroad, and we know little about the types of change. Studies on transformative learning applied to study abroad have been focused primarily on nursing, tourism education (Stone & Duffy, 2010; Stone et al., 2017), and teacher education (Trilokekar & Kukar, 2011), or investigated whether study abroad can foster TL (Strange & Gibson, 2017). Research argues that study abroad can foster perspective transformation, but under certain conditions. However, only a few studies have used the LAS to evaluate the impact of study abroad in terms of perspective

transformation experiences. Strange and Gibson's (2017) investigated the correlation between program length, experiential learning, and transformative learning. They argued that reflection and discomfort were not, unlike Mezirow's transformative learning claim, necessary for transformation. They also state that short term programs longer than 18 days can have "just as great of an impact as those of a full semester, or academic year long" (p. 96). Their research provides interesting insights in the relations across theories. However, while they support that the more experiential learning students are exposed to, the more potential there is for transformation, little is known about the specific learning components in relation to the countries where students visited. Indeed, while their study reported that half of their participants found that interactions with locals and field trips were the most influential, the types of interactions were not described. In their qualitative study of pre-service teachers, Trilokekar and Kukar (2011) interviewed nine students who participated in three-month study abroad programs. All participants mentioned having experienced disorientation, and all articulated it around their experiences of "racial dynamics," feeling like outsiders, gaining awareness of privilege and power, engaging in "risk-taking or experimenting with new identities," and "recognizing privilege and global power relations" (Trilokekar & Kukar, 2011, pp. 1144-1146). In their study of tourism students participating in short-term faculty-led study abroad program (two to six weeks), Stone, Duerden, Duffy, and Hill (2017) used the LAS and found that out of 107 students who had answered their survey, 59% of them had "experienced overall TL" (p. 6), while others had only gone through one phase (disorientation). This quantitative study not only confirmed that study abroad can foster perspective transformation, but it also suggests that for some students, short-term study abroad can be sufficient time for perspective

transformation. However, there is a dearth of empirical studies using the LAS in study abroad contexts.

During studying abroad, students' molar (habitus or general identity) are challenged, and their sense of self and perceptions of otherness are questioned by their interactions with the environment and inhabitants of the host country and can therefore trigger beginning phases of transformation.

Engberg and Jourian (2015) without using the terms "transformation" or "perspective transformation," insisted on the centrality of the intentionality and willingness to change. They label the phenomenon as "Intercultural wonderment," and define it as being "manifested as students intentionally push themselves outside their comfort zones, feel immersed in the culture of the host country, explore new habits and behaviors while abroad, and interact with individuals from the host country outside the classroom" (p. 2).

The German concept of *bildung,* which does not have an equivalent in English but refers to the "processes of cultivation of human capacities," and simultaneously "the end of this process, the state of being educated, cultivated, or erudite," (Fuhr, 2017, p. 3) has been of interest in the field of intercultural sensitivity for the past decade. Byram emphasizes *bildung* in his theoretical reflections on intercultural communication competence and consequently on intercultural sensitivity in relation to language teaching and learning. He argues that *bildung* requires a global mindset and is equivalent to global citizenship, inseparable from intercultural communication competence. Fuhr, Laros, and Taylor (2017) go further, arguing the *bildung* is inseparable from transformative learning, as both concepts "analyze complex, prolonged learning processes in which learners

reconstruct basic assumptions and expectations that frame their thinking, feeling, and acting" (Fuhr, Laros, & Taylor, 2017, p. ix). Intercultural sensitivity and perspective transformation are deeply intertwined around ideas related to identity in relation to a global mindset.

A recent focus in research has been the impact of studying abroad with a service learning component – that is, programs with a specific task identified to encourage reflection and lead to taking action – and its connection to global citizenship For example, Graham and Crawford (2012) identified differences in the transformation across programs, arguing that instruction-led topic-focused programs and immersion programs led to more epistemic and philosophical learning transformations, whereas engagement activity instructor-led programs involved personal adaptive and epistemic dimensions. Vatalaro, Szente, and Levin (2015) found that students increased awareness of cultural differences, developed self-awareness and changed how they viewed themselves and their future career paths. A study of mostly minority populations (primarily African American females), revealed that older students who did reflective journaling and participated in service learning had the highest critical reflection and self-awareness (Walters, Charles, & Bingham, 2017).

Some researchers (Engle & Engle, 2003) argue that short-term study abroad has the potential to lead to positive by leaving students in the first "honeymoon" or "infatuation" phase with the culture. The opposite, however, may be equally true, as students who experience negative culture shock may have no time to moderate their negative experiences.

**Transformative Learning and Intercultural Sensitivity in Study Abroad Contexts**

Evidence suggests that study abroad fosters intercultural sensitivity and perspective transformation experiences. Specifically, study abroad in non-traditional countries, especially in those that polarize external opinions such as Israel (Gries, 2015), is an important gap in the literature. The specific growth of intercultural competence and intercultural sensitivity, especially in relation to experiential learning has been the focus of few investigations. While perspective transformation seems to be happening for many students abroad, there is a lack of knowledge regarding the specific experiences that enable transformative learning. Finally, perspective transformation seems to be closely related to intercultural sensitivity as both are conceived as phases on a continuum. Particularly, focusing on experiences abroad perceived to have influenced intercultural sensitivity and PT might lead to identifying whether both intercultural sensitivity and perspective transformation are triggered by similar activities within experiential learning. This would contribute to helping improve learning outcomes for study abroad programs.

A review of literature highlights how changes can emerge from study abroad. Cultural Distance plays a role in affecting intercultural adaptation. Intercultural competence as a whole —including intercultural sensitivity— can emerge from SA, and it can be measured via several instruments. Finally, transformative learning and transformative experiences can result from international education, but many aspects of the impact of study abroad need more scholarly investigation and could benefit from the encounter of theoretical frameworks that do not often meet.

# Chapter 3: Methods

## Introduction

In this chapter I present the methods I used to answer the research questions. I restate the questions that guided this dissertation and introduce my epistemological stance. Then, I describe my research design, my participants, and how I collected and analyzed the data. Finally, I address issues related to data management.

## Restatement of the Research Questions

The purpose of this study is to understand *how* study abroad participants perceived their intercultural sensitivity change and perspective transformation and *what* they perceived to have contributed to such change as a result of a short-term program in the Middle East. The following four questions guided the research:

1. What were the participants' experiences in a short-term study abroad program in Israel?

2. In what ways, if any, do study abroad participants perceive that they changed?

## Epistemological Stance

The choice and articulation of my research topic are the results of my epistemological stance. I identify myself ontologically as a realist and epistemologically both as a constructionist and as a social constructivist. That is, in my conceptions, there are different ways of conceiving reality, and that humans, if they constantly try to understand and conceive of the Truth, cannot escape their human filters. Even though

there is something outside of the human consciousness (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003) – an external reality – our human understanding of it remains trapped by our humanness (Crotty, 1998; Schutz et al, 2004). "Meaning without a mind," thus, "is not [conceivable]" (Crotty, 1998, p. 10-11). Because my experience is determined by my human condition, I tend to be more aligned with a constructionist view and with Sartre's statement that "la conscience et le monde sont donnés d'un même coup: extérieur par essence à la conscience, le monde est, par essence relative à elle" (1939, translated as "consciousness and the world are given at the same time: external by essence to consciousness, the world is, by essence relative to consciousness." Nothing can be known by conscious-making beings outside of their human filter, which is both socially and individually constructed through interaction with the world (animate and inanimate), because our tools (for meaning-making) remain human-made and therefore with human limits. I construct my understanding, my knowledge and my meaning of the world through both social interactions as they affect language--as a person part of a culture where knowledge is "the product of a collective effort to assemble a consistent worldview" (Davis, 2004, p. 97), and where we "co-create understandings" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003, p. 35)—but also individually through my own system of references that is affected by social interactions (Levi-Strauss, 1952). There is an external reality which cannot really be conceived and a multitude of constructed realities, as many as there are human beings to construct them.

My social constructivist standpoint informs my way of thinking about knowledge and my way of conceiving research. Between post-positivism and symbolic interactionism, I try to predict and understand my research. However, because the nature of inquiry resides in one's "constructed worldview" (Schutz, Chambless, & DeCuir, 2004,

p. 273), I believe that what we choose to study and how things are defined are led by one's sociohistorical context. Science as inquiry is a "problem-solving activity" (Schutz, Chambless, & DeCuir, 2004, p. 274) within a sociohistorical context, and is meant to explain phenomena and enable (socially constructed) agreement in order to improve the lived realities of humans within their sociohistorical contexts. Because science is conceived as a problem-solving activity, what should be studied should be defined by the usefulness of suggesting a contextually relevant potential solution to an existing problem through inquiry, implying that the solution and the problem, like knowledge, are contextualized and changeable, and therefore anchored in space, time, and cultures (Schutz, Chambless, & DeCuir, 2004). This position echoes aspects of Dewey's pragmatism, as I do not think in binary terms regarding research but rather in what would be useful to answer my research questions (Biesta, 2010). My project emerges from my own context and experience as "serial study abroad participant" in various environments. My experiences as an international or exchange student have influenced all aspects of my life, causing me to question what I value and transforming my interactions with others and with my own identity. This observation – that I am more curious and eager, and derive more pleasure from, intercultural interactions – makes me wonder what has impacted me. To understand myself, I strive to understand what impacts others and makes them want to pursue their learning, and what prevents other students from seeking to embrace international, intercultural, and interlingual identities and claim a more active form of global citizenship.

To the ends of trying to understand the pursuit or rejection of internationality, my epistemological stance defines my research interests and what I value as important to

learn about, "the cultural role of research" (Biesta, 2010, p. 104). Specifically, my postpositivist standpoint informs my belief that some phenomena can be observed but the act of observing remains contained by our humanness and therefore influences not only the observation itself and the object observed, but also shapes our understanding of it. As a social constructionist, I think that knowledge is "the product of a collective effort to assemble a consistent worldview" (Davis, 2004, p. 97), and an individual process. The combination of the two being social constructivism, symbolic interactionism also shapes how I view the knower and knowledge. Knowledge cannot be transmitted but is instead actively processed through an individual filter co-shaped by social interactions. Therefore, it "resides in the meanings people create for themselves" (Schiro, 2013, p. 189), which implies a multitude of individual truths, validated to some extent by a social agreement, through social interactions with our environment, and shaped by our language and previous experiences (Schiro, 2013, p. 168). Knowledge is contextual and subject to change, as it is "enmeshed within a complex and layered sociohistorical context" (Schutz, Chambless, & DeCuir, 2004, p. 272). I try to "predict" which experiences related to learning abroad foster the development of intercultural competence, intercultural sensitivity, of perspective transformation. Simultaneously, I am trying to understand how students and their instructor report in their own words and perceive their intercultural sensitivity growth and perspective transformation, and how they think of it in relation to the international experience they were exposed to.

## Research Design

My system of references, background, and experiences influenced my conception of sociohistorical contexts, gender, race, ethnicity, and nationality. They influence my

interpretation of experiences in a hermeneutical manner. Denzin and Lincoln (2008) state "the gendered, multiculturally situated researcher approaches the world with a set of ideas, a framework (theory, ontology) that specifies a set of questions (epistemology) that he or she then examines in specific ways (methodology, analysis)" (2008, p. 28). I engaged in qualitative research with the awareness "nothing is culture free" (Bruner, 1996, p. 14) and that "issues are complex, situated, problematic relationships" (Stake, 2000, p. 440) and that my research questions, my epistemological stance and my theoretical framework are anchored in my situatedness, which inevitably affected my data collection and analysis.

Most studies regarding intercultural competence were quantitatively driven (Engle & Engle, 2004; Fritz, et al., 2005; Fritz, Möllenberg, & Chen, 2002; Peng, Rangsipaht, & Thaipakdee, 2005; Wang & Zhou, 2016) reporting change numerically, but without always describing the change or incorporating the voices of participants. The limit of quantitative data is that it is often inadequate to describe the meaning behind the experience. I used a qualitative case study methodology to explore how short-term study abroad participants perceive that they changed and to what they attribute the change. The small and specifically qualified group of students was defined within a bounded system in order to understand, in depth, their perspectives (Creswell, 2007; Stake, 1995). A qualitative approach was appropriate for exploring individuals' feelings and emotions, as well as how they make meaning out of their experiences.

I consider knowledge to be socially constructed, and through this case study, I intend to "assist readers in the construction of knowledge" (Stake, 2000, p. 442). The bounded system in which participants exist is a short-term study abroad program to Jerusalem. A case study approach enables understanding of an "issue or problem using

the case as a specific illustration" (Creswell, 2007, p. 73). Because the boundaries between the experiences or choices and contexts are not clear, a case study enables the collection of a varied set of data (Yin, 1984) and captures the perception of the participants in a more holistic way.

The intent was to examine the experiences of students participating in a study abroad program (to Jerusalem), to explore their perceived changes, according to the students and their instructor, and understand which experiences remain salient six months upon their return.

*Quantitative and Qualitative Data within a Qualitative Approach*

The first phase of the study involved observations as a research participant in a study abroad program. Then, I collected documents written by the students during their study abroad. Six months after the end of the program, I collected quantitative data and a few open-ended questions (ISS and LAS) to evaluate students' perceived transformation and intercultural sensitivity. Finally, the following week, I conducted interviews with the students and their instructor.

This research sought to describe *how* study abroad participants perceived a short-term program in the Middle East to have affected their intercultural sensitivity change and perspective transformation. In order to gain in-depth and holistic understanding of lived experiences, a qualitative case study methodology was employed as it enables one to "understand an issue or problem using the case as a specific illustration" (Creswell, 2007, p. 73).

A central dimension in case study research is to define the boundaries of the case being studied (Stake, 1995). The bounded system comprises students having participated in a course offered at a university in Jerusalem over the summer. The course focused on understanding cultural diversity in the Israeli context. In order to gain insight in the students' perspectives within their environments, research used multiple data collections and multiple sources of data (Creswell, 2007; Stake, 1995). In order to explore aspects of intercultural sensitivity growth and perspective transformation and determine if and how a change in intercultural sensitivity and perspective transformation took place, research used the syllabus, various course assignments such as reflective papers, observation papers, reflections on readings, as well as final research papers, pictures, and the researcher's participant own observations and journals in addition to qualitative semi-structured interviews (Creswell, 2007) of the students and instructor.

A narrative writing of participants' experiences integrated both quantitative and qualitative data by recreating individual stories analyzing intercultural sensitivity scores and transformative learning phases and the perceived explanations from the selected participants (Polkinghorne, 1995). Further, because the design of the study prevents pre-study abroad surveys of IS, and perceived quantitative self-evaluation of intercultural sensitivity prior to studying abroad, initial student papers and observations were used to give a sense of potential change in intercultural competence.

The following diagram represents the various stages of the research.

| Study Abroad in the Middle East | - Students enrolled in SA program, wrote papers, went on trips with and without instructor, etc. + researcher participant in class (observations…) |

| QT Data Collection Post-Test Survey | - Collected reflective journals and assignments<br>- ISS + LAS 6 months after SA program |

| QT Data and Written Assignments Analysis | - Descriptive statistics + inductive thematic content analysis |

| QL Data Collection Interviews | - Conducted interviews |

| QL Data Analysis | - Inductive thematic content analysis<br>- Member-check<br>- Data triangulation + researcher triangulation |

*Figure 11: Stages of the Research*

## Participants

Numeric data was collected from the five students who participated contemporaneously in the same study abroad program course in Jerusalem. The bounded-system is therefore defined by the following criteria: all students of at least 18 years old, participating in the same short study abroad program (4 weeks) over the summer 2017,

making this study a case-study. The instructor of the five students was also a participant in the research, providing a different perspective. Further bounding the case-study, students spent approximately the same amount of time in Jerusalem, with only a few days before and after the course. They were hosted within similar housing conditions in the dorm with other international roommates, and they attended the same activities as part of the course. However, individual characteristics and individual experiences before, during, and after participation in this study abroad are considered in this study, but the experiential learning within the course abroad will be the focus of this research.

I collected all students' initial reflections on Jerusalem, Israel, Palestine, immigration and cultural diversity, their diverse observations of various neighborhoods of Jerusalem and Tel Aviv, as well as their reflective papers on readings and their final research papers completed during their time abroad. All students took surveys assessing their current intercultural sensitivity and perspective transformation approximately six months after their return from Jerusalem. I also conducted interviews of all students and their instructor.

Sampling for the qualitative data was the same as for quantitative data, and all students were interviewed. This *complete collection*, or *criterion sampling* enabled comprehensive data of all participants (Kemper, Stringfield, & Teddlie, 2003; Teddlie & Yu, 2007). It is important to note that data saturation might not have been reached due to the limited number of study abroad participants in the described bounded-system.

**Data Collection**

The design described in this dissertation was reviewed and approved by the Institutional Review Board at the University of Oklahoma for the inclusion of human subjects. I collected several types of data for this study:

1. All participants' written assignments submitted in the class

2. Course syllabus

3. Surveys

4. Research participants' observations of classroom and interview dynamics while in Israel

5. Interviews from all participants and instructor

*Quantitative Data Collection*

### Intercultural Sensitivity Scale

The Intercultural Sensitivity Scale (ISS) developed by Chen and Starosta (2000) was used to collect quantitative data approximately six months after the end of the study abroad program (post-test). The ISS was chosen because of its focus on dimensions (interaction confidence, interaction attentiveness, interaction enjoyment, interaction engagement, and respect for other cultures) rather than stages like in the IDI (Hammer et al., 2003), and because it does not focus on the exploration of individual and collective features like the ISI (Bhawuk & Brislin, 1992). Stages, even though they are not clearly distinguished, are identified through qualitative data driven from the interviews.

The original ISS encompasses 24 Likert-type scale items from *strongly agree* (5) to *strongly disagree* (1) and assesses the five factors of intercultural sensitivity (Chen &

Starosta, 2000). The present study used the original instrument in addition to an alternate version specifying Israel, and thus encompasses a total of 48 items. It offers 16 questions for interaction engagement ("I enjoy interacting with people from different cultures," questions 1, 11, 13, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 35, 37, 45, 46, 47, and 48), 6 for interaction enjoyment ("I get upset easily when interacting with people from different cultures," questions 9, 12, 15, 33, 36, and 39), 10 for interaction confidence ("I am pretty sure of myself in interacting with people from different cultures," questions 3, 4, 5, 6, 10, 27, 28, 29, 30, and 34), 6 for interaction attentiveness ("I am very observant when interacting with people from different cultures," questions 14, 17, 19, 38, 41, and 43), and 12 for respect of different cultures ("I think people from other cultures are narrow-minded," questions : 2, 7, 8, 16, 18, 20, 26, 31, 32, 40, 42, and 44) (Chen & Starosta, 2000, p. 98). As stated by Chen and Starosta (2000), "higher scores of this measure are suggestive of being more interculturally sensitive" (p. 10). This survey has been a reference in the field of intercultural sensitivity for nearly 15 years and many follow-up studies have used this instrument to test and confirm its reliability and validity in non-Western environments. In addition, demographic data, such as nationality, age, sex, language(s) spoken at home, other languages learned, major, minor, and previous international experiences, was collected at the beginning of the survey, such as date of birth, sex, country/state of origin, language(s) spoken at home, other languages learned, major, minor, and previous international experiences. The survey was administered via email.

Many follow-up studies have used Chen and Starosta's (2000) ISS, confirming the five-factors previously identified. Instrument reliability and validity were conducted by Chen and Starosta with a confirmatory factor analysis, and in various other cultural

contexts such as China or Germany (Dong, et al., 2008; Fritz, Möllenberg, & Chen, 2002; Fritz, et al., 2005; Peng, Rangsipaht, & Thaipakdee, 2005). The original ISS measures intercultural sensitivity in a broad American context and addresses intercultural sensitivity in a large sense and towards all cultures and is therefore not developed to measure intercultural sensitivity in specific cultures. Therefore, the first 24 questions are directly borrowed from the instrument developed by Chen and Starosta and address "other cultures." The next 24 questions specifically address the Israeli context. For example, item 2 "I think people from other cultures are narrow-minded" and item 26 "I think people from Israel are narrow-minded" can lead to different responses. In addition, items 2, 4, 7, 9, 12, 15, 18, 20, 22, 26, 28, 31, 33, 36, 39, 42, 44, and 46 required reverse coding.

*Learning Activities Survey*

The Learning Activities Survey (LAS) developed by King (1998, 2009) was used to collect data as a post-test. The purpose of the LAS is to identify "whether adult learners have had a perspective transformation in relation to their educational experience; and if so, determining what learning activities have contributed to it" (King, 2009, p. 14). In the context of the present study, the LAS was administered to identify whether perspective transformation was perceived as having occurred, and activities inside and outside of class that contributed to change. For example, the first part of the survey aims at identifying whether study abroad participants experienced any aspect of perspective transformation, such as "I had an experience that caused me to question the way I normally act" (King, 2009, p. 243). Originally composed of 14 items, the instrument was altered to fit the study abroad context, but the adaptations were made according to the

guidelines developed by King (2009). For example, some statements about potential activities in items 4 and 7 were added, such as "interactions with people from the host country," or "living with people from another culture" in order to address the specificities of SA. While the instrument was originally designed to determine which classroom activities or classroom-related experiences fostered TL/PT, the modified version integrates both classroom and external activities. Finally, items 8 to 14 were deleted as they asked for demographic information which were already collected in the first part of the survey via the Intercultural Sensitivity Scale.

The table below displays how the Learning Activities Survey statements match the Transformative Learning Phases. Some statements do not have equivalents in TL phases as they do not acknowledge any type of experience leading to transformation.

| Learning Activities Survey Item (King, 2009) | Transformative Learning Phase (Mezirow, 2000) |
|---|---|
| **a.** I had an experience that caused me to question the way I normally act. | 1. A disorienting dilemma |
| **b.** I had an experience that caused me to question my ideas about social roles (i.e. what a student or teacher should do) | 2. Self-examination with feelings of fear, anger, guilt, or shame |
| **c.** As I questioned my ideas, I realized I no longer agreed with my beliefs or role expectations. <br> **g.** I felt uncomfortable with traditional social expectations. | 3. A critical assessment of assumptions |
| **d.** Or instead, as I questioned my ideas, I realized I still agreed with my beliefs and role expectations. | - |
| **e.** I realized that other people also questioned their beliefs. | 4. Recognition that one's discontent and the process of transformation are shared (with others) |
| **f.** I thought about acting in a different way from my usual beliefs and roles. | 5. Exploration of options for new roles, relationships, and actions |
| **h.** I tried to figure out a way to adopt these new ways of acting. | 6. Planning a course of action |
| **i.** I gathered the information I needed in order to adopt these new ways of acting. | 7. Acquiring knowledge and skills for implementing one's plan |
| **j.** I began to think about the reactions and feedback from my new behavior. | 8. Provisional trying of new roles |
| **k.** I tried out new roles so that I would become more comfortable or confident in them. | 9. Building competence and self-confidence in new roles and relationships |
| **l.** I took action and adopted these new ways of acting. | 10. A reintegration into one's life on the basis of conditions dictated by one's new perspective |
| **m.** I do not identify with any of the statements above. | - |

*Figure 12: Learning Activities Survey items (King, 2009) and Transformative Learning Theory phases (Mezirow, 2000)*

The following figure represents part of the Learning Activities Survey (for the full survey, please refer to Appendix A). Participants checking off statements on the right perceive that such statements apply to them.

Thinking about your educational experiences abroad, *check off any statements that may apply:*

| | |
|---|---|
| **a.** I had an experience that caused me to question the way I normally act. | |
| **b.** I had an experience that caused me to question my ideas about social roles. (i.e. what a student or teacher should do.) | |
| **c.** As I questioned my ideas, I realized I no longer agreed with my beliefs or role expectations | |
| **d.** Or instead, as I questioned my ideas, I realized I still agreed with my beliefs and role expectations. | |
| **e.** I realized that other people also questioned their beliefs. | |
| **f.** I thought about acting in a different way from my usual beliefs and roles. | |
| **g.** I felt uncomfortable with traditional social expectations. | |
| **h.** I tried out new roles so that I would become more comfortable or confident in them. | |
| **i.** I tried to figure out a way to adopt these new ways of acting. | |
| **j.** I gathered the information I needed in order to adopt these new ways of acting. | |
| **k.** I began to think about the reactions and feedback from my new behavior. | |
| **l.** I took action and adopted these new ways of acting. | |
| **m.** I do not identify with any of the statements above. | |

*Figure 13: Learning Activities Survey – Transformation Statements (Based on King, 2009)*

As explained by King, the Learning Activities Survey is paired with a follow-up interview so as to acquire "more detailed information about perspective transformation experiences and the learning activities" (King, 2009, p. 14).

The LAS has been an increasingly popular instrument and various follow-up studies have used it, increasing the instrument reliability and validity, which is also enhanced by the follow-up questions allowing data collection at different points in time and thus data triangulation (King, 2009). The survey relies on self-reports and therefore imposes limitations on the reliability of responses. The fact that participant contact

information is associated with the survey might hinder more genuine responses (Spencer, 1938), but the follow-up interviews allow more depth and discussion.

*Qualitative Data Collection: Observations, Documents, and Interviews*

### Observations

I was a participant in the course and I observed both classroom and field trips during the study abroad experience. I took field notes in a personal journal at the time of the sojourn to Jerusalem. My notes included observations, feelings, discoveries, and random thoughts.

I collected multiple observations including interactions among participants, instructor, me, and individuals in Israeli and Palestinian territories.

### Documents

I collected documents such as the pre-sojourn reflection, reflective reports on observations and conversations with locals, reflections on various readings, final research project papers, and other papers written by the research participants during the study abroad experience. I also gathered timelines and photographs taken by the participants.

### Interviews

As explained by Fontana and Frey (1994), many researchers hold "the assumption that interviewing results in true and accurate pictures of respondents' selves and lives" (p. 646). I am aware that the content and way stories are delivered by participants are contextual and situated, and my presence as a researcher conducting interviews influences

such stories and participates in their co-construction (Wells, 2011). The design of this study as a case took this limitation into account as I collected data from multiple sources. An interview protocol was developed in order to collect in depth qualitative data from individual in-person interviews (Creswell, 2007). I explained to the importance of the informed consent (Glesne, 2006) to the research participants and I also emphasized the importance of their individual stories. The questions were deliberately formulated to encourage participants to give their individual perspectives (Patton, 2002), rather than a view they thought could be "representative." A two-hour semi-structured audio-recorded interview with each participant was conducted via Skype, as all participants were living in different regions across the globe. Follow-up questions were also posed via Skype and via email. Questions were largely based on the five constructs of intercultural sensitivity (interaction engagement, interaction enjoyment, interaction confidence, interaction attentiveness, and respect of different cultures), but also on significant experiences, perceived change, and potential perspective transformation.

I conducted two-hour long interviews and followed-up with questions later via email or Skype, which increased the stability of data over time. Eventually, I sent follow-up emails to participants for member-check of transcriptions and analyses to ensure that depictions were accurate reflections (Creswell, 2007).

Further, the instructor of the course was interviewed in a two-hour semi-structured audio-recorded Skype interview concerning his perception of students' growth, the holistic development of the course in terms of curriculum ideology and theoretical and philosophical aspects of the curriculum. This interview also allowed collection of data

regarding students who had taken the instructor's courses in Jerusalem in the previous years.

## Data Analysis

I analyzed the quantitative data to identify which intercultural sensitivity dimensions were perceived by participants to be the most developed. This helped formulate subsequent interview questions and allowed me to compare participant answers during interviews with survey responses. I analyzed qualitative data inductively.

The aim of the qualitative data collection was to compile narratives of each participant experience through multiple data sources, to gain understanding of the process of the participants' experiences.

The first round of "formal" data analysis consisted of analyzing the written reflections of observations, and other class assignments, through inductive and thematic analysis with a focus on content. This allowed me to familiarize myself with the experiences captured by the participants during study abroad, since the documents had been written for our class over the summer. Then, I familiarized myself with participants' current perspectives regarding their intercultural sensitivity and their perspective transformation experiences. Later, I conducted interviews, which I listened to three to four times each. I read transcripts repeatedly, identifying the main ideas. I wrote short summaries, reporting core ideas and contradictions within individual stories. The interviews were also analyzed through inductive and thematic analysis to extract patterns and to capture meanings from participants (Ezzy, 2002; Shank, 2002). This analysis focused on the content of the stories or semantics (Wells, 2011). Five student participants

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and one faculty member were interviewed. Each two-hour individual semi-structured Skype interview and their follow-up interviews or email correspondence was transcribed verbatim. Entries from my journal and notes were also added (Charmaz, 2006; Strauss & Corbin, 1990, 1998).

Although this is a case study, I used both "narrative analysis" and "analysis of narrative" (Polkinghorne, 1995) in this dissertation. "Narrative analysis" refers to the use of storytelling in research in order to both analyze data and present findings as a story. "Analysis of narrative" refers to the idea that narratives are used as data. I also used inductive thematic analysis.

First, I highlighted and underlined paragraphs of the transcriptions which clearly answered one of the research questions and color-coded them based on the research question (blue for intercultural sensitivity, red for perspective transformation...) and I drew colored lines with highlighters next to the paragraphs which seemed to address both intercultural sensitivity and perspective transformation and were difficult to disentangle. Then, I tagged the data obtained from the interviews and I labeled at the sentence or paragraph level with in-vivo codes for the first round of analysis, using either a word or short phrase from that paragraph or sentence of the data (Charmaz, 2003; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). This allowed me to have a closer look at the individual stories and to ease the re-creation of the narratives. I coded the transcriptions directly on the printed transcriptions. Then, I made a list of all the codes per participant and interview question in Excel.

After that, I categorized each individual code and I chose the most representative codes to rename the categories across all participants. I organized the categories and contrasted them in a new round of categorization to clean the categories and label them more consistently across participants. For example, categories such as "increased curiosity," "heightened curiosity," or "wants to know more" were renamed under the same category (curiosity), and I tried to keep in-vivo codes as names for categories as much as I could. I added a thematic description and summarized the "definition" of the category in a table in Excel. I then compared and contrasted categories across participants to see if there were patterns and individual differences. To do this, I printed the code book and color-coded it by participants.

For example, Alex's codes were orange, while Hailey's were blue. I also color-coded by segment the codes and categories in Excel. For example, blue was for change in intercultural sensitivity, and red for reflections. Then, I printed the codebook and cut the codes/categories, compared, contrasted, and aggregated the labels and arranged them by segments (Morse, 1994). I identified five segments: 1) perspective transformation experiences with Israelis, 2) perspective transformation experiences within course boundaries 3) change in relation to Israelis, 4) change beyond Israel, and 5) other (including previous language experiences, international travels, etc). Triangulation is defined as a "process of using multiple perceptions to clarify meaning verifying the repeatability of an observation or interpretation" (Stake, 2000, p. 443). I relied on researcher triangulation (consultation with other researchers) to improve general trustworthiness (Creswell, 2007).

In addition, I recreated the participants' experiences into narratives, using the labels extracted to access individual stories and identify common categories (Polkinghorne, 1995). I reorganized the participants' experiences chronologically to recreate their stories, intermingling quotes and reflections from their written assignments submitted for our course, and quotes from our individual Skype interviews. I use "narrative writing" (Ely, 2007) as method of data analysis as well as a method for presenting findings. This narrative analysis is referred to in the Findings as "Katherine's Experience" (or with the name of another participant). While I chose to display the individual narratives in lengthy ways, I believe they are necessary to get a deep understanding of the individual stories, I remain aware, however, that "the whole story exceeds anyone's telling, anyone's knowing" (Stake, 2000, p. 441).

Each narrative was analyzed and entitled "Analysis of Katherine's Experience" (or with the name of another participant). This "analysis of narratives" was done through constant comparison between participants, highlighting similarities and differences among them (LeCompte & Preissle 1993; Strauss & Corbin 1998). I identified "repeated patterns that remain situated rather than generalized" across narratives (Josselson, 2007, p. 13). Sifting enabled the identification of "common patterns" and variations across participants by "decontextualizing" the individual stories and leading to synthesis (Morse, 1994, p. 30). The final step of analysis was "recontextualization" (Morse, 1994) by recontextualizing this research in the existing literature of intercultural competence and perspective transformation.

Although this dissertation is heavily qualitative, quantitative was integrated, as the qualitative data clarifies, illustrates, and seeks elaboration from quantitative data. In

this study, some demographic variables (e.g. prior international experiences) were questioned, and the factors perceived by the participants as having influenced change were identified and analyzed in relation to the intercultural sensitivity constructs themselves. Qualitative data collected during the interviews were used to explain the quantitative findings, to give them more depth and insights (Creswell, 2015).

## Trustworthiness

The interviews and survey results were administered six months after students finished their study abroad in Jerusalem. The post tests are subjective accounts of change. The documents collected (reflections and papers) are "useful referents to correlate with changes between the retrospective substitutes for pretesting and their corresponding post-test outcome measures" (Hadis, 2005, p. 12).

Member-checking helped increase the credibility of the findings presented in the individual narrative analyses in order to clarify or confirm interpretations (Creswell, 2007; Merriam, 2009; Stake, 1995). Using multiple sources of data, follow-up interviews for temporal triangulation, and researcher triangulation over codes and categories presented the data from multiple angles and helped increase the dependability, and the overall trustworthiness (Blestein & Shepard Wong, 2015; Shank, 2002). The small number of participants makes it difficult to state that saturation or "comprehension" (Morse, 1994, p. 27-30) was achieved. The thematic analysis displays trends across participants, enabling pattern identification between categories (Morse, 1994). This instrumental case study (Stake, 1995) is "examined mainly to provide insight into an issue" (Stake, 2000, p. 437). However, defining the case in a detailed way and collecting personal information

about each participant anchors this research and its findings in a rich, contextual and situated way. I tried to "tell quite a bit about the case that almost anyone, who had our opportunity to observe it, would have noticed and recorded, much as we did" (Stake, 1995, p. 110). Inductive thematic analysis of the data was chosen because it lets the data speak before being put into pre-determined categories (Ezzy, 2002, Yin, 1984). Thematic analysis helped alleviate some of my theoretical assumptions, but I remain aware of my own filter (LeCompte, 2000) and that other researchers could have interpreted data differently.

## Data Management

All data were stored on my laptop computer and on cloud backup, both protected by a password to which I am the only one having access. The data collected, such as each assignment, picture, or transcription, were stored in individual folders labeled with the pseudonym of each participant. Printed data such as transcriptions were made anonymous thanks to the removal of identifying data (names, institutions, etc.) and were securely stored in a locked file cabinet. All participants were informed their confidentiality would be kept via the consent forms, and this was reinstated during each interview. I maintained participant confidentiality during all stages of the research.

## Researcher Subjectivity: Participant Observer

I participated in this short-term study abroad during the same term as research participants. I had the same instructor, interacting with participants as a classmate over the summer. During the study abroad program, I developed relationships with everyone interviewed. The intensity of my own experiences and attachment to the effects of these

experiences were challenging in my interpretation of the data. My subjectivity guided my research topic and interest, impacted my research questions, and undoubtedly influenced my data analysis at every stage of the research.

I relied heavily on member-check for transcriptions, and narratives asking participants not only if their experiences were recounted the way they perceived them, but also asking them to check whether the analyses of their experiences were plausible to them. My personal attachment to each participant made me feel like I was sometimes walking on egg shells, caught between wanting to present the data as it was, but also praising my now, wonderful friends. I could relate to my participants in many ways. I felt myself in a flow while writing their narratives. I recognize myself as a social constructivist, and a subjective being, and my awareness of this helped me be at peace.

# Chapter 4: Findings and Discussion

"My "awakened dreams" are about shifts. Thought shifts, reality shifts, gender shifts: one person metamorphoses into another in a world where people fly through the air, heal from mortal wounds. I am playing with my Self, I am playing with the world's soul, I am the dialogue between my Self and el espíritu del mundo. I change myself, I change the world" (Anzaldua, 1987, p.71).

## Introduction

This chapter presents the findings, analysis, and interpretation of the data. The findings are preceded by two tables. The first table summarizes participants' demographic information; the second table lists assignments and activities.

As Stake (2000) states it, what is necessary for an understanding of the case will be decided by the researcher" (p. 441).

First, the findings are presented via narratives to report on individual experiences and perceived changes. The narratives are presented in the following order:

- Alex

- Katherine

- Hailey

- Sarah

- Maria

Then, the findings are discussed separately for each participant to present categories and relationships to answer the research questions at the individual level.

Finally, the findings are presented in a within-case inductive thematic analysis to compare and contrast the categories (Shank, 2002) and relationships across all participants and therefore answer the research questions of this dissertation holistically.

This qualitative case study aimed at answering the following research questions:

1. What were the participants' experiences in a short-term study abroad program in Israel?

2. In what ways, if any, do study abroad participants perceive that they changed?

## Curriculum: Summer Program in Jerusalem

The length of the program varied between 4 and 6 weeks, although students could stay longer if they took courses over two consecutive sessions. Students could, for example, enroll in a 4-week summer class in the July session, followed by 4 weeks in the August session and thus stay for about 8 weeks in total. Other students took several courses over the same session. Students had the opportunity to choose from among diverse courses as part of a summer program at a university in Jerusalem. Students could choose one or two courses per session, from among a list that included language courses (Modern or Biblical Hebrew or Arabic for six weeks), courses on religion, on Israel and Middle East Studies, or in social and political sciences, such as urban planning in Jerusalem, radical Islamic organizations in the Middle East, conflict resolution, photographing multicultural Israeli society, or the history of the Israeli-Arab conflict. Some courses were also geared towards business and STEM fields such as looking at innovation and start-ups in Israel, water, or even law, investigating topics about Israeli

politics and law-making processes, as well as international law and human rights. Credits varied greatly between courses, which influenced the format and number of times students met with their instructors. For example, some courses had no field trips and met exclusively in class, three times per week for three hours each time. Other courses met both inside and outside of class and included meeting times outside of the regular class hours. Finally, instructors and professors all had various backgrounds, educational ideologies and pedagogical practices: while some instructors were academics with many years of experience in teaching and researching in their academic fields, others were less established academically, such as doctoral candidates, or were not in academia at all but rather from professional fields in their industry; some were political figures.

## Participants

The table below introduces the five students and the faculty who participated in this study. All five students were enrolled in the course taught by the faculty participant. While most students took an additional course at the same time, only one choose to enroll solely in the course taught by the faculty participant.

| Name | Sex | Country | Age | Class. | Major | Minor | Prior international experiences | Post SA |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Alex | F | US/Egypt | 20 | Soph. | International Affairs; Religious Studies added after Israel | - | Europe and Singapore with father; vacation in Spain; several trips to visit family in Egypt | SA in Scotland Fall semester |
| Katherine | F | US | 21 | Junior | Global Studies + Middle East Studies | - | Brazil with family summer 2016 | Traveled Europe with father, SA in Jordan Fall semester |
| Hailey | F | Australia | 21 | Senior | Islamic Studies | Political Science + international relations | Various travels around Europe and North Africa | - |
| Sarah | F | US | 20 | Junior | International Affairs | Arabic | high school SA in Rwanda; interned in Uganda 2016 (1 mo.); travels to Europe, Canada, and Mexico | - |
| Maria | F | Denmark | 38 | N/A | Bio-analysis Professional BA; Theology | - | Volunteered in Venezuela (9 mo.) & India (3 mo.); worked and lived in Norway (2 y.); traveled across Europe | - |
| Ehud | M | Israel/US | 45 | Instructor | - | - | - | - |

*Figure 14: Characteristics of participants*

*Students' Religious Background*

  None of the student participants were of Jewish or Hebrew background, a point of significance as existing research about study abroad participants in Israel tends to revolve around Hebrew language learning and Jewish identity (Donitsa-Schmidt & Vadish, 2005). Alex identifies as a non-practicing Muslim. Katherine is a practicing Christian (Protestant), whereas Hailey was not vocal about her belief system. Sarah was raised in a Catholic environment and attended private Catholic K-12 institutions but did not mention her personal beliefs. Finally, Maria is a practicing member of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Denmark.

*Chronology of Class Assignments, Activities, and Field Trips*

In order to understand the chronology presented in the narratives, the following section presents the list of assignments and field trips students submit and in which they participated.

| | Activity/Assignment and Short Description |
|---|---|
| 1 | *Reflection assignment* - Students needed to reflect on what they knew before the beginning on the course based on their experience and knowledge about immigration and cultural diversity in Israel or in another country they are familiar with. |
| 2 | *Field trip in Central Jerusalem* – Observation Assignment 1 in Central Jerusalem. Students watched people for at least 2 hours and engaged in conversations with at least 3 people. They then wrote a report on what was familiar or strange to them. |
| 3 | *Readings on the Arab minority in Israel* – Written reflection on the friction between Zionism and the Arab minority in Israel. |
| 4 | *Field trip to the Old City of Jerusalem* – students and instructor walked around Christian, Arab, and Jewish questers and looked at religious communities and boundaries in the Old City. Then, they went to Meah Shearim (Ultra-Orthodox Jewish neighborhood). |
| 5 | *Field trip to the Old City* – Observation Assignment 2 in the Old City of Jerusalem. Students watched people for at least 2 hours and engaged in conversations with at least 3 people. They then wrote a report on what was familiar or strange to them, on similarities and differences noticed with Central Jerusalem, on expectations and surprises, and ties to the readings. |
| 6 | *Readings on Jewish immigration and other immigration to Israel* – Written reflection on differences between immigrations in Israel. |
| 7 | *Field Trip to Ashdod and Rehovot* – visit of an integration center in Ashdod and meeting of *olim* + visit of a research center in Rehovot and meeting with researchers in education. |
| 8 | *Field trip to Tel Aviv* – tour of diverse neighborhoods, including Neve Sha'anan where migrant workers often reside, and of the Old Bus Station where undocumented African immigrants often reside. Observation Assignment 3 in Tel Aviv. Students watched people for 2+ hours and engaged in conversations with 3+ people. They then wrote a report on what was familiar or strange to them, on similarities and differences noticed with Jerusalem, on expectations and surprises, on whether and how their perspective had changed. |
| 9 | *Field trip to Yad Vashem, the Holocaust Museum* – Readings and individual visit of the museum |
| 10 | *Presentation of Research Proposal* |
| 11 | *Readings on the educational system in Israel* |
| 12 | *Readings on the manifestations of cultural diversity in Israeli politics* |
| 13 | *Field trip to Wadi Ara* – Observation of the Wadi and division between Jewish and Arab towns + visit of an Arab research center in Kfar Qara and meeting with researchers |
| 14 | *Farewell dinner at the residence of Ehud's parents in Gedera* |
| 15 | *Guest Speaker - Professor of Economy* - Talk on the integration of diverse communities (Arab, Haredi Jews, etc) into the Israeli community |
| 16 | *Final Project Presentations + Final Research Papers due.* |

*Figure 15: Description of class assignments, activities, and field trips*

Ehud's course included several field trips to cities in Israel (Jerusalem, Tel Aviv, Ashdod, Rehovot, Kfar Qara), but also encompassed various neighborhoods of Jerusalem (Jewish and Arab Quarters in the Old City, Central Jerusalem/Mahane Yehuda, Meah Shearim, etc). Entering diverse spaces was motivated by the idea that students would learn about communities and encounter people from various sects of Judaism—from ultra-orthodox groups to liberal and atheist populations; they would also meet people whose ancestors are native to the land (Arab or Jewish), as well as older waves of immigrants of a myriad of different origins like Russia, France, Ethiopia, or Uruguay, plus recent immigrants (*olim*), to gain a greater understanding of the heterogeneity of Israeli society and its social makeup. For this reason, the course encompassed visiting not only neighborhoods, but also institutions such as an immigration center in Ashdod, a research center in Rehovot, another center directed by Israeli-Arabs in Kfar Qara, as well as the Holocaust Museum of Yad Vashem. For each field trip, students had to read about the communities they were likely to meet, observe locals for at least an hour, and engage in conversations with at least 3 people over two hours, in order to write a report of at least two pages about their encounters, what they had learned, and how they had felt, following specific guided questions each time in order to facilitate their reflection.

**Qualitative Findings: Narratives and Individual Analyses**

The following section presents narratives followed by analyses answering the research questions. Individual analyses integrate results from the Learning Activities Survey and Intercultural Sensitivity Scale.

### *Alex's Experience*

"Israel changed my life. It really did. It's cliché, it sounds so icky, but it is. I went in very confused about my major, I wasn't as interested in religion, and I came out wanting to provide a platform for women, regardless of their belief. Extreme, fundamental, liberal, I wanted to create a better vocal table for everyone, so we can discuss our beliefs in an environment that is inclusive, includes marginalized representation, has conflicting views."

*Alex's background and prior expectations and bias*

Alex was raised in the US and was born to an American mother of Swedish origin and an American father of Egyptian and Syrian origins. Blonde with pale skin, she claims her Arab heritage as a central part of her identity, and she considers herself a non-practicing Muslim feminist.

She traveled to Singapore when she was 13 years old, then to Italy, Germany and Austria with her father when she was 15 years old and admits that she was "too young to appreciate the experience," as she hated it. She then traveled to Spain with a friend after her high school graduation and recognizes that she "was not there for the culture." She has also traveled to Egypt several times, because part of her family lives there, including her aunt, whom she considers to be her "best friend."

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At the time of the study abroad in Jerusalem, she had just completed her sophomore year in college, and was majoring in international affairs in conflict resolution. She declared, nearly six months after her return from the region, a second major—religious studies--arguing that

> Israel solidified my interest in religious studies but moved
> it more towards theology as I felt a strong sense of God in
> Jerusalem that I never felt before.

She freely admits that she came to Jerusalem with biases against not only the Israeli government and military, but also the Israeli population, which she thought was Jewish, Zionist, and entirely supportive of the state and its policies. Her family on her father's side -her Egyptian aunt in particular- does not recognize the state of Israel and refers to the land as "Palestine," a rhetoric that Alex was raised in, along with the idea that Israel and the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) are aggressors who "slaughter Palestinian children on a regular basis." However, during my interactions with her during the study abroad, I never heard her using any terms but "Israel" and "West Bank" or "Palestinian Territories." She acknowledged the existence of the state of Israel, if not internally, at least during our exchanges.

This background and bias was "carried over pretty much in all of my experiences" during her study abroad.

> I was probably the most biased and I know that doesn't
> bode well for me at all, but I was probably the one that
> carried the most pro-Palestinian Arab sentiments or at least
> I felt like I was the most vocal about it.

As she signed up for a program in interfaith dialogue, she did not have the choice in the courses she would take over the summer. One course was about urban planning in

a city at the heart of conflict, and the other focused on immigration and identities in Israel. The first course was taught by Gershom, a famous Israeli man who had actively participated in the 1967 war and in negotiations with Palestinian representatives, while the other course was taught by Ehud, who specialized in language teaching and has been living in the US for over fifteen years. When Alex saw Ehud's name, which is identifiably Jewish, her immediate reaction was hostile, thinking that Ehud "was not going to listen to anything that's pro-Palestinian, he was not going to promote Palestinian rights, he was going to completely overlook parts of history." Similarly, her first encounter with Gershom—who introduced himself as a Zionist—elicited a similar reaction:

> I was just like 'boom, we're down. Black Hawk Down, like, I'm not interested', if the first thing you're going to say to me is that you're aligned with Zionism and you're supposed to be mending relations between Israelis and Palestinians, through the city, what do you expect me to believe? It would be equivalent to a bi-partisan approach: he sat with Palestinian leaders and, okay, 'you sat down and you tolerated Palestinian leaders.'

While Alex's hostility remained quite present in Gershom's class, she adopted a different attitude towards Ehud and his class.

In her initial reflection on immigration and identity submitted before the official meeting as a class, Alex insisted on her long-time struggle to define her identity, and how attending an international high school had helped her to learn

> not only more about my own culture and what it means to be an Arab- American woman, but how that title affected other people and how other people's identities affected me. I began to explore my own identity initially by questioning my family history. My own ethnic identity coupled with the vast religious traditions my family practices ignited my interest in international affairs and identities. My entire

academic career has been centered upon these topic matters and how to coexist with a magnitude of identities in one area.

*Alex's first interactions with Israelis*

During her first observation and set of interviews in Central Jerusalem, a very western area in the city, she reported in her reflection written for class that she had encountered two men who told her offensive things about Arabs and Muslims in general, and that Arab teachers tell their students how to effectively stab Jews. However, she also said that she had encountered two ultra-Orthodox teenage girls who told her and Hailey that "Islamic people say that the Israelis are monkeys." While she felt hurt, she also "really felt bad for them which was kind of a weird reaction" and she wanted to tell them that no one in her family believes such things about the Jews. This interaction prompted her to reevaluate her expectations about Israelis and their knowledge of Islam, and to understand that many Israelis are "not well versed in Islam." She explains that with this interaction, she "really mellowed out, and was like 'okay, these people aren't necessarily out to get Muslim people, they just don't know anything about Islam. It's just not even targeted, it's just ignorance.'"

She also talked with Galit, a woman who had made *Aliyah* (moved to Israel for religious reasons) from the US to Israel 12 years earlier. While Alex described her as initially unfriendly, the woman warmed up when she asked Alex about her (Islamic) religious upbringing. Alex "lied because she could tell Galit would be unresponsive if she knew the truth." Alex was rarely open about her background, as she was "afraid that they would be hostile towards her for some reason." When Alex asked her about her thoughts regarding the Israeli state, Galit "went on a rant so furious that she could barely keep up."

While Alex reported in her written reflection that she was "impressed with the literary analogies" and "in awe of her religious dedication," she also concluded her reflection saying that she

> found this a universal aspect of Israelis. If one is paying attention solely to Israeli people and not interrupting/not interjecting one's own thoughts/opinions the Israeli people are extremely warm and open. However, the trouble begins when one vocalizes a thought contrary to an Israeli.

In her first observation report from Central Jerusalem, she started by writing that she "was very excited. One of her favorite aspects of immersing into a new culture is familiarizing herself with the people who create it." However, during our interviews, she repeated several times that she would not have talked with Israelis, had she not taken a course requiring it. Further, during one of our Skype interview, she mentioned that her interactions were not necessarily enjoyable at first, and that some were even "difficult but it was intriguing and if she didn't have this class with this project she would have just straight up gotten up and left." However, she insisted on how curious she felt from the beginning of her experience abroad, saying that she was "naturally intrigued by day one, but she just became much more respectful."

*Reading about the Palestinian Nakba and Zionism*

The third assignment was a response to or reflection on the readings regarding the rationale for the creation of the Israeli state, as well as some of the consequences such as *Nakba* ("catastrophe" in Arabic) which directly followed the creation of the state and involved, among other things, the razing of Palestinian villages. Although Alex

mentioned in her Skype interview that "the readings didn't do much for her" regarding her change, she noted that

> even discussing the readings was more beneficial than just doing the readings at home. Because I was able to bounce off and feel other people's interpretations of what was going on.

However, she wrote that after reading Theodor Herzl's text, she had an "intense amount of sympathy for the Jewish people," especially because she had read about the fact that many Jews around Europe had lived there for centuries and were still viewed as strangers in their own countries. She also reflected on her prior knowledge and assumptions, explaining that she was "shocked to learn that religious Jews found Herzl's Zionism to be a heresy because Herzl depleted the influence of rabbis." Upon reading a couple of article about Nakba, which she did not know about before taking this class, she wrote that "the Nakba piece was extremely emotional, thought provoking, and painful," the intensity of her reaction to the text and influence of the text on her was pointed out by Sarah in her own interview. Alex concluded her paper saying that she had been "in this city for one week today, and she is in awe of the visible/invisible divisions between Arabs/Jews." She added that she appreciated the class "because it provides tools, readings, lectures that give a voice to the voiceless and provide evidence for both sides of the story," which was something she doubted would happen when she first started the class. As she explained in the interview, her instructor, Ehud, "was the one that educated her about the Nakba, and about how Deir Yasin was the same location as Yad Vashem. This man from Israel was helping HER strengthen her own opinion about Palestine and Israel, and their relationship." Alex explains that she is "forever grateful to Ehud and it also made her change her opinion on Israeli people, his family welcomed her into their home." Further,

she explained in her interview that journaling about the readings and talking about them in class affected her understanding "because they allowed her to reflect on the experiences."

*Alex's different courses*

However, her experience in her other course with Gershom was significantly different. While she thought that the course was "interesting in theory," she had a negative experience of the course, its content, structure, as well as of the professor and his discourse:

> It was just purely a tourist trap kind of deal. We just went on all of these tours, went to the Dead Sea, went to the Jordanian River. We just did a lot of just non-interactive things. Professor was very arrogant. there was no class participation, it was solely him lecturing about his book. it wasn't the field trips where you would sit and interact with the public it was okay, this is the tree where this happens, and this is where this happens, literally we could have done that anywhere.

When comparing her two courses, she argued:

> In the class with the immigration, we interacted with people from all different types of perspectives and origins in that class. With my urban planning class all we did was just get on a bus with a tour guide, a literal tour guide who just pointed at things and told us what things were, there was no interaction with the Israeli people or the citizens at all or Palestinian citizens for that matter.

*Conversations with Haredim in the Old City: a turning point*

In her second set of observations and interviews reported in her second written reflection, she noticed that people were dressed much more modestly, that couples had many children, that groups of people were determined by sex or gender, and that people

were less eager to share with her. For example, she met Daniel, an ultra-orthodox man who she believes was a beggar, and while he did not refuse to answer her questions, he turned his chair away from her, so she would talk to him back-to-back.

> At first, I was very offended, because it was just like a knock to me being a woman, but after that, I talked to him, he was warm, he was friendly, he had a belief that he didn't want to look at a woman because he didn't want to arouse a physical response, and I just respected that.

She realized while talking with him "this is not so bad; regardless of the people's political alignment or religious restrictions, I can still do this."

This experience allowed her to gain understanding of cultural differences among Israelis, but also to become "much more comfortable and tolerant of their restrictions." She recognized feeling "embarrassed because I kept trying to make eye contact with him," but wrote that the night she wrote her reflection for class, "now, I understand his motives behind this action."

She then reported in her written reflection meeting the ultra-orthodox teenage girls (which she thought, during our Skype interview, had been met during the first field trip in Central Jerusalem) with Hailey. In their interaction, they talked about Arabs and how the girls did not feel comfortable around Arabs. Alex explained that

> I just think my beliefs changed a little bit in the fact that these girls were innocent, they were young, they had no idea they were being influenced by something that was greater than themselves, so I felt very sorry for them and I wanted to tell them like 'this is not true.'

The conversation moved to lifestyle, and Alex noticed that the girls were having pleasure in showing how differently they were living from her, and emphasizing that boyfriends,

sex, and sports are forbidden, and that they cannot wait to get married and have children. Alex reported feeling a strong connection with the girls, saying they were "refreshing," and made her reflect as she was wondering who (between them and her) was "more advanced," because "they were already learning about the responsibilities of motherhood," whereas she was trying to "seek an education and a career." This encounter provoked a lot of thoughts and reflections on her part, comparing their lifestyle and culture with hers. She explains that "If that class was offered at my university here, it wouldn't have been the same. I would have not even known about these women." She was "scared for the girls," afraid of their vulnerability regarding sex and marriage, and this was a turning point in her deciding on her research topic for the class, "to focus on self-actualization and womanhood in ultra-orthodox communities." In her final paper, submitted approximately three weeks later, she wrote that she "feared that their process of self-actualization would not be completed since they lacked a sense of individuality." She explains that after this interview, she was "very confused."

> I found myself relating to them on so many different levels, yet paradoxically, I could not have been raised in a more opposite environment. I feared that their spirit would be diluted in a Haredi community. I was worried they would never have the opportunity to self-actualize beyond their predetermined status; however, did they even want to?

After these interactions, she tried to talk with Arabs in the Arab Quarter of the Old City and noticed that they were reluctant to talk with her every time she mentioned the word "Palestine" to make contact. She wrote in her reflection that she was "hurt by their unwillingness to create a dialogue," as she tried to position herself as a third-party, if not as a potential ally. She explained that she was "almost ashamed" for her

expectations, thinking that, as an Arab herself, they would take advantage of the "platform she was providing them to anonymously explain their perils."

She expanded during our interview on the effects of the design of Ehud's course and its insistence on reflection and hermeneutics:

> After the conversation ends you're able to marinate in what was said and his point of his class there was hermeneutical aspect to it, you would reflect, you would reanalyze, you would go into it and look at it over and over again and um, that allowed me to really become more in tune with what people were trying to say but weren't saying, but their body language towards me, I would reflect on that a lot. I usually interviewed people with partners, and maybe this person had a different interpretation about what was said than I did, and we were able to bounce that off of each other.

*Interactions in Tel Aviv: questioning her maturity and respect*

During the second Friday, she went to Tel Aviv on a class field trip, and reported in written reflection that, although she had been to Tel Aviv the previous weekend, she noticed this time people there "simply looked happier. You can see how the weight of the poli-religious-national affects the people of Jerusalem. They are far less relaxed, and their physical health reflects the trauma. There was a lightness to the people of Tel- Aviv that I found refreshing." She met two people which she interviewed for her research. First, she talked with Shlomo, a Hasidic man who had made Aliyah 30 years earlier and who had views about women which Alex did not agree with. She explained that he made a joke about a man wanting a divorce because his wife does not want to help him with big decisions. Shlomo laughed and Alex wrote "at first, I really didn't understand his joke and chuckled along so not to disrespect him. However, I started to piece the joke together after the interview." She understood that, according to Shlomo, women should be grateful

that men take big responsibilities on behalf of women, and she "found this offensive, since my academic career has been focusing on these 'big issues'." Shlomo mocked feminism and she prevented herself from arguing and asking questions, "because I felt the questions were aggressive and antagonistic." While she was about to leave, she "went to shake Shlomo's hand, but quickly remembered the Orthodox rules. I could not touch him. I could've been impure, and shaking a hand might ignite his 'urges'."

She encountered a Colombian teenager whose family was Christian. Alex asked her about her positioning regarding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and their conversation then moved to her views about Hasidic women. The young girl recounted a story in which she wanted to take public transportation and a Hasidic woman loaned her money. She told Alex that although she "doesn't understand the way of life of Hasidic women, after that day on the bus, she respects them." This comment provoked Alex to question herself while writing her reflection.

> I wondered: if more secular people interacted with Hasidic women, would they feel more inclined to respect them? A common ideology I had regarding Hasidic women was to liberate them. I wanted to show them the possibilities of education.

Alex concluded her reflection saying that "this young lady was more mature than I was in her line of thinking regarding Hasidic women."

*Yad Vashem and Alex's change of mindset towards "the Israeli cause"*

Two days after having experienced Tel Aviv with her class and after having eaten pork ramen in a restaurant, she experienced Yad Vashem --the Holocaust Museum-- with her class. She explained in the interview that "prior to that, I was fully convicted in the

state of Israel being in an apartheid state, and these people didn't belong here, and this was a Palestinian state." However, "the museum was brilliant in the fact that it humanized the situation and it put my mindset in a perspective that these people need somewhere to go." The visit to the museum represented a turning point in her sojourn and in her understanding of Israelis. She explained that "when I went to Yad Vashem, I really sympathized with the Jewish people because I saw the atrocities they experienced, though I knew about the Holocaust." This caused her to

> truly question a lot of what was said in my household regarding Jewish people, people who believed in Judaism, people who supported the Israeli state. That was the most emotionally profound experience I had.

Shortly after the visit, Alex called her aunt who lives in Egypt and she had a "long conversation with her and I told her how she was feeling, and she was really sympathetic." She explains retrospectively:

> I have become more sympathetic to a side that wasn't mine, which I even hate saying that I was on a side. When I physically and audibly verbalized those words, I was like 'okay this is real, like this is very real.' I had the subconscious sentiment of it in my head, but then I was confident enough to say them out loud. It was a little bit of an identity crisis because I had been subjected to so many pro-Palestinian ideologues before that. It was kind of tranquil in a way that I was able to separate myself from my family and come up with my own opinion on the subject matter rather than theirs.

*A disorienting experience at the Western Wall*

A few days later, Alex, another friend, and I went to the Western Wall at the break of Shabbat, and we witnessed an incident that Alex qualifies as "disorienting":

a man was mentally ill, and he proceed to scream in this security check room that we all were in. And I thought he had a bomb. He was making gestures and emotions, like his facial expression just said hatred, and I truly thought that I might die.

She explained that this incident was the first time she ever had felt like her "life was in danger," which was particularly relevant considering the location and the "highly contentious conflict going on." She described her reaction in our follow-up interview:

Immediately, when it was over I was shaking, crying and felt like I was going to throw up. This, obviously, was an overreaction, but I was so convinced he had a bomb or gun or something that was intended to harm the people there.

*Diving into Ultra-Orthodoxy via readings and conversations*

Once Alex had decided on her research project about the self-actualization of ultra-orthodox women, she started waking up early in order to be in the Jewish Quarter of the Old City by 9 am to meet Haredi women and talk with them before heading to her class on Urban Planning. She explains that "I would have had no motivation to speak to an Israeli citizen if I was not enrolled in Ehud's class." She added that the nature of the class and its assignments encouraged her to talk with Israelis:

if I didn't have this project to do or if I wasn't motivated by my classmates or my professor wasn't encouraging me to explore something that I hadn't experienced before, there would be no way that I would be getting up early to talk to someone that was going to potentially disregard my entire beliefs.

Alex explains that she reflected intensely and

I was able to really hone in on the idea that I needed to separate my identity as an Arab woman, as a feminist, as a believer in the pro-Palestinian cause to someone who is here to understand a conflict purely from an academic

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perspective, purely as someone that's trying to solve this conflict in a constructive manner that would positive to both.

Alex started to explore her topic in a more academic manner, reading about ultra-orthodox women's experiences. She read Lynn Davidman's "Becoming Un Orthodox" and increased both her knowledge and understanding of the communities' views and behaviors regarding sex, marriage, and abuse. More specifically, reading about a mother who dismissed her daughter's pain about sexual abuse by her rabbinic uncle, Alex stated that "this intensely insensitive reaction furthered my curiosity regarding motherhood and young women in Haredim communities." She kept reflecting on the teenage girls she had met in the Old City, their ignorance about sex, and their insistence on the forbidden character of boyfriends and discussions about carnal pleasure. She initially wanted to investigate the self-actualization of ultra-orthodox women because "as a feminist, I went into this like 'I want to save these women'." She explains that

it was a motivation for me, talking to my classmates about their projects and wanting to produce something equally as prolific as they were producing.

On her way to Mea Shearim --one of the ultra-orthodox neighborhoods in Jerusalem-- Alex met Nurit on the light rail and asked her for directions. Nurit warned her that people there would not talk to her especially if not dressed conservatively, but Alex replied that "I had a shawl to cover my neckline" because she wanted to be respectful and she knew people would not interact with her if she was perceived as immodest. She then interviewed Nurit who told her she was raised in a somewhat Jewish secular way in Canada before she was "guided through the Haredi life." Alex reported in her final paper that "initially, this sounded cult-like to me." Their conversation covered topics related to

Nurit's self-actualization, and Alex was interested in what Nurit valued in her womanhood. Nurit insisted on the importance of having children, respecting her husband who is always right because he is more educated through religious knowledge, but also being respected by her husband in their privacy.

> I really felt they had a connection at this point, and I respected her as a woman and also as a wise, spiritual being. I told her I hate to think she has to deprive this world of her knowledge because she feels dedicated to her kids.

Nurit replied that she hated for Alex to think that she would leave this world just to pursue academia. Alex explained that they "both acknowledged [their] differences, but emphasized [their] similarities. [She] really sympathized with Nurit." And Alex concluded the part about Nurit in her research paper, "If this education provides other young women with a sense of happiness, I respect that." Through their conversations and the way Nurit talked about how she dealt with one of her daughters who is privileging her career over motherhood, Alex had "intense flashbacks to my own father who questioned her about her modesty." At the end of the conversation with Nurit, Alex told her that she never plans to marry, and Nurit did not tell her she was wrong. Alex noted in her research paper:

> I really appreciated that she did not peddle her agenda on me. Then I thought, 'was this what I was doing to those young girls? Was I peddling my agenda on them?'

Alex concluded in her paper:

> I was wildly impressed. Not only did I agree with the majority of what Nurit was saying, but when we disagreed, I found respect for Nurit in her decisions, and vice versa.

After talking with Nurit, Alex went to Mea Shearim, "As I walked around this area, I felt, for the first time, very uncomfortable." She reported "I clinged to my shawl in an effort to maintain my modesty. In fact, I would've much more appreciated being dressed in a burlap sack." She questioned herself and her motivation:

> I began to feel very bad. I felt intrusive. These are people, not a zoo exhibit. This is their life, not an article for a magazine or tabloid cover.

She managed to talk with Hannah, a 15-year-old girl, and while Hannah told her similar things about her wish to have many children in order to have a good life as a Jewish woman, their interaction was interrupted by another Haredi woman who told Hannah she should not talk with Alex. Alex reported that

> I had to ground myself because I was getting very angry. I felt like it was so inappropriate for someone to dictate who another person could talk to. However, I attempted to justify this. Maybe the young woman was concerned for Hannah's safety? I had hoped the young woman's intentions were for the well-being of Hannah's security and not for something more sinister, like preventing Hannah from expressing herself. I realized self-actualization for Hannah was rooted in the education and environment that had been surrounding her.

Alex concluded that "that there are different groups in the ultra-Orthodox community and that Nurit's process of actualization was just as valid as Hannah's."

She then met Dinah, a young Haredi woman who calls herself "feminist" and who argues that "her feminism comes from within, and who believes in the equality of women, which it's just demonstrated differently." Alex was "shocked" to hear the term being used, and she "was impressed by this answer," and she thought "Dinah represented a strong

feminist woman." The first part of her conversation with Dinah centered around the idea of modesty, and Alex told me that

> after talking with those Haredi woman, I still am a very strong believer in feminism, but I think there is an elegance and grace to modesty that sometimes get overlooked. I think that's a wonderful thing to have and, regardless of whether you want to show your skin, if you don't want to show your skin, I'm cool with either. But for me personally, interacting with these women made me want to have that element of femininity that I did not have.

Dinah admitted to Alex that she was going to a medical center to check on her health because she had had a miscarriage, which is, Alex reflected, "the most devastating incident that could have had occurred in Dinah's life because her life is family." Alex was deeply uncomfortable, not knowing how to react, and she accompanied her into the clinic. They then ran into Leah who talked about the depiction of Haredi communities in the media, and Leah told Alex about a particular article for which she had been interviewed and felt abused and betrayed by the journalist who depicted the Haredi community as homogenous, almost caricatural, even after having talked with her and her family in her home. Alex read the piece when she returned to her dorm and concluded:

> I have spoken to some women and men in the Haredi culture that reflect an oppressive, patriarchal society. Nonetheless, I will never again generalize the Haredi people because I have met some women that mirror my personal beliefs. When I read this article, I felt extremely sorry for Leah. The journalist made her life a spectacle.

Alex explained the effect of talking with Haredi women on her:

> I think my values changed personally but not only there but in the Middle East in general. I gained more maturity, I saw a lot of beauty in those women that wasn't physical. Their comfort with themselves was much stronger than mine was

with myself. They were so much more comfortable in their conviction and their beliefs than I was. And I wanted that, and I think that's a beautiful thing to have.

Another significant interaction and experience was when Alex met with her instructor's aunt in the Jewish Quarter of the Old City:

> She was an orthodox-woman, a painter, and she had a mentally ill daughter, and that was a striking experience. She wanted to draw me, and so I stood there and conducted an interview as she drew me. And I watched as she was exercising her craft, engaging in motherhood with a severely mentally ill child, making dinner, and I was kind of SHOCKED. So, I think in terms of evolution, that goes back to tolerance, and just I got an inside look at someone's life, who I would originally label as anti-feminist or ultra-Zionist, ultra-conservative, and I gained a lot of RESPECT.

While she remained critical of texts and of her encounters with Israelis, she also became critical of herself:

> You know the stereotypes of Jews, they're cheap, they're exclusive, they don't like outsiders, I was welcomed into a Jew's home, I was given food, small trinkets, things, sentimental things, material things by Jewish people, which debunks the whole 'Jews are cheap.' I know it sounds silly, but it carries over, right? It resonates with other stereotypes. You know? It's a small stereotype that's significant of the larger form of intolerance. By debunking the whole Jews are cheap stereotype, it's so much easier to debunk the Jews are the enemy stereotype from an Arab perspective.

In her reflections and in our first Skype interview, Alex mentioned that

> conversations with the people were the most important part of this class. Conversations with people outside of the class were very important because everyone in my class was very intelligent. Everyone was well read, everyone had an insight and a perspective that was different than the other, but it's one thing to sit in a group of academics and solve a problem and it is another to sit with the people who are the problem.

However, she thinks that there was no particular event leading to her change regarding her understanding of feminism and womanhood, nor her change of views and tolerance about Israeli perspectives in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict; she feels that

> It was an amalgam of things. I can't pinpoint it, I feel like pinpointing it and assigning one event would be doing the others injustice.

Further, she also mentioned that she had a personal journal in Israel, in which she only wrote bullet points of her days and experience at first, but noticed that her

> journal got longer and longer and I wanted to talk about what I was feeling more and more and more. It was when I was talking to the Haredi women in the Haredi community. I think that really moved me the most about this class.

*Gaining understanding of the Israeli society*

In the fifth written assignment, Alex wrote a reflection on her readings regarding the process of immigration in Israel, and some of its consequences. She displayed knowledge about the Law of Return and about the exclusion of *Falasha*, the Ethiopian Jewish communities often excluded and segregated in Israel. She explained that reading about this confirmed an interaction she had had in Tel Aviv with a Russian Jewish girl who had told her she pitied them for they are "treated so poorly." Alex reflected that there is a hierarchical dimension implied in pity, and that the daily acts of racism, such as excluding Ethiopian Jews from equality in Israel, are not the fundamental aspect. For her, "the most prominent issue regarding Ethiopian immigration is the derecognition of their Judaism." She commented how she finds the "*Falash Mura*'s exclusion and lack of recognition ironic since the purpose of the establishment of the Israeli state was to create a state for all Jews."

*Meeting Hadas: an "oxymoron in a nutshell"*

Alex created a new email address under a fake name in order to hide her Arabic last name and she contacted an Israeli newspaper, asking for the contact information of a staff member connected to the Haredi community. They put her in contact with Hadas, a female Haredi correspondent, and Alex was really excited about the prospect of meeting this person for her research project: "'this is wild'. A Haredi woman working in journalism, oxymoron in a nutshell." The night before the last day of class, Alex invited Hadas for dinner, and she wrote in her research paper that "this interview was critical to better my understanding of the Haredi community." Alex learned that Hadas was born and raised in a Haredi community, college-educated, multilingual, engineer who had co-published a book, and she was raising her daughters as Haredim while valuing education and encouraging them to explore her passions. Alex noticed that Hadas was complicating how she was viewing Haredi women, as the fact that she needed to explore her passions "was a dimension of Haredi women I had not experienced before." For Alex, "all of these things were so feminist." She reported that their interaction was very much like a debate: "It was always friendly, always amicable. I listened, I was listened to. We bounced off ideas. Though we didn't agree, we both had a respect for the other person." An example of this experience was when she talked about the meaning of a feminist with Hadas:

> the debate was would she label herself a feminist and she
> said no and, like an idiot, I said 'yes, of course you're a
> feminist.' I placed my beliefs on her and she called me on
> that and I think that was the first time, when she called me
> out and she was like 'why must you categorize my identity?
> why must you say I'm a Haredi feminist woman? What's
> the point of that? What does that do for anyone?' and I
> really thought about it. 'she's right, what does that do for
> her? what does that do for me? It doesn't do anything.'

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Upon her return home, Alex noted "I didn't want this interview to end, I didn't want my relationship with this woman to end." Alex is still in regular contact with Hadas, which she considers to be

> an influence of mine and a role model, but someone that I'm very intrigued by. I hate to pose her as a zoo spectacle. I hate to think of her as someone that I'm just trying to study, because we have a more fluid relationship. But there are times in our relationship that I am so intrigued by what Hadas is saying from an academic perspective.

Alex considers her research project on ultra-orthodox women to have been "really profound because, as a feminist and as an Arab, there were so many different layers to that that really resonated with me." Alex acknowledged that

> I'm still very pro-Palestinian, but I'm much more willing to listen to other people's perspectives. I read Israeli news, I don't just read Al Jazeera… or go onto the Jerusalem fund and see what they're pointing out. I definitely branch out of what sources I read. I'm more than willing to engage in a discourse that's pro-Israeli, if you give me enough evidence to support your cause and you provide me with enough information.

However, she admits that these interactions with people who held different opinions were "Not discomforting" but "debates" about "contentious ideas and theories" which "provoke conflict on an intellectual level." She explains that talking with people who held different opinions from her "was not confusing, it just added a nuanced layer of opinions from people that are different from myself."

> I think the experiences that I had with people were based on topic matters that were sensitive. It could spark confusion in the identity of the person that was interviewed. They could have confused me. I could have left questioning my belief in feminism or Islam, but instead, they just provided me with the opposite perspective, but I understood where they were coming from, I tolerated their

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views. I understood where they were coming from, I was not confused, I just didn't agree with it.

*Reflecting upon her return*

After her month-long experience in Jerusalem, Alex returned to the United States for the end of the summer until she could fly to Scotland for her second study abroad experience which ended in December. She explained that she is constantly "marinating in that experience in Israel" and that "the bulk of the reflection was done after the program ended and I was able to APPRECIATE the style of learning that I was provided."

Alex indeed kept comparing Scotland to Israel, and she stated that "the culture was not favorable to me. There was a large drinking culture and a large going out scene, and it was very obnoxious." When interviewed, she explained that she had not particularly enjoyed her experience there, and that she had had issues that forced her to return to the US earlier than expected. However, she emphasized the platform that her experience in Scotland created for her to reflect and continue her reflection about her Israeli experiences. She kept comparing the educational experiences,

> because the teaching style was so different, and I preferred the one in Israel because it was more interactive, it allowed me to engage with the people more, a specific topic I was interested with more, the style was much more OPEN and INQUISITIVE, rather than closed and structured.

Upon her return to the U.S. from Scotland, Alex submitted a presentation proposal on Haredi women for a conference on religion and society. Her abstract was accepted but she has decided not to present her research, arguing that

> the real reason is that I just don't feel confident in it, and it feels incomplete. I love this project so much, and I want to share it with people, but on my own terms and when I feel

like it best reflects my goal: to accurately represent Haredi women.

*Changing beyond Israel*

Upon her return from Scotland to the United States, Alex's explains that studying

> makes me think of the experience, the learning experience I had in Israel, and how I wish I had a class in the states similar to the one I took.

She has noticed that her experiences in Israel and her change have influenced "the way that I approach my essays, my research, people." Alex explained that she interacts with international students a lot more than she used to before leaving for Jerusalem.

> When you engage in the international community, you don't want to leave, you don't want to just revert back to being an American, being an Egyptian. You want to be able to have connections and meet people that are beyond yourself. And so, it just sparked that curiosity.

She acknowledges that she has changed her behavior when interacting with people, in particular people from different cultures from hers and who reject the West: "I like to listen more, I don't like to talk as much. I like to learn more about who I'm talking with." She insisted that now she has a "fascination with everyone from different types of culture, especially if it's the POLAR opposite of me."

> I love to interact with people that don't agree with the West or my views. It really provides me with a nuanced idea of my own country and my own opinions. I just want to know. I want to know their opinions about the West, about me, about my personality, how I am perceived, how that can change, is there a cycle of intolerance there, can I break it, how do I infiltrate it, how do I facilitate a dialogue that's inclusive, how do I advocate for the marginalized, how do I, how do I get into touch with them, how do I understand their perspective without it clouding my own, or my perspective clouding theirs.

She emphasizes that she has also developed more respect in the questions she asks, but that she does not hesitate to ask questions: "I don't care if I come across as not well-learned in the culture, but I have to be respectful." She explains that she has become more "comfortable" asking questions and listening: "Even if I'm pushed outside of my own opinion comfort zone, I feel very at ease debating and talking and questioning and being questioned. It doesn't make me nervous."

The effect of her experience is mainly grounded in the "evolution of my tolerance": "It made me more tolerant." Her tolerance is not only towards a greater "sympathy for the Israeli cause" and a larger understanding of the complex situation in Israel, or a better knowledge and understanding of Haredi communities; Her tolerance transcends the Haredi women she met, or even the Israeli borders: "I think I became more emotional. I'm very sensitive to everyone now, every cause, LGBTQ, Arab Palestinian, Israeli Jew, Muslim, Christian, Trans, Black, White, Asian." She demonstrates it with more recent examples in her school since she has been back in the US:

> I think after talking to the Haredi community, I gained a valuable lesson of learning to LISTEN to other women talk about their experiences of womanhood. And so, if these women really feel like this is going to help them achieve their actualization of being a pro-life Catholic woman, alright. If they must. That doesn't change my perspective on being pro-choice or my perspective that I think what they're doing is somewhat violating to a young female here who's potentially had an abortion and looking at these crosses like 'oh, you know, maybe I shouldn't have done that', but they still have a seat at the table.

Alex gave a second example of how she believes her experiences with Haredi women influenced her tolerance. In her school, a recent controversy involved a student mocking African Americans and making a racist comment on social media:

> What she did was completely wrong in my opinion, and before mellowing out, before gaining a bit more tolerance, I would be the one with the pitchfork and fire, 'we need to get her out, we need to remove her,' like, 'let's launch this witch hunt right now!'

However, Alex explains that prior to her study abroad experience in Jerusalem, "I was vocal and I didn't want to learn about the other person as much." She recognizes that she has changed her way of dealing with such issues, now advocating for demonstrations of tolerance towards people who do not show tolerance, in order to educate and change their views:

> Now, I don't think that we should ostracize her as a pariah of the community; I think this girl's ignorant. I think we should educate her. Maybe that comes from the fact that I've said some pretty shitty things about Jewish people before going to Israel. It's absolutely awful, and if I could take it back, I totally would. And if someone snapped a picture of me saying those things and that was… and I am putting myself in her perspective right now, I would have appreciated the opportunity to understand and learn and become more tolerant, and now it's my goal in my academia to create and foster an environment of interfaith dialogue so we don't have these problems anymore.

According to her, her change "caught [her] off guard." Indeed, she did not expect to change to such an extent:

> I expected to learn more about it from a historical standpoint, but I didn't expect to come back with a completely different idea of how the social structure in Israel is run and how to change it and all of that. I expected my behavior just to resemble how it was.

While her change was about her views of Israelis, to whom she became more sympathetic and which affected her in her identity, it was also about her views of feminism, which also affected her in her identity, and which bounced back toward her tolerance. This, in return, affected her academic interests, solidifying her interest in

religion and interfaith dialogue, and her wish to work in academia. Alex qualifies her study experience in Israel to be "earthshattering": "after Israel, I solidified the fact that I'm going to remain in academia, in theology to promote interfaith dialogue and tolerance."

Her experience influenced her in many deep ways:

> Israel changed my life. It really did. It's cliché, it sounds so icky, but it is. I went in very confused about my major, I wasn't as interested in religion, and I came out wanting to provide a platform for women, regardless of their belief. Extreme, fundamental, liberal, I wanted to create a better vocal table for everyone, so we can discuss our beliefs in an environment that is inclusive, includes marginalized representation, has conflicting views. Conflict is good. I learned that conflict is good. It means passion. But what I want to do is use academic to channel that passion and turn it into something tolerant, interfaith, interdialogue, intercultural communication. Let'ss learn about each other in a way that's respectful and provides insight so we can create a global sisterhood.

Alex asserted that the impact of her study abroad was something that could not be replicated elsewhere:

> I was moved by everything. The faith, the conviction, the women, the people, the environment, the spirit, the professor. The overall experience of it was so groundbreaking to the formation of my academic and professional identity that I could never replicate the experience, but if I could, I don't think I would do it because what I have right now is SO GREAT from it that I don't want to touch it. I would never want to continue altering it, only developing it. I don't want to go back to Israel and think that I want to be a dentist. I know what I want to do, I know where I want to be. I would go back to Israel to add details and maybe answer some questions about academia, but I don't want to have another mindboggling experience.

When reflecting six months after her experience in Jerusalem, she argues that people "have to go experience it in order to really comprehend what I did and what we did!" She explains for her, Ehud's course was "THE class," and that she "felt fulfilled from Israel," and she believes that the intensity of her experience is "rare," because it was "spiritually awakening, academically enlightening" and that other students had

a great time in the sense that they just don't do school work, they just go out and travel. Which is cool too, don't get me wrong, but it's not what I had.

*Analysis of Alex's Experience*

1. **What were the participants' experiences in a short-term study abroad program in Israel?**

Thinking about your educational experiences abroad, *check off any statements that may apply:*

| | |
|---|---|
| I had an experience that caused me to question the way I normally act. | x |
| I had an experience that caused me to question my ideas about social roles. (i.e. what a student or teacher should do.) | x |
| As I questioned my ideas, I realized I no longer agreed with my beliefs or role expectations | x |
| Or instead, as I questioned my ideas, I realized I still agreed with my beliefs and role expectations. | x |
| I realized that other people also questioned their beliefs. | x |
| I thought about acting in a different way from my usual beliefs and roles. | x |
| I felt uncomfortable with traditional social expectations. | x |
| I tried out new roles so that I would become more comfortable or confident in them. | x |
| I tried to figure out a way to adopt these new ways of acting. | |
| I gathered the information I needed in order to adopt these new ways of acting. | x |
| I began to think about the reactions and feedback from my new behavior. | x |
| I took action and adopted these new ways of acting. | x |
| I do not identify with any of the statements above. | |

*Figure 16: Alex's responses to the Learning Activities Survey*

Alex identified two major experiences as the most significant during her study abroad sojourn, but she feels that the amalgam of all of her experiences in Israel led to her change, framed by our instructor, who provided a unique experience. She perceived that she would not have talked with people if she had not taken Ehud's class because it was out of her comfort zone to engage in conversation with people whom she thought would judge her for being Arab. Talking with people outside of class was the most

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important type of experience, and she perceived that it was an accumulation of conversations and reflections that led to a bigger change, because talking with people allowed her to understand more about the country which led to bigger ramifications.

Her conversation with ultra-orthodox teenage girls in the Old City sparked her interest in defining her research topic around the self-actualization of Haredi women. Her interaction with these girls allowed her to develop knowledge about a community that she thinks she would not have known about had she not studied abroad. Further, she perceived that this interaction helped her gain knowledge and understanding about the way ultra-orthodox Jews tend to think of Arabs, and Muslim Arabs in particular. This helped Alex realize that many Israeli Jews do not know much about their Arab counterparts. By becoming aware of their ignorance about Islam, in particular, she perceived that she "mellowed out" and became more tolerant towards this aspect in that she realized that much of the tension results from the lack of knowledge of other communities. Similarly, learning about these girls' way of life in Haredi communities made Alex reflect on her own lack of knowledge and examine it in a critical way.

When she met Daniel, the Ultra-Orthodox man who faced his chair away from her so as to avoid making eye contact and stirring carnal desires. Alex was uncomfortable at first, hurt even, as she felt it was offensive to her as a woman, but the conversation seemed organic and natural despite Daniel's restriction. This allowed Alex to learn about cultural differences, to adapt her behavior and to accept these restrictions, and feel more tolerant of restrictions. Interestingly, while writing her reflection after this encounter, she reported guilt, shame, embarrassment and discomfort when reflecting on her behavior, because she had initially tried to make eye-contact before Daniel explained to her that he did not

want to have a physical response to her. This interaction made Alex feel increasingly curious, and she reported on her perceived awareness. She wrote about the source of her discomfort, thinking about her own positionality, her influence on interviewees, and tried to identify the source of her discomfort. She also appeared to be increasingly enjoying, if not the conversations themselves, at least the learning experiences, feeling that the more she learned, the more comfortable and confident she felt when interacting with ultra-orthodox individuals.

Another significant experience which stands out was when Alex visited Yad Vashem –the Holocaust Museum-- with the class. She perceived it to be a disorienting and emotional experience, and she believes that it impacted her awareness of her biases against Jewish communities. Her ensuing call with her Egyptian aunt made Alex aware of her shift in ideology, as she used to be hostile to the idea of a state for the Jews. The call resonated like a tranquil "identity crisis," separating herself from her family's ideas about Israel and Jews.

After delimiting her research topic on the self-actualization of Haredi women, Alex had a set of encounters with women from ultra-orthodox communities, which she perceives helped her develop tolerance, respect, and often, admiration for women that she initially thought she would "save." Many of the conversations brought her "pain" and "sadness" and complicated her previous assumptions. Alex perceived that these conversations provoked conflict at the intellectual level, but not confusion or discomfort. Instead, they "added a nuanced layer of opinions," and "a different perspective." She realized that the more conversations she had, the more she understood not only about Haredi women, or even Israel, but about herself, and Arab culture. Finally, Alex's last

encounter had a significant influence on her perspective on womanhood and feminism as it provoked her to reevaluate her way of interacting with people while debating, rethinking her body language and her use of words, as it shook her definition of "feminism."

Alex perceived that her interactions would not have been possible without our instructor who was "unbiased." The instructor, Ehud, framed the experience on inquiry, choice, ad personal growth in an academic setting. This allowed her to talk with people she would not have been able to interact with had she stayed in the US or only taken her other course. The hermeneutical dimension of Ehud's course encouraged constant reflection and allowed her to marinate in what she was learning. She attributed much of her change to the written reflections and group discussions. She perceived, however, that the readings did not participate much in her change, but that discussing the readings with classmates was useful to her. The engagement of classmates motivated her to produce quality work.

Finally, Alex perceived that she had a "groundbreaking," "earthshattering," and "spiritually awakening" experience in Israel and that she does not want to "have another mind-boggling experience" because her study abroad sojourn was of a "very rare" intensity.

## 2. In what ways, if any, do study abroad participants perceive that they changed?

Alex did not expect change at the personal level. She thought her time in Israel would deepen her pro-Palestinian sentiment and teach her more about the history of the place. However, multiple types and levels of change happened to her while in Israel, after

she returned to the US, and she considers the overall change to be very positive as she feels like it has made her more "tolerant." She left Israel with a more "diluted vision" of the Arab-Israeli tensions. She perceived that "Israel changed her life," and that she is still processing the meaning of her experiences. She thinks about their effect constantly, convinced that the intensity of her experiences was "very rare."

Although Alex perceived that most of the reflection came from the US, she also mentioned changing while in Israel. Learning about ultra-orthodox cultures, in particular, developed her knowledge and helped her expand on her understanding of the complicated nature of the country. Interacting with Israelis for an academic task encouraged her to listen to people rather than act the way she would have, had she been in the U.S. and not doing academic work.

Her interactions in Israel evolved. At first, she was tense and uncomfortable, but grew increasingly confident, enjoying most interactions because they were becoming natural and organic. This led to making her to being more respectful of cultural differences such as religious restrictions, affecting her "values" and "beliefs." Her intercultural sensitivity increased with her conversations, as she reported having more interaction enjoyment, interaction confidence, and engagement. For example, she believed that she became more curious and confident in asking questions when she did not know, with the risk of perhaps coming across as ignorant. Developing personal relationships with ultra-orthodox women and with Hadas, in particular, helped Alex feel like she was increasing her knowledge of cultural differences and her respect for such differences. She also noticed that her behavior had adapted to cultural differences and was respectful of them. She dressed more modestly in certain areas and did not address

ultra-orthodox men directly. The specific conversations she had led to an ideological shift about femininity, womanhood and equality, analyzing that her former definition was exclusionary and feeling like she needed to be more conscious of her positionality.

Interactions helped Alex debunk stereotypes about Israel, which helped her change her opinions about Israeli Jews. She was naturally intrigued but developed respect for people for whom she thought she had little respect. She perceived that she changed her perspective about Israeli Jews while in Israel, thanks to visiting Yad Vashem and to talking with people, learning about their perspectives, and appreciating them as individuals. For example, she perceived that the identity crisis that resulted from her visit of the Holocaust Museum made her change politically. While she used to feel somewhat opposed to the Israeli state, she became increasingly tolerant of its existence, though maintaining her views that the creation of Israel had had a human cost to Arabs native to the area. Further, while she used to think that Jews were "cheap," and made what she now perceives as "racist" and insensitive jokes, her experience of generosity in Israeli-Jewish homes, as well as some women's welcoming interactions changed her perceptions. This stereotype led the way for the debunking of more perceptions, like Jews being the enemy. Becoming aware that she was biased made her feel like she should question her general attitude and behavior towards otherness. She now believes that not knowing should actually lead her to listening more and learning from others.

Beyond the Israeli context, she perceived that her academic and professional worldviews were affected by her study abroad in Israel. Before Israel, she was confused about her major; after Israel, she had a clear idea of what she wants to do academically and professionally. She now wants to study religion and interfaith dialogue and create a

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platform for women to express themselves. Now, her capstone project will revolve around religion and female agency.

Her transformation affected her everyday life. She "branches out" in news sources that she reads in order to comprehend all "sides" of an issue. She feels that she is more sensitive, more emotional, and more tolerant. Her behavior has changed, even towards other people's intolerant behaviors. She feels more vocal than she used to. Instead of ostracizing people who express intolerant ideas, these people should be educated as they "still have a seat at the table." She attributes her change of sensitivity to her new sense of critical awareness of herself. Her perceived increased openness and tolerance leads her to accepting discourses she disagrees with, such as pro-life positions, as she feels like women who hold these views still deserve to be heard.

Alex believes that her increased tolerance has led her to being more intentional in her relationships, affecting her intercultural interactions and friendships as she associates more with international students than she used to. She now lives with South American international students and feels that having had a taste of international environments makes her never want to leave it and go back to being "American" or "Egyptian" only. She now feels more interested in interacting with people from different cultures, especially people who reject the West. She believes that these new friendships push her out of her comfort zone. She has noticed that she is less nervous about disagreements, as she previously wanted to seem polite and not aggressive. Her intercultural interactions constantly challenged her and made her critically aware of her culture and her own positionality.

## *Katherine's Experience*

I feel that almost every aspect of my life has been affected by my study abroad experience, whether it be my time in the classroom, pursuit of my own faith, my interactions with other faiths, my understanding of where my career's going. I don't have a really clear understanding of where my career's going to go, but I have a more nuanced understanding of what clear options will look like in the Middle East. Even my interactions with my family have been affected in the sense that both Israelis and Jordanians are really affectionate, really committed to the family unit. I would say every aspect of my life has been positively affected by my study abroad experience, and I feel much more focused since coming home from abroad. Much more, everything seems a little clearer and I'm really happy that that's the case.

Katherine was raised in the US in a family of Christian missionaries, which led her to living in various states around the country. In high school in California, she studied Spanish, because it was "close enough to Portuguese," the first language of her grandfather who is originally from Brazil. She then decided to study Arabic in college because she had already started majoring in Global Studies and in Middle East Studies on a "liberal campus" in California. Before studying in Jerusalem, her only experience abroad was when she had traveled to Brazil with her grandfather and immediate family. She explains that she "came back from that trip feeling changed having seen new places, but nothing to the extent of studying abroad."

Katherine chose to study in Israel for two reasons. First, she wanted to "gain a deeper understanding of the role the country plays in the dynamics of the Middle East." Second, she had "always hoped to visit the sites of Biblical narratives that I was raised with and the opportunity to explore those locations through my studies was an exciting prospect."

She explained that she "came to Jerusalem with an expectation that her Israeli counterparts held fairly uniform political opinions, supportive of the state of Israel and its current conservative government." She therefore enrolled in two courses in Jerusalem. Her afternoon course on immigration and identities in Israel was taught by Ehud. Her morning course was taught by Boaz and Doron, two Israeli Ph.D. candidates, and it revolved around radical terrorism. However, she quickly noticed that the instructors in the second course were

> much more distant in their lecturing and their engagement with the students than Ehud was, but from an educational perspective. They, for the most part, just stood up there and gave us the lesson and then we'd go home, but also they didn't really tie it as close to Israel and I would have liked to have seen more of that.

Indeed, she insisted on how distinct the two courses were from each other, but also how "the class we took" was important: "it was structured so differently from any other course I've ever taken." She insisted during the interview on the fact that Ehud

> "challenged us to think beyond our beliefs incessantly, and it was every day, and it was also outside of the classroom. So, we were doing it within the environment that we were studying and surrounded by the opinions that were exposing us to new ideas and challenging us. And then, having to come back and share that with each other over and over and over again and slowly progress, I know for sure that I left Israel with more questions than answers.

Katherine's initial reflection about immigration and identity did not revolve around Israel, but rather about Brazil and how she learned about Lebanese and Syrian immigrants in Brazil through meeting shop owners in Rio. She gained an understanding of the influence of Lebanese communities on Brazilian society.

Katherine has been part of her campus newspaper for several years and is used to interviewing people. She explained at length during our Skype interview how important her identity as a journalist is:

> My place on campus is very much defined by my role at the newspaper and I've been writing for a long time, this idea of being a journalist who's like disassociated from an environment is very much a part of my identity.

She wrote in her first report that before going with the class to Central Jerusalem and conducting the first set of interviews, she "was excited but also slightly apprehensive about approaching locals to talk to them."

She talked with several people, including Yosef, who was displaying parrots in the street for a few shekels (local currency), and who had moved from Russia 30 years earlier. She also had a short interaction with a young teenage girl, who tried to communicate with her in English. Katherine noted cultural differences with the US:

> I was struck and moved by their innocent and joyful nature, which contrasted so starkly from the young girls I see in the States, wearing heavy makeup and glued to their cell phones.

She also talked with David, a shop owner who had emigrated from Iran, and with whom she talked for an hour, "as he made [her] tea," sharing about their respective family stories. Katherine quickly realized, as she noted it in her first report, that "the straightforward and friendly nature of the Israelis made talking with them simple." She noted in our Skype interview that people were engaged in "sharing information with [her] that was so new and so different from [her] understanding" which "broadened [her] perspective and triggered a lot more questions."

As she noted, although she had experience interviewing people in California,

I appreciated the opportunity to do it in an international country, because you were exposed to new ideas and I wouldn't have been otherwise. I would have talked to Israelis as much as possible if I hadn't been in Ehud's course, but the course was forcing us almost every other day to go out and talk to people.

After her first observation and set of interviews in Central Jerusalem, Katherine asserted in her written reflection that her expectations were contradicted several times, which led to a better understanding of the Israeli society:

While I anticipated to hear various languages spoken I had expected the non-Hebrew speakers to likely be tourists. Twice this preconceived opinion was contradicted, the first time when a traditionally dressed Jewish man began speaking Spanish on his cell phone nearby me, and the second time when a traditionally dressed Jewish family who had been close by for nearly half an hour walked closer and I heard the adult-son comment how Jerusalem compared to their home in Philadelphia.

Her third assignment was a response to readings regarding early Zionism and the creation of the state of Israel. While she wrote that she was "familiar with the origins of the Zionist movement" and with some events of the Palestinian *Nakba* prior to her arrival in Israel, her understanding of the conflicts in the region evolved. She realized with the readings and conversations she had with people in the Old City that

the perimeters of the Arab-Israeli conflict that had been instilled in my understanding through historical events, policy discussions, even primary sources melded into a reality of unimaginable complexity.

When reading an article about the Nakba, she mentioned she had two sets of emotions. The first time she read it, it saddened her, while the second time, the text "left me feeling conflicted." Indeed, she contrasted the text which heavily criticizes Israel's handling of Arab communities with images of "frightened families and haggard soldiers in East

Jerusalem." Having access to sources of information from the two 'parties' "allowed me to see that the contrasting narratives were in many ways actually aligned, with both groups suffering painful loss and trauma." She added in her reading reflection that the "events that already were hard to ascribe as right or wrong may never be labeled as such because war is convoluted." Realizing the complexity of the situation in Israel/Palestine became, for Katherine, "both frustrating and freeing." However, she continued agreeing with the texts about Nakba regarding the failure of the Israeli government to acknowledge the events of the Nakba.

Katherine noted that she had already read some texts before taking Ehud's class, but she noticed that talking with Israelis before starting the readings prompted "new questions" which she acknowledged were gaining in complexity.

At the end of her first week in Jerusalem, Katherine decided to go out with a couple of friends from her summer school in Central Jerusalem and they joined a table of local students from the Israeli university she was attending. She reported feeling conflicted because of the potential consequences of her curiosity: she was "eager to learn about their perception of the conflict, but hesitant to offend them after they warmly took us under their wing for the night." While she had already talked with several students who had completed their military service and gotten similar answers, such as how they felt remorseful regarding the status of Palestinian citizens of Israel as being second class, Katherine noted:

> I was ashamed at my surprise over his honest and empathetic opinion of the Palestinians, as though an Israeli youth who had served in the IDF was somehow no longer as capable of recognizing injustice as an American student.

As she reported it in her final research paper, this emotion was

> the first of many occasions where I realized that, while I
> came to Israel without a decisive opinion of the IDF as a
> political actor, I did carry prejudices that collectively
> characterized young adults in conscription rather than
> recognizing them as individuals.

During her second observation and set of interviews, this time in the Old City of
Jerusalem, Katherine went into the Arab Quarter and talked with Nassim, a young boy
working in his father's juice bar. When communicating with him, she tried to adapt her
questions, paying attention to the level of Nassim's English by adapting her pronunciation
and pace, she also tried to "phrase my questions in a manner that would be more sensitive
to his age." She indeed noted that talking with people in this neighborhood "taught me
new interview skills." She tried to ask him questions about his relationship with Jewish
Israeli youth, since he attended an Arabic-speaking school in Jerusalem (schools are
divided by language and curriculum can sometimes vary greatly), and about his
educational experiences, especially in history. She noted that

> He offered me a little insight, but most of the conversation
> resulted in the carefree answers, accompanied by a
> shoulder shrug, that you would expect from a middle
> school-aged boy. While he was happy to answer my
> questions, his responses were casual, hardly indicative of a
> politically conflicted youth. The complexities of the
> congested Old City were his reality and he would just as
> much rather tell me about his soccer team than his opinions
> on the relationship between Israeli Jews and Israeli Arabs.

She then encountered a Syrian couple living in the US and visiting Israel for the
first time, and they all

> agreed that the openness of the people in Israel who are
> willing to sit and talk with you for an hour without giving

the sense that you were inconveniencing them was a truly remarkable aspect of the country's culture.

She returned to the Jewish Quarter of the Old City and observed a toddler whose mother let him out of sight, which caused Katherine to be "frightened" and check on the child while waiting for the mother to come back. Her time in the neighborhood allowed her to gain awareness of some cultural practices, religious ones in particular, noticing women's *sheitel* (wigs) for the first time, a sign of piety and modesty displayed in some *Haredi* branches of Judaism such as *Hasidism*. She then became "aware" of the practice "which became strikingly clear," as an instance of the Baader-Meinhof phenomenon.

She then sat in the courtyard of the Hurva synagogue –which had been destroyed in the 1967 war— to take notes, and she saw a toddler girl from an ultra-orthodox family dancing in the shadow of the synagogue and reflected even more on her interaction with the young boy she had just encountered:

> The proximity of these two children, in a space peaceful on a summer afternoon but the scene of violence and destruction just fifty years ago brought me to tears. I was struck by the fragility of the space. The young boy and toddler girl's realities were just around the corner from one another, but a great breadth separated the children's heritage and uncertainty marked their futures.

She noted in her reflection about this set of observations and interviews in the Old City that seeing Arab children working and Jewish children playing in different neighborhoods was "a powerful experience" for her because she "came to realize how simplistic and presumptuous [her] understanding of the conflict was before beginning this course." While she came with a clear-cut pro-Palestinian opinion, encountering memorials to the Jewish victims of the 1948 war around the neighborhood "forced her to weigh the

narrative of the Palestinians as victims" which was, until she went to Israel, the only narrative and side that she had been exposed to. She concluded her written reflection: "after coming to the realization that the issue is far beyond my breadth of understanding, I feel better prepared now to proceed with the class activities, listening and learning as we go along," suggesting a new attitude towards class activities and the content being discussed.

She concluded her written report on her increased awareness of how little she knew before coming to Jerusalem:

> I have come to realize as I contemplated my experience interviewing people in the Old City how ignorant I was of the complexities of Israel when I arrived just a little over a week ago. As a Middle East studies major I came into the program with the mindset that I had the textbook understanding of the history and present conflict between co-existing communities in the country. I was eager to learn, but in all honesty, viewed the program in many ways as an opportunity to see for myself what I already knew to be true.

*Field Trip to Ashdod*

Katherine explained in the follow-up interview that "the trip to Ashdod is particularly memorable for her." The class met with women volunteers who were helping the new *olim* to integrate into Israeli society, and some women commented on their perceived necessity for Israel to conduct air raid training. Katherine explained that it "did not necessarily surprise me, given the proximity to the Gaza border." However, she also mentioned that once in Jordan, after President Trump decided to move the U.S. embassy to Jerusalem which led to "weeks of bombardments on towns in South Israel," Katherine realized that the "headlines with Ashdod always caught my eye." She explained that now,

the *hamsa* charm from the Ashdod souvenir the women gave us is on my keychain. I often think of those women, their suburban town so vastly more developed than the communities in Gaza, and the routine of their lives greatly shaped by ongoing political friction.



*Figure 17: Katherine's hamsa (the hand charm on the bottom) keychain*

*Gaining a nuanced perspective by talking with people*

Upon her field trip to Tel Aviv with the class, and her observations and conversations with people, Katherine talked with four different people in Tel Aviv, and noticed that she was "surprised" several times, and that she "grew increasingly aware of the diverse nature of those serving in the IDF." She reported in her final research paper and in her Skype interview:

> One particular observation assignment that comes to mind more often than others that I think plays a significant role in my shift in mind was in Tel Aviv, when Hailey and I came across two street musicians and they were both in high school, one about to begin his IDF training and the other one had another year to go before he started.

*Figure 18: Two street musicians interviewed by Katherine in Tel Aviv.*

Katherine had decided to focus her research on understanding the perspective of Israeli youth of the Israeli Defense Force (IDF) and she had already been talking with several young adults who had completed their military service and were now in college. However, the two street musicians she and Hailey met in Tel Aviv had not yet participated in their service as they were still in high school, and therefore younger than the people Katherine had interacted with. Their conversation with Matthew and Oliver revolved around the two boys' origin, and they both revealed that they were both from southeast Asian countries as their parents had immigrated to Tel Aviv. Matthew had arrived in Israel from Hong Kong at age 11, and Katherine noted that he "didn't match the physical description of what people think of as an Israeli." Further, she noted that having met people who had completed their service, she had noticed that some of the students she had talked with tended to be somewhat hostile to the Israeli government. She expected

that younger students would have a similar opinion, because, being in Tel Aviv, she

anticipated "a very liberal, leftist response to questions related to the military." However,

Matthew and Oliver's opinions regarding the IDF did not match Katherine's expectations,

and she was "surprised with that conversation":

> one of the boys was a little less eager that he was
> approaching his time in the service, because he had a
> scholarship that he wanted to pursue, and he had to wait on
> that. But the other saw it as an opportunity to demonstrate
> his gratefulness and his love of the country as an immigrant,
> and that was a whole other identity that he held that I would
> never have imagined, and it made me realize that I had a
> very specific idea of what the youth and the IDF looked
> like. And so, that was almost an immediate realization of
> the fact that I had to be more open and that there were
> specific images, understandings that I held that, because I
> came into a thinking that I was very unbiased and that I
> didn't have any preconceived opinions of what they looked
> like, I was only aware of other people's preconceived
> opinions.

Following the interaction with the two boys, Hayley and Katherine sat together and

gathered their thoughts in silence. Katherine explained that they "were not shook [sic] in

the sense that they were disturbed" but they reflected individually to digest the interaction

taking notes on their journals for the class before debriefing together. For Katherine,

> that particular experience with that younger Israeli really
> fully turned the light on and made me aware of [my
> preconceived and biased opinions], and I was able to push
> those other ideas aside and approach the following
> conversations that I had with youth in the weeks that
> followed free of that.

She felt that this interaction followed by the individual reflection and the conversation

with Hailey led her to a "pretty immediate change:" She "noticed more openness and a

great heightened awareness in the following observations after having talked with him."

This allowed her to consciously approach the

> remaining of my interviews with a much, much more open mind. It enabled me to ask more specific questions in my interviews, because I wasn't forming them with that limited perspective that I held prior to my conversation with the boy in Tel Aviv.

As she explained multiple times, having read about and studied the Middle East, including Israel, she had a factual knowledge of the country, mainly based on history. However, this interaction with the boys, and Matthew in particular, enabled her to "dissociate the history that I know of the place from individuals" regarding the IDF. She realized that

> it was more of a personal choice whether people embrace that opportunity to serve in the IDF and do their conscription service, and it forced me to sort of break down that collective understanding that I had, or opinions that I had of Israeli youth and to look at them more as individuals.

Listening to people's various experiences, ages, and backgrounds added to Katherine's understanding of the complexity in Israel. She explained that henceforth,

> I will always go into situations with a different perspective than what I held before I had this altered perspective knowing that within certain communities where I may be aware of their ideas or backgrounds or potential viewpoints, there's always going to be nuances amongst the individuals, and hoping that I can discover those and it can give me a better understanding of what's happening.

Gaining understanding of a perspective which she had not been exposed to in the US nor yet in Israel, such as students' perspective before their conscription into their military service, "helped me understand the opinions of people who had finished their service."

By learning about different types of opinions within the Israeli youth, Katherine acknowledged that

> it gave me a better understanding of a trajectory of change that that individual may have encountered in the years during their service and then after. It just gave me a better understanding and from there I could ask that older individual 'well did you think this or that before?', because I knew that those youth had, the high schoolers versus the university students.

She considered this particular conversation with Matthew in Tel Aviv to have "tipped [her] into a new gear as [she] finished [her] research," which she perceived made her aware of her ignorance of Israeli culture and allowed for a deeper understanding of complexity:

> I definitely came to realize how unaware I was of Israeli culture when I was over there, because I didn't really have much of an understanding of the secular Israeli culture, or that it even existed. But the fact that I THOUGHT I knew what was happening was something I was very convicted about. I wasn't aware of how unaware I was. It made me really eager to do as much as I could while I was there, to learn about the culture, about people's perspectives of their history, because I was familiar with the history but I didn't have a very nuanced understanding of the individuals' outlooks on it.

Upon the reflection of change that followed, which Katherine considered to be an "immediate change" but also a "transitionary period," she explained in her Skype interview that "I wasn't upset by it, I wasn't sad or angry or anything. I was just alarmed." She understood that she had let her preconceived opinions prevent her from comprehending the complexity and variety of opinions within the Israeli youth about the IDF and the current Israeli government, and she needed to change her approach, to "tune

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into what was happening around me and not be blinded or hindered by my own opinions

or understandings," not only in Israel, but in general. As she noted in her final paper, she

> was intrigued by their individual experiences, and at the same time, alarmed at my intrigue because it made clear to me that by failing to discover for myself the realities of the IDF, I had essentially adopted the opinion of my fellow-students who labelled these peers, collectively, as human rights violators.

This newly acquired self-awareness created a dissonance in how she viewed herself as a

journalist and how she saw her work.

> I feel very personally affected and very convicted. As a journalist, I think of myself as a very open-minded person and I'm very distanced from situations themselves and just sort of collecting information and then disseminating it and putting it into a digestible package almost. And so, with that mindset, I think I had become numb to the understanding that there were ideas that I held that were inhibiting my ability to be fully exposed to what was happening around me. Beyond even conversations, I felt towards the end of the program, as each week that passed the time we were in the course getting even heightened awareness to my physical surroundings, to smells and scents, and peoples.

Following this "disturbing," "humbling" and "very emotional experience," she

reported "I allowed conversations or things I read to help me process [my environments]

more accurately" instead of "just assuming that I understood what was happening around

me." This interaction followed with the growing awareness that she had been spending

the past two weeks in Israel somehow trying to confirm her bias. This gave her a "sense

of urgency to talk with people and learn as much as I could." The development of this

curiosity led her to make conscious efforts and

trying to not share too much about myself or talk too much about what I thought was happening there, why I was there, and just allow them to share with me, so I could get as much out of them I guess as I possibly could in those engagements.

Katherine also mentioned in her final paper her conversation with Yonatan, a young man who had recently completed his military service as "a military prison guard." He explained to her that most of the inmates were actually young men who had "failed to carry out their mandatory service" because they did not accept the military lifestyle, refused to participate for ideological reasons, or because their pension was not sufficient to support their family. Katherine explained that her conversation with Yonatan "provided me with a more comprehensive understanding of the IDF, as well as some of the inherent side effects of conscription." As she explained retrospectively regarding this set of experiences in Tel Aviv,

the multi-faceted nature of the Israeli perspective on the IDF challenged my assumption that the right-winged government's nature would be to support the actions of IDF soldiers regardless of the circumstances.

Although she noted that she needed to change her mindset and way of understanding what people were telling her while in Israel, she also emphasized during our Skype interview that this awareness did not disrupt her interactions with Israelis, as she had "always felt comfortable" interviewing, and had never really felt like she had stepped out of her comfort zone. She "didn't really see a difference in my approach or my emotional reaction from beginning to end." However, she noted a difference in how learning about different opinions regarding the IDF and understanding more about her topic allowed her to ask more specific and more critical questions to people rather than "flounder" in gathering

information. She noticed that her curiosity and eagerness to "understand them and understand their country" evolved, and that

> I enjoyed the interactions more when I had a more focused research topic and when I was still getting a variety of information but it was diversifying that one topic and not just kind of spilling all this on to me, because that was overwhelming in the sense that I didn't know what to do with it all in the beginning. Not that it wasn't exciting though. It was an enjoyable process in the beginning as well, just more focused towards the end for sure.

Katherine expressed in our Skype interview

> In retrospect, this belief was a result of my having come from a university where the majority of students hold liberal opinions and are harshly critical of the Israeli government, often denouncing the right of Israel to exist as a state. But I quickly realized in my conversations with Israeli youth, who had recently completed their military service or were about to begin their service, that their opinions emerged from diverse backgrounds. They were, however, all impacted by the narratives common in Israel, that of the purpose of the Jewish state and the role of the Jews within it. Whether my counterparts realized the impact of this nationalist rhetoric depended on a variety of factors, such as their military assignment, age, place of birth, gender, and current field of study.

Katherine mentioned in her written reflection on the readings regarding the Law of Return and the different immigration waves that she was "frustrated by the availability of the land of Israel to peoples as distant as the spouse of an individual with a single Jewish grandparent." However, she noted that visiting Yad Vashem –the Holocaust Museum,– "instilled in me a firm conviction that a state for the Jews is justified for their protection." Learning more about the *Falashas*, the Ethiopian Jews evacuated by the Israeli military in the 1980s and 1990s, Katherine noted that although she had heard of them, being reminded of this community made her aware that prior to studying in

Jerusalem, "the common image of an Israeli Jew in my mind fits a European physique."

The readings "challenged my preconceived imagery" even more than what Matthew had

done. The readings triggered comparisons between Israel and the US regarding the

common perceived threats represented by migrant workers to the Arab population, which

reminded Katherine of "economically disadvantaged Americans in the Midwest."

Katherine demonstrated, not only thorough knowledge of the content presented in the

readings, but also a clear understanding of current issues in Israel in relation to

immigration and local populations.

*Influence of Ehud's course*

Katherine perceived that "the course in particular in the way it was structured and the

way it forced us to be really aware of how we were entering into situations" contributed

to her change, because "it made me increasingly aware of Israel being a small and

interconnected country." The structure of the inquiry-based project was particularly

different from what she would have expected:

> the way that he had it structured almost upside down. You
> started exploring and challenging before even really
> determining what it was you were looking for. And usually,
> when you're doing a research project, it's the other way
> around. You decide your topic and then you begin
> exploring and then you narrow down and then you come to
> your conclusion.

For Katherine, the whole experience in Israel was related to Ehud's course, and "It was

very much unlike anything I had experienced at my own university." Reflecting after each

observation, conversation or reading "caused her to reflect more, she kind of became

more aware." Further, she also used photography as a form of journaling as she organized

her pictures every night, causing her to continue her reflection. However, she considered

her classmates' support to have been more important than the instructor's: "as a collective we, the six of us, and then Ehud off to the side, really, I think connected and then also encouraged one another to grow and to challenge ourselves." While Ehud "was the facilitator of our discussions and the structure of the class," Katherine insisted that

> had you guys not been as engaged as you were, I also personally wouldn't have got as much out of it, because so much of coming to realize what I was discovering was catalyzed by having to vocalize it to you all. And so, I'd say that was the most influential, and then secondary to that would be also Ehud's pushing us and encouraging us.

The repeated aspect of reflections through writing and group conversations in class participated in her increasing awareness:

> I definitely think that putting it to paper and then having to take what we'd written and share it again with the course, with the class, definitely helped. Just that repetition of exploration, personal reflection, having to format it and write it out and just share that vocally all helped build on that growth.

Further, she mentioned that her hopes for future pursuits:

> I hope to continue to practice the things that that class sort of made me aware of. To listen, to not allow too much of my background or ideas to impose on a conversation and then inhibit the person who is sharing with me his ability to share. And also, being aware, like I said, of how they're engaging in their space. And so, how their body language is towards me, what their places and their community, how that impacts them but also how they impact that space.

In contrast, while she attributed most of her change to experiences framed by Ehud's course, she mentioned that the other course she took on radical terrorism did not participate in her change as "it was not explorative."

She regretted that her other course did not encompass meeting with local people and discussing opinions about terrorism and governmental reactions, learning from the Israeli government, itself, how it was making security-related decisions. She noticed, by talking with other international students, that some courses included field trips in which some students would only drive around with a tour guide. She perceived that "our class was the exception on the program" in that other courses failed at "exposing people to the topics that we were exploring and relate to the Middle East in the context of Israel and its relationship to the other countries in the region." She concluded on the topic that:

> I think I would have left Israel with the same change had I only been in our course. I got a lot out of the other course I was in, but it was very much a more distant academic experience.

*Gaining from pain: an emotional disorientation*

During Katherine's stay in Jerusalem, a particular set of events unfolded after a group of Palestinian citizens of Israel (or "Israeli Arabs") (Haaretz, July 24, 2017) shot Israeli policemen at one of the entrances to the Old City, by the closest door leading to the entrance of the Muslim access to Haram Al-Sharif (also called "Temple Mount," mostly by non-Muslims). The shooters were pursued by the Israeli armed forces before being killed on the courtyard of Haram al-Sharif, which created a first set of protests as the Israelis are not allowed to use weapons on the holy site, which is administered by the Waqf, an Islamic trust, in coordination with the Jordanian authorities. The following day, Israel installed metal detectors at the entrance of Haram al-Sharif, which in return created a wave of protests not only in Jerusalem and the West Bank, but also across Muslim majority countries. In reprisal, a family of Jewish settlers was slaughtered, which led to

more security measures and many more Palestinians being shot by the IDF in Palestinian territories.

One thing that particularly "shocked" Katherine about the Temple Mount/Haram al-Sharif incident was how the news organizations in the US were depicting events. She noticed that, right after the university where we were studying in Jerusalem informed us about the attack, she left a message to her parents to let them know that they should not be worried, but "they never called her back until they saw it hit the American news waves, which is, she believed, when the family on the settlement was killed." This event and its depiction in mainstream news outlets in the US provoked a reaction for Katherine's understanding of the news.

Then, one evening during the third week of her stay in Jerusalem, Katherine went to watch the sunset from the Mount of Olives with a few international friends from her classes. The evening was quiet, and Katherine's group was observing Haredi men at a burial ceremony in the oldest Jewish cemetery when they started hearing people shouting and seeing police vans rushing along the road separating the Mount of Olives from the Old City. As they were walking back towards the Old City, the voices intensified, and they asked a police woman in anti-riot gear whether they could walk by the protest to reach their light rail station faster, but she recommended they go the other way to avoid getting stuck in the protest. Katherine recalls

> I was alarmed by how distant it could feel even though I could literally hear it from campus. And it was a very strange thing to have unraveling while we were there, and it was really exciting, but obviously I would rather it never had happened. But to have the opportunity to be there was rather extraordinary. But I was confused, and I still am

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confused by how it could still feel so distant even though, when we were climbing down off of the Mount of Olives we could hear it and we were personally affected and rerouted. By the time we left Israel, half a dozen people had died within the Israeli territories, and then another half a dozen in the Palestinian territories and on settlements. That the loss of life was part of my educational experience felt very odd. I gained something from those people's pain. I didn't ask for that, but I personally as a student came to a better understanding of what was happening there, and I was able to be exposed to things and hear various opinions and see things that I would not have otherwise, had I not been in the country or had those things not transpired while I was there. That was very strange and I thought about that a lot in the last week, that I benefited as a scholar from kind of everything that unraveled at the time.

Katherine explained in her Skype interview how this set of events—which that she qualified as "uncomfortable," but not disorienting—impacted her. She mentioned that, combined with many more instances in the past few months she spent abroad, these events caused her to reflect on her positionality towards people and spaces, both physically and ideologically, and how it impacted her future.

it wasn't my place to be my gaining from an Israeli and Palestinian issue. I just felt like it wasn't my place. I'll never have a sense of ownership over that space and those places. Those events will never be mine, because I'm not Palestinian, I'm not Jordanian, I'm not Israeli, I'm not Jewish, Muslim, whatever. I am Christian and some of those spaces are tied to my faith, and so that's one thing that's still very hard what part of this is mine and what part of it do I have to respect as not being something for me to approach. I'm still trying to figure out how much can I emotionally attach myself to the place without being disrespectful. How much can I claim it as part of my identity without being inappropriate? Just what sense of ownership do I have over that space as someone who's studying it versus someone who has heritage there.

When she left Israel, Katherine felt "very emotional" and she remembered "leaving feeling like it was a space I was very comfortable with" and "really very

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devastated to be leaving." Because she was "very surprised by how comfortable I felt there." She noted that she did not feel, neither in Israel or in Jordan, "a culture shock which was kind of surprising," because she "expected to at times feel thrown. Maybe I was just too excited, too distracted."

*Israel influenced social interactions in Jordan*

After leaving Israel, Katherine went on a trip with her father primarily around European cities before heading to Amman, Jordan, for the fall semester. She insisted on a particular way in which her experience in Israel carried over to Jordan and influenced, not only her understanding of Jordan (which is impacted by Israel's policies towards Palestinians), but also her interactions while in Jordan. She mentioned that she formed a strong friendship with Orthodox Jews from US campuses, who helped her to reflect further on her experience in Jerusalem.

> I don't think I would have clicked with them as well or they would have been as eager to grow close with me had I not been in Israel that summer. So, definitely it was a huge, that was the most obvious way in which the first program influenced the second, because those friendships really defined my time there in Jordan.

Katherine perceived that her experiences in Jordan would have been entirely different,

> had I not taken Ehud's class and had that mindset and the real enhanced awareness of the fact that I had preconceived ideas and they needed to be challenged and that wasn't something that was just going to passively happen to me, I had to expose myself to various opinions.

*Changes noticed in the US*

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> I feel that almost every aspect of my life has been affected by my study abroad experience, whether it be my time in the classroom, pursuit of my own faith, my interactions with other faiths, my understanding of where my career's going. I don't have a really clear understanding of where my career's going to go, but I have a more nuanced understanding of what clear options will look like in the Middle East. Even my interactions with my family have been affected in the sense that both Israelis and Jordanians are really affectionate, really committed to the family unit. I would say every aspect of my life has been positively affected by my study abroad experience, and I feel much more focused since coming home from abroad. Much more, everything seems a little clearer and I'm really happy that that's the case.

Katherine returned from the Middle East after six months abroad and although her experience in Israel was nearly six months ago, "I'm still grappling with everything that I saw and everything that everyone told me" and she repeated many times:

> I'm still thinking about as you can see. I'm sorry if it's a little all over the place because I'm still processing it. Yeah, I just got back, like a month ago, and the Israeli and Jordanian experiences are really linked and a lot of what I learned, and I thought about Israel carried over in Jordan.

One of the first things she emphasized during our Skype interview was the uniqueness of studying abroad and of Ehud's course, compared with simply traveling. She explained in her follow-up interview that "It has been difficult to relay to [my parents] all that I experienced and the personal changes that resulted from my time abroad." She insisted on the consequences of her change and her awareness of change, how she positions herself as a journalist, and how she positions herself in her own culture:

> studying abroad specifically is a unique experience that forces you to be aware of your environment and how you engage in that space and what your priorities are.

She explained that going to Israel was necessary for her to gain a genuine understanding of the tensions in the Middle East, because it is "hard to really properly understand what's happening in the region from the states." Studying abroad allowed for experiences which staying on her university in the US would not have provided:

> the experience abroad offered me the opportunity to converse with my Israeli counterparts and challenge my previously held beliefs on their opinions. This would not have been possible from my home university in the States.

She noticed that she has become

> open to various opinions that maybe I wouldn't have been otherwise, in the sense that I understand the necessity for certain security measures, certain border control tactics. Prior to my time in Israel, I would have disregarded as an unnecessary use of force.

She demonstrated this greater openness by her "political perspective change" which she perceived expresses itself in new behavior. While she used to look primarily at liberal news, she is now

> exposing myself to more news outlets than I used to, actively talking with friends and colleagues, asking them what their take is, and what they think.

However, she insisted on the idea that

> I do still believe it's an occupied state, and we were able to go and see some of the differences of what it's like to live on the other side of the wall, and that was really hard. But I guess, being there and everything kind of becoming, not clear in the way that everything's entangled, made me understand, and not necessarily agree, but be willing to listen to various opinions.

She emphasized in our in-depth interview the idea that "everything seems a little clearer and I'm really happy that that's the case" because "everything just is a lot more tangible

now, so that makes every aspect of my engagement with Israel in particular but also the region just a lot more defined."

*Change as a student*

In the first weeks of class in her Californian university, she "noticed a clear difference in how I approach my readings and how I'm digesting information and engaging with my professors as opposed to before I left." She explained that studying abroad "made me more aware of what was happening in my courses here." In the follow-up interview, Katherine emphasized that her "experience in Israel has helped contextualize much of my studies of the Middle East since I returned to my home university." She mentioned that, since she has been back on her US campus, she has been able to notice "behaviors and personal characteristics that I would have totally not tuned into before being abroad." For example, an early thing she noted about her professor (who is also the director of a Hillel Center) "was that he wasn't wearing his kippah." Another example was about her Palestinian Christian professor wearing a Bedouin necklace. As Katherine explained, "had I been in my [Palestinian professor's] class last year, I would not even have noticed the necklace or thought anything about it," attributing her "heightened awareness" and attentiveness to signs and behaviors to her experiences abroad.

> I think being able to understand your professor is really important to being able to understand the information you're being presented with and where that information is coming from and how it's being influenced by their background. I was really happy to have been able to tune into those things about those two people.

In the first few weeks of school in California, she was "a lot more active in my studies, it's a lot easier to absorb information," which she attributed as an indirect consequence of having studied abroad. She was feeling more motivated academically because her classes were her only window to the Middle East, a region which has become a lot more personal:

> I just feel such a greater sense of urgency to get as much out of it as I can now it's something that's more personal, this place that I've grown to love and feel a need to understand. It created a sense of urgency and greater focus within my classes and my studies.

She further explained that she feels that the fact that "everything is not clear in the sense that I understand, but clear that I have a very defined, tactile picture of what the region looks like," helps her in reading academic texts about the Middle East.

Since her return to the US, she has "actually noticed that she is less inclined to talk in class, and more observant versus impersonally engaged in her classes." She has been "trying to kind of gage the environment before just putting her ideas or sharing just for the sake of sharing, to really gain an understanding of where [people are] coming from," because she is "more eager to learn about them than to put my information out there."

Even her academic curiosity has extended, as she enrolled in a course on rabbinic literature when she returned, which is

> something I definitely wouldn't have enrolled in before going to Israel, but I'm very curious about the texts that accompany the study of the Old Testament because I've studied the Old Testament as a Christian all my life, but there are other texts that define the Jewish faith.

*Change in personal interests*

In addition to her academic motivation which she perceived as having increased, Katherine believed that studying abroad "definitely has triggered something, a greater level of personal exploration of my academic focus outside of the classroom." For example, she now reads books about the Middle East for personal pleasure, "trying to understand the places that she was exposed [to]."

*Change as a Christian*

Katherine has also noticed that studying abroad and gaining familiarity with places and landscapes in the Middle East has impacted her Christianity. She pointed out how even though she has been reading passages of the Bible since she was little,

> some of them I feel like I'm reading for the first time because it just all is a lot more tangible to me now and easier to visualize within my mind as I'm reading, I feel like I'm absorbing it better.

She summed up that "having a better sense of the geography and the topography makes understanding what's happening there and kind of digesting any literature or academic studies or scripture that I'm reading," making her "studies and research more tangible."

She has been trying to develop a relationship between her learning of Arabic and her desire to better understand her religion, copying passages of her New Testament in Arabic in order to practice her calligraphy skills while exercising her memory of the scripture.

*Impact on her career*

Katherine emphasized how her experiences abroad influenced her reflections regarding her future career in journalism, which she hopes will be based in the Middle East. While the specific influences of both study abroad sojourns were difficult at times to disentangle, she explained that going to the Middle East made her question her positionality as a foreigner, as a Christian, and as a journalist. "It forced me to think things over related to my future." Settling in Israel for a long time is not something appealing to her for political reasons:

> I also don't feel that it would ever be my place or my right, and I don't think I'd feel comfortable staying, ever moving to Israel. It's a place that I still think of often, and I think that I will always be very attached to, but would never live there, because there are certain things that I don't think should be happening and I wouldn't ever want to turn a blind eye to that. As much as I enjoy it there and love history and I would love to have accessibility to some of the places that are religiously significant to me, I don't think I could ever justify it, especially under the current government. So, if I ever end up back in the Middle East, it will be in Jordan. The Israeli experience helped me understand what my place should be if I end up living in the Middle East.

In the meantime, Katherine has applied to short-term internships in both Israel and Jordan, emphasizing that she would only be comfortable with living in Israel during short-term trips so as not to show support for the government nor for the "expulsion of the Palestinian populations that transpired in the creation of the state, [which were] incredibly unjust."

Katherine punctuated her in-depth interview with apologies because she felt that her answers were "a little all over the place because I'm still processing it."

*Analysis of Katherine's Experience*

1. **What were the participants' experiences in a short-term study abroad program in Israel?**

Katherine answered the survey showing that she perceived having had a perspective transformation experience while studying abroad in Israel. An experience caused her to question the way she normally acts as well as her ideas, beliefs, and expectations, which she realized she had changed. She reflected on how to act instead of what she used to do, and thought about how her new ways were affecting people. She then decided to adopt these new ways of acting. Interestingly, in her in-depth interview, Katherine's answers could fit even more categories.

Thinking about your educational experiences abroad, *check off any statements that may apply:*

| | |
|---|---|
| I had an experience that caused me to question the way I normally act. | x |
| I had an experience that caused me to question my ideas about social roles. (i.e. what a student or teacher should do.) | |
| As I questioned my ideas, I realized I no longer agreed with my beliefs or role expectations | x |
| Or instead, as I questioned my ideas, I realized I still agreed with my beliefs and role expectations. | |
| I realized that other people also questioned their beliefs. | x |
| I thought about acting in a different way from my usual beliefs and roles. | x |
| I felt uncomfortable with traditional social expectations. | |
| I tried out new roles so that I would become more comfortable or confident in them. | x |
| I tried to figure out a way to adopt these new ways of acting. | |
| I gathered the information I needed in order to adopt these new ways of acting. | |
| I began to think about the reactions and feedback from my new behavior. | x |
| I took action and adopted these new ways of acting. | x |
| I do not identify with any of the statements above. | |

*Figure 19: Katherine's responses to the Learning Activities Survey*

Katherine insisted on the unique experience she lived via her study abroad, by highlighting the role of her course in framing most of her experiences in Israel. She

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perceived that talking with people as part of her assignments in Ehud's course was her favorite part (not only of the course, but also of her stay in Jerusalem) and the most impactful. She emphasized the difference with her other course which did not encompass any conversations with Israelis and which she could have taken in the same format on her American campus. Ehud's course was the reason of her significant experiences and change.

Although she would have talked with people without Ehud's assignments, the nature of the course, focused on inquiry via conversations with people, forced her to do it on a regular basis and in a gradual way, as she progressively developed the desire to interact with more people during her stay. She explained that each interaction triggered more questions, influencing her curiosity. The more she learned, the more curious she became.

She identified two main interactions with people which had a significant impact on her. The first one, noted in the narrative, was the juxtaposition of a young Arab boy and a Jewish toddler. The experience catalyzed a transformation in her perceptions, leading to a realization of the futilities involved in placing "blame" or taking "sides" in the conflict – a realization that she put into immediate application in her subsequent interviews and research. In a larger sense, however, the event triggered a long-term change of her emotional sensitivity to the Arab-Israeli conflict.

The second conversation took place in Tel Aviv with the two teenage street musicians whose parents were migrant workers from Southeast Asia. This conversation, she perceives, was a turning point and led to an immediate awareness of her need to

change how she conducted her interviews. She immediately applied this behavior in her conversation with the boys, and then reflected silently before talking about it with a classmate. The ensuing reflection triggered further awareness of the need to change, of adapting her behavior, and of her positionality in her course project. It also precipitated further changes in her course project, ideology, political stance, and in her role as a journalist. While she said explicitly that she did not feel guilt nor shame for having a monolithic understanding of the IDF, she had let other people's opinions talk through her. She valued being in Israel to get access to the multitude of perspectives rather than the often-simplified ones she had access to in the media from the U.S. This new awareness of her biases led her to feeling embarrassed and uncomfortable. She analyzed her discomfort, attributing it to her lack of knowledge which made her feel humbler, because she came to realize that she did not know.

Finally, another set of significant perspective transformation experiences revolved around the protests happening after the shooting of Israeli policemen which led to the execution of the terrorists on the esplanade of Haram Al-Sharif and the installation of metal detectors at the entrance. The discrepancy in the media coverage of the events between Israel and US news made her realize how biased the news sources she follows sometimes are, and how this also furthers the biases she has encountered in academia. One night when Arabs were protesting the metal detectors and their meaning for Muslims, she felt both thankful to witness such events, and uncomfortable.

Katherine feels that these significant experiences were either framed or reinforced by the course design, which required us to talk with people on a regular basis. She perceived that our classmates' support influenced her because our engagement and desire

to learn impacted her own engagement. Much of her awareness was catalyzed by her vocalizing concerns to classmates, both in class and outside.

She perceived that the course readings made her feel alarmed, and added to the complexity of the situation, as Ehud chose texts presenting contradictory narratives about Arab-Israeli tensions.

She attributed a large role to her written reflections, although she felt the interaction between written reflection, group reflection, and final paper helped her see more clearly. Finally, she perceived that organizing her pictures every night allowed her to reflect in a visual way.

## 2. In what ways, if any, do study abroad participants perceive that they changed?

Although she expected a very limited change, Katherine perceived that she changed in various ways, and that the change was positive. She thinks that her views and perspective has changed because she has changed her opinion of Israelis.

She also feels that defining and refining her research topic affected her intercultural sensitivity, to Israelis in particular. She noticed that although she enjoyed her early interactions in Central Jerusalem, her enjoyment of interactions increased with the awareness of her choice of research topic, leading her to having more focused questions for her conversations with Israeli youth. She felt increasingly engaged in such intercultural interactions—feeling more focused on people's responses and listening to them more than when she first arrived in Israel—and she noticed that her observation skills increased, including feeling more aware of her surroundings, and even noticing

smells more. Gaining in understanding of her topic via the conversations with Israeli youth made her feel increasingly more confident when interacting with Israelis.

*Behavioral Change*

Katherine noticed that she adapted her interview skills after the interaction with the street musicians, talking less and letting people express themselves more, conducting interviews in a different way. For example, instead of remotely following her list of questions, which might sometimes affect the natural course of the conversation, she let herself be carried away by what people actually answered, which she perceived was a way of demonstrating that she was listening more than she used to.

Her change transcended the Israeli context, and she perceived that her study abroad experience influenced her subsequent stay in Jordan, making her more open to friendships. Her intercultural interaction with two orthodox Jews in Amman was, she believed, evidence of her change. Her attentiveness to intercultural interactions increased –the professor wearing Bedouin jewelry and rabbi teaching class without wearing a kippa. She explained that she would not have "tuned" to these signs, had she not learned from her experiences in Israel and Jordan.

Upon her return to the United States, she felt that she had changed as a student, feeling more focused, more engaged, and more motivated. She also felt that she participated less orally and listened to others more, and she attributed this change to her experiences in Israel. She felt she had changed in her approach to readings, feeling that everything was more tangible, because of her newfound familiarity with the geography and the topography of the area.

Her familiarity with the locations affected her in a religious way, enabling her to read her Bible in a different way. Because she is now familiar with the sound of Hebrew, she feels that reading scriptures has a different effect, because she can visually imagine the places mentioned.

She also perceives that her political stance changed as a result of her conversations with Israelis, and her overall experience in Israel. Although she still believes that Israel is occupying many territories that do not belong to the Israeli state, she has gained understanding and tolerance for security measures which she used to perceive only as oppressive in the past. Further, she feels that she has been vocal about her more nuanced perspective since she has been back in the U.S.

As a result of seeing how news organizations were depicting events that she was witnessing regarding the Arab-Israeli conflict, Katherine perceives that she has changed her behavior in her consumption of news, making efforts to be intentional in her selection of news sources.

She perceives that her career in journalism was impacted by her study abroad experience, more specifically by her gain in knowledge about the complexity of issues in Israel and in the Middle East. She has applied for an internship in a news agency that might send her back to Israel. She also perceives that she is more aware and critical of herself, her culture, and of the Middle East.

She also thinks that her interactions with her family have changed in that she is more demonstrative than she used to be, because she appreciated how affectionate family members were in the Middle East.

Katherine feels that she will continue to change as she processes her experience, and because she perceives that her experience in Israel will influence her futures.

*Hailey's Experience*

"I felt like I lacked a lot of knowledge of the people.  I felt a bit uncomfortable with how closed my views were to begin with, not necessarily in relation to one particular thing but I mean in general what I knew before hand or what I experienced beforehand was like completely different. I felt like I had closed myself up to a lot before I got to experience the people in Israel."

Hailey grew up in a rural environment between regional Victoria and South Wales, Australia, where the community "did not reflect any cultures or people different from herself," and which she found sometimes hostile to diversity. She explained that she was "raised on a mixture of common racism and intolerance from anyone different to ourselves" because her community was "confined to the homogenous ideology of the people there." She then moved to Melbourne to pursue her higher education and "became aware of the diversity of the city and the acceptance of everyone in the community." She emphasized that college provided her with the opportunity to meet people different from her: "The university environment gave me the chance to work with people that I wouldn't have had the opportunity to otherwise." According to her, writing her initial reflection on her own experiences of immigration and diversity helped her develop an awareness of her own background, beliefs, and positionality before formally starting her course.

At the time of her experience in Jerusalem, she was 21 years old and a senior in college, majoring in Islamic Studies and minoring both in Political Science and International Affairs. She had never studied a foreign language except for one semester

of Arabic during her Freshman year of college. She chose to study in Jerusalem because she had taken many courses in Jewish studies, both about religion and about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and because one of her professors had recommended Israel as being "the most unique place in the world." She believed that by studying abroad, she would "just learn more" even while limited to the classroom, but that her exploration of Israeli cultures would be done on her own during her free time. She expected to "see some of the religious sites that I had learned about and I was really curious to see those," but she did not imagine a month in Israel could lead to any other type of change.

Hailey had traveled to Morocco and some locations in Western Europe, and prior to beginning the program, she spent a few days in Tel Aviv with her boyfriend, who was able to take some time off from his internship in Germany. During the first few days, the met an elderly couple who had migrated from the UK. They commented on Germany and told them that it is a terrible place. Hailey was taken aback, because she had not expected people would criticize other countries so openly but felt that it "wasn't [her] place" to defend anyone or to respond, not knowing the previous experiences of the couple.

*Observations and Conversations in Central Jerusalem*

During her first set of observations and interviews in Central Jerusalem, Hailey noticed people's attire and religious markers, but focused on the difficulty of the exercise: "Observing others wasn't something I was naturally inclined to do, and so taking note of what I saw proved quite difficult." Talking was even more difficult for Hailey the first time. She was "terrified" because the activity was "outside of my comfort zone," acknowledging that she would not have talked with Israelis had it not been a requirement for the class.

She first met two young adults who were studying in Jerusalem, Samuel and Adam. Through this conversation, she learned that some members of Samuel's family had been established in Israel since before the creation of the state, while others had immigrated from Argentina. On the other hand, Adam had grown up in the US in a non-Jewish family but had converted to Judaism during his time in college and therefore made *Aliyah* before pursuing graduate school in Jerusalem. Encountering these two students with such diverse backgrounds, Hailey "was particularly interested in hearing the answer to what the kind of friends they had both made before, and after university." Samuel told her that by growing up in Israel, his social circle was mainly composed of Jewish friends, but that going to college had allowed him to diversify his group of relationships by having "two atheists" around. Hailey was "surprised" by this, noting in her written reflection that she had "already begun to experience the segregation of cultures in Jerusalem." She noted that

> When reflecting back on it, I found it similar to my own situation while in Australia. Having grown up in a secluded area, it is difficult to interact with others different to yourself. When moving to the city for university, I made numerous friends with different beliefs and cultures, something that isn't taken into as much consideration as it would in regional areas.

She explained that "these men had both conformed to my pre-existing ideas that within a university campus environment, they would become friends with everyone," because they had mentioned that going to college had allowed them to expand on their circle of friends, just like Hailey had. However, Hailey reflected on this "mirroring of my own experience at university" and realized that none of them had Muslim or Arab friends, which she

noticed was odd, because at the time, her "understanding was that anyone could attend university, which included Arab-Israeli citizens."

She then encountered two sisters, Misha and Lior, whose parents were born in Zimbabwe and the U.S. Both of them emphasized that they had attended public Jewish high schools. One of them had just finished high school and was about to start her military service and wanted to be a tour guide, while the other had finished her service, worked as a tour guide, and was now completing university, "had only Jewish friends," and was afraid of Arabs. The statements flabbergasted and "confused" Hailey, who expected public schools to be diverse by essence, but also because her previous interaction with the boys had confirmed her expectations based on her own life experience, and she was "surprised" to encounter an opinion and set of experiences that did not match everyone else's:

> The conversation that I had with these women, did differ significantly to the one I had with the men before-hand. They were of similar age, however their experiences with others were completely different.

In addition, she reflected on her "assumption" that the girls, wanting to be tour guides, would naturally want to meet people from other cultures than theirs.

This first set of conversations confirmed Hailey's early interest in understanding Israeli youth's perspectives on coexistence, wanting to understand how their socialization is impacted by factors such as attending university. She explained that she

> had predicted that the younger generation of the population, especially those completing further education, would be more open to coexistence with other sects of their community. The sisters were clear in noting that when the

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> community comes together peacefully, this does not
> include minority groups, especially individuals such as
> refugees.

In addition, realizing that the girls feared Arabs in their own country led Hailey to question the presentation of the Arab-Israeli conflict in academia and how it differs from the way Australian news often presents the events. She indeed started reflecting on the fact that she "never sort of got what was Israel's reasoning" until taking Ehud's class and interacting with Israelis.

*Readings on Zionism and the Arab minority*

After reading a few articles and book chapters presenting Jewish and Arab narratives, Hailey noted: "When reflecting on the readings and class discussion that followed, it is obvious the various narratives that exist from both perspectives." In her written reflection, she demonstrated a great understanding of the new knowledge she had been exposed to through the readings collectively.

*Observations and Conversations in the Old City: Refining her Research Topic*

Her feeling of unpreparedness during her first set of conversations led Hailey to come to the Old City with a set of questions "relevant to the field that I was becoming particularly interested in." She had indeed, over the course of the first week in Ehud's class, refined the scope of her research project, deciding to work on coexistence within young people, and becoming increasingly interested in the effects of university on their perception of coexistence. As she noted in her written reflection, she hoped to draw connections between people's geographic and social backgrounds and their university

attendance on their friendship patterns. She explained that during her second set of conversations, she "really enjoyed it and wanted to speak to people outside of class."

She first started to observe people in the Jewish Quarter of the Old City, noticing how more religious people seemed to be by wearing modest clothing and *kippas*. However, she was surprised by the number of young couples and their number of children, having initially expected to "see predominantly elderly people around the Jewish quarter, especially around the synagogue and more traditional areas." She acknowledged that her "lack of knowledge" of the Jewish faith, especially of Jewish orthodoxy, and more widely of Israel, had influenced her expectations.

She and Alex decided to conduct their interviews together, Hailey perceived that as classmates we sort of helped each other and pushed each other to meet more people." She explained that interviewing in pairs "helped me to approach different types of people that maybe I wouldn't have." Hailey and Alex met a group of ultra-orthodox teenage girls who told them that it was very common to have an average of ten children in their community. Hailey recognized that "this was something that I hadn't expected and was completely taken aback." She was "taken aback," and "overwhelmed" multiple times during her conversation with these teenage girls, hearing that they could only imagine having Jewish friends, saying "blatantly" that they were afraid of Arabs, and seeing them freely coming to Jerusalem on their own and without adult supervision from a conservative city near Tel Aviv, and yet being forbidden from practicing sports or even running in the streets for fear of being immodest. Hailey revised her expectations: "My preconceived thoughts were that perhaps adults couldn't participate in such things, but these girls being so young and having the same restrictions was surprising." Learning

about the girls' religious restrictions made her adapt her questions and behavior to them, being herself "more conservative" in her way of addressing topics with them, compared with the type of questions she would have asked most teenagers in Australia. The conversation made her question her own position and culture, wondering whether the ultra-orthodox culture, by valuing marriage and children for young people, was not making them grow up more quickly that she had. However, learning from them about their ultra-orthodox culture and how their religious upbringing was influencing their friendships "helped me to confirm my focus of youth in Israel, and believe it will be something particularly interesting to write my paper on."

Further, although she felt uncomfortable hearing the teenage girls voicing what Hailey considered "racist comments" about Arabs, she also demonstrated understanding of the influence of the girls' environment on their opinions and fears:

> I think given the unique situation and the environment that they had grown up in, very conservative neighborhood, I still could understand it but it nevertheless made me uncomfortable.

She explained that she did not interject during the conversation, and only listened, because she wanted to know what the girls really thought, and also because she "didn't feel like I had a right to defend anyone" because she did not know their "past experiences and their background and why they believe this certain thing so I sort of… I felt as though it wasn't really my place."

She reflected on her own understanding and opinion regarding the tendency of ultra-orthodox communities to keep to themselves, excluding themselves from certain

compulsory secular activities, such as participation in the IDF, or even pursuing higher

education:

> I can on one level understand the ideology that this group of youth values, and the tight-knit community that would emerge from such ideology. Not only this, but the support and advice that you could receive from within your community could be helpful during times of tension and uncertainty. On the other side of this is my inability to comprehend how a young person could be excluded from the rest of society in such a way. In every aspect of their lives whether it be education, where they live, or who they marry is pre-determined, which appears from the outside to be limiting a young person's opportunities.

She reflected on the contrast between the two groups of people she had met in

Central Jerusalem, and this group of ultra-orthodox teenage girls, noticing how

encountering such different perspectives started helping her understand the impact of

individual circumstances. She quickly realized that this diversity "already shows how

difficult it may be for me to come up with a united conclusion or understanding at the end

of this project," and demonstrating comfort with ambiguity and the lack of universal

Truth that everyone shares.

Although she explained that she realized that she and that her perspective were

changing through "multiple moments, every time I spoke to someone," she also perceived

this particular interaction with the teenagers was something of a turning point among

many others, as it made her realize that

> there are so many people in the world that I didn't even realize that they lived in this particular way or to that extent they were telling me. And I just felt a bit ignorant. I think that was probably one of the moments that I realized it was changing and where I sort of looked back and felt a bit uncomfortable about what I knew beforehand.

Hailey mentioned her struggle to understand and repeat Hebrew terms used by the Haredi community, and her reaction to her difficulty not only to repeat those terms, but also to the teenage girls' reactions to being exposed to their culture. Hailey emphasized that she felt like she lacked a lot of knowledge" and how she "felt very ignorant" when meeting these girls, which made her "uncomfortable" during their conversation.

> I felt like I lacked a lot of knowledge of the people. I felt a bit uncomfortable with how closed my views were to begin with, not necessarily in relation to one particular thing but I mean in general what I knew before hand or what I experienced beforehand was like completely different. I felt like I had closed myself up to a lot before I got to experience the people in Israel.

Finally, Hailey concluded her reflection with an emphasis on how being in Israel was giving her access to knowledge that she could not attain in Australia: "it was surprising to learn so many things from these girls that I probably wouldn't have learnt otherwise."

*Noticing and Adapting to Cultural Differences*

Hailey's interactions made her realize that "people in Israel loved eye contact," leading her to changing and adapting her own behavior by making "more eye contact, being more direct." Noticing the directness of people in Israel, she commented that she appreciated the fact that Israelis were "more than happy answering" her questions which she noticed is very different from the culture in which she evolves in Australia and led her to adapting her "body language and what it was that I asked them about." However, she emphasized that she always adapts her behavior and clothing to situations, dressing

modestly in certain areas of the world of certain neighborhoods, not only by respect for

the people, but also because she "would feel uncomfortable otherwise."

*Reading about Diverse Immigration Waves in Israel*

Hailey was often surprised through the readings, her assumptions frequently being

swept away as she was exposed to various texts presenting sometimes contradictory

narratives, which allowed her to develop her knowledge about Israel.

> One statistic we were given that I was surprised about was
> that by 2001, the total number of labour migrants was
> 240,000 and 60% of those were working without permits.
> This surprised me as with the overwhelming amount of
> immigrants in the state, I thought the government would
> have been looking closely at those entering in the country
> on work permits.

She also acknowledged that reading about certain aspects of Israeli identity made her

realize she had not thought of them in her previous understanding of issues:

> The role of national identity however, wasn't something
> that I had considered previously. Now reflecting on it, it
> does seem clear why a strong sense of national identity
> would affect the minorities of the region.

*Observation and Conversations in Tel Aviv*

For Hailey, Tel Aviv presented a "more diverse crowd," as she had been able to

visit the city before formally starting her courses, and she believed that it would offer the

"opportunity to interview people from different backgrounds." She was indeed already

aware that Tel Aviv was significantly different from Jerusalem, having not only noticed

differences but also acted differently herself, adapting her behavior to each environment:

> I think you felt a different way and you behaved a different way and the way you interacted with people was probably different and the way you dressed [as well].

In this more modern coastal city, Hailey conducted interviews with Katherine, another classmate, whom she perceived influenced her change of perspective in an "indirect way" by pushing her to interview people she would not necessarily have talked with had she been alone. A significant encounter for her was when they talked with two street musicians, from Hong Kong and the Philippines. One of them had parents from Hong Kong and he was about to start his military service with the IDF, which would give him the opportunity to be granted citizenship and residency for his parents. The other was about to start his final year of high school. She explained:

> These boys were completely different from the previous youth I had interviewed in Israel, and the entire environment of Tel Aviv differed from the traditional Jewish population of Jerusalem.

While this allowed her to learn more about the IDF and the conscription, triggering new questions, this interaction led her to expand on her research topic. Most of the new understanding of the complexity not only of opinions and experiences, but also of the Israeli educational system, emerged from this interaction which complicated everything for Hailey. Indeed, she explained that it allowed her to interact with people and reinforce her understanding of her topic by talking with groups of people that she "previously wouldn't even have considered." The two boys attended a type of public high school that Hailey had only read about as part of the course, but never met someone attending one. The two of them emphasized the "inclusive environment of the school and highlighted the diversity within it," mentioning that their friends were from diverse backgrounds and religions, not only Jewish or from migrant worker families. Hailey reflected that the

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environment in which the boys were studying, with ethnic, religious, and national diversity, "appeared to be a step forward in accepting diversity, and perhaps eventually coexistence." For her, observing, writing and then talking about her experiences with her classmates were times for reflecting which bounced back to each other, but she perceived that writing alone allowed her to think about how the environment of the interviews and of the upbringing of the people influenced their responses and perspectives.

Further, she noticed that this set of interactions in Tel Aviv led her to being "a bit more confident in approaching people knowing that I wasn't going to get yelled at," making her "more eager" to speak with "the most diverse groups of people that I possibly could" as she started seeing the possibilities this offered for the development of her understanding of her research topic:

> I just wanted to speak to sort of everyone and I think that
> definitely compelled me to keep talking to people so that I
> had a bit more of a well-rounded perspective. A bit more
> of an unbiased group of people that I'd spoken to for my
> research.

She perceived that her eagerness to talk with as many people as possible resulted from her assignment which started as a simple class project but turned into being perceived as transcending the class and grade and turning into a personal topic. However, she insisted that her assignment, paired with seeing her personal growth, "went hand-in-hand:" the assignment pushing her first, and then being itself pushed by her personal growth.

*Meeting three Israeli students who had served in IDF*

Upon her return to Jerusalem a few days later, Hailey decided to interview students on campus so as to get more perspectives regarding the factors contributing to the

development of ideology and acceptance of coexistence. She interviewed three students who had completed their military service and were, as a result of their years of service, attending college at a slightly older age than Hailey thought they would be. This set of interactions brought a new set of perspectives that Hailey had not imagined until then: "they mentioned the IDF could act as an institution to open the minds of soldiers, and give them ability to think in different ways." This was unexpected for Hailey as she had considered, until then and because of her personal experience, that formal educational experiences were the primary ways one could see their ideology about coexistence change, because of her own experiences. She reported that the three students acknowledged developing "a different perspective on morals, peace, and what it means to be human" while completing their military service, because the IDF "provided them the opportunity to mature in a way they couldn't have within university." She also emphasized that the three students mentioned that being raised in a patriotic and nationalistic environment and then serving had led them to question whether there were "alternatives to violence to achieve peace." However, she also noted that attending university after the IDF had allowed them to make friends from "other cultures and ethnicities, which wouldn't have happened if they didn't return to study," confirming again the role of university that Hailey had previously held.

However, Hailey also got a new perspective from her conversation with an Israeli-Arab researcher, Yousuf, director of an Arab research center. He informed her about the differences between Israeli-Jews and Israeli-Arabs in relation to the role of the military service and university. He explained that Israeli-Jews, upon completing their service, end up studying a little later in life whereas Israeli-Arabs do not have to serve, attend

university after high school, but struggle with the "highest rates of unemployment or under-employment," even when they have "one of the highest rates of tertiary education in Israel," as it is the case in Kfar Qara, an Arab town in the Wadi Ara area.

Hailey reflected on her set of conversations in her final research paper for our class, she emphasized that talking with diverse people in various areas at different stages in their lives gave her access to "multiple perspectives," allowing her to grow and change her expectations regarding youth in general, as we all have different experiences that can rarely lead to homogenous results. When reflecting, she identified that trajectories often vary based on belonging to a particular group in Israel, realizing that ultra-orthodox children, by not pursuing higher education for religious reasons, tend to stay away from changes in their ideology about coexistence, whereas children of migrant workers tend to be with a greater diversity in the public primary and secondary schools they attend. She explained that "having preconceived notions of the role of university in Israel is premature and differs significantly to what I have experienced in Australia." Hailey concluded her research paper questioning how distinct the role of the IDF is on influencing someone's ideologies compared with university, acknowledging that both are formative but probably have various results regarding their influence on coexistence.

*Retrospection on her change and the contributing factors leading to her change*

Hailey was enrolled in two courses. One was on immigration and identity in Israel, taught by Ehud, and the other was on Radical Islamic movements, taught by two young Israeli professors. She took both courses with Katherine. Her course on radical Islamic movements was taught very differently from the one on immigration and identity, because

it was a "classic tutorial situation with an exam," that imparted "purely an academic perspective" which did not allow her to meet Israelis and learn about "people's opinions." For Hailey, this course was "something that I would do here in Melbourne, being not in the area," whereas Ehud's course was "a lot more hands on." Indeed, she explained, when comparing the two courses, that she "felt as though she got to know Israel a lot more. And although there was an academic side to it, I think it was more of a learning experience than my previous class." Indeed, for her, it was "like engaging with emotion more so than the facts."

An important aspect of her study abroad sojourn was how almost all her experiences were framed by the course design, and therefore by our instructor Ehud, who created an environment for us to be "really engaged which was a bit different to her other class." She emphasized that the entire group of classmates and instructor was very "supportive," which led to her to being "engaged, eager to learn," but also feeling like we could

> freely express our own opinion without the judgement of someone else, especially when it's not from an academic perspective, you don't have someone constantly shutting down your ideas.

For Hailey, this supportive environment which valued curiosity, genuine questions, and interactions with Israelis was significantly different from her other course, where she perceived that her other classmates were "not as interested in attempting to engage with Israelis." Ehud's pedagogy and way of seeing the world and cultures did not set specific answers, making Hailey feel at ease with ambiguity, ever changing and incomplete answers, and the absence of specific factual answers, and therefore the awareness that she cannot know everything.

She perceived the hermeneutical dimension of the course to be helpful as she had

to reflect on her experiences orally and in writing while also hearing about others'

experiences and reflections, which in return influenced her own perspective on what she

had just lived:

> I think that written assessment time where I came to reflect
> and re-write my own observations because it's one thing
> having a conversation with someone but then actually
> coming back and analyzing that conversation, wondering
> why it occurred that way and also doing research and reading
> on it and seeing that other people have had this shared
> experience.

Indeed, she emphasized that talking about her experiences with her family, but also with

our classmates who were going through similar emotions was useful and helped her

understand her own positioning and growth and process what she was learning.

> I think through talking with them I sort of understood how
> I was, how I was feeling and how I would you know deal
> with this completely different environment to what I was
> used to and I think that would just… you know if they
> didn't say anything or do anything that necessarily but
> being able to talk to them about it would have helped. And
> knowing especially with my classmates, knowing that they
> too were experiencing the same thing was comforting.

Hailey explained that she developed "more an understanding than a changed attitude,"

gaining in particular in clarity. She highlighted on multiple occasions, both in her written

reflections and in her interview, how she progressively became aware of her "lack of

knowledge" and understanding prior to studying in Israel:

> I think I didn't really understand as much as I thought I did
> about the people there and how they lived. I went in there
> with a pretty open mind, so I think my attitude didn't
> necessarily change but I think I just saw a bit of a clearer
> picture than I did when I first arrived.

She perceived that studying in Jerusalem helped her gain awareness of the complexity of the situation and debunk some stereotypes not necessarily about Israelis but about the Arab-Israeli tensions, realizing that unlike what she used to think, there is no "easy solution to fix every tension in Israel."

> when you're looking at a current academic perspective, you think you could do this, and then going and seeing the reality of it is just so much more complex than you first thought so I think it definitely debunked that.

This realization made her feel helpless and uncomfortable, furthering her awareness of her own ignorance:

> not being able to do anything, again, it made me feel a bit uncomfortable I think and helpless, not that they need my help, I mean I know that and I know that a 21 year old girl from Melbourne isn't going to do anything, but just knowing that the reality is so much more complex than you first thought made me feel a bit uncomfortable, a bit overwhelmed, and a bit helpless, and I've no idea why. I knew that I couldn't do anything, but knowing that you know the solution or whatever it is isn't… and that there is so much that I hadn't considered previously again made me feel a bit ignorant I guess to some extent.

Hailey explained that most of her reflection came after she had returned to Australia, as she had felt "overwhelmed" and with "information overload" during her study abroad sojourn, but "when I came back there was so much that I had studied beforehand that when put into perspective and in reality was completely different." However, she acknowledged that her perspective on her understanding of the "social and political situation changed." She attributed this to not only going to Israel, but also "speaking to a diverse range of people," because "if you were there only speaking to one kind of person, you're going to get one kind of picture." In addition, she explained that

listening about our classmates' experiences and conversations in class expanded her

overall understanding. She emphasized that studying in Jerusalem and taking a course

focused on "inquiry" and "personal growth" was a "unique experience" allowing her to

understand the complexity and nuances of the place and of its peoples:

> when you look at something without experiencing it, like
> from an academic perspective let's say, it's really easy to
> assume an answer. Whereas when you get there in person,
> I think you understand the complexity of a place and it
> becomes a lot more difficult than anyone first thought.

Hailey reaffirmed this idea in our follow-up interview nearly two months after her first

interview:

> I believe these experiences helped me to greater understand
> the complexity of Israel in a way I couldn't have otherwise.
> Getting to understand the opinions and beliefs of people
> living in Israel were invaluable and significantly
> contributed to my understanding of the complex social and
> political situation in Israel.

Prior to going to Jerusalem, Hailey thought that she did not have an opinion, but

quickly realized she had one, and that it changed throughout her interactions with people.

In this process she developed a deeper understanding of concepts she had never spared a

thought on, what 'melting pot' and 'multiculturalism' mean. Indeed, learning about how

Israeli society is dealing with its diverse communities helped her realize that she had only

been exposed to an official form of multiculturalism. She explained that a turning point

in her understanding of coexistence happened during class as we were asked to reflect on

our own countries and experiences of multiculturalism. This helped her, by developing

knowledge about the Israeli context, to analyze her own context more deeply. For

example, she acknowledged that the academic bias she had been exposed to in college,

which mainly criticized Israel and rarely reflects on its bias, did not necessarily match her

own experience of Israelis, because the situation is more complex at the individual level.

This realization made her more cautious and more intentional in her analysis of the news,

making her "more curious about the media she sees and the news that she read about those

areas." This intentionality was furthered by the media coverage of the events of Haram

Al-Sharif/Temple Mount. This made her

> more open minded and aware of the information that I'm
> being given and where that information might come from
> and the kind of person presenting that information where
> they might have formed these opinions, so I think instead
> of just being a bit of a bystander and absorbing all the
> information I think making a conscious effort to analyze
> your given information and sort of acknowledge where it
> came from and why it might be given to you.

She realized that she needed to confront news sources in order to avoid feeling ignorant

again:

> not just one side of every story which is sort of what I felt
> before going to Israel and then when I got there and
> realized that there was so much that I hadn't even been
> subjected to, I feel like I need to be a bit more conscious of
> different media sources and I'm a bit more curious about
> what both… not both, but every side of the story is and try,
> even though I'm not there, try and understand what's going
> on because I just don't want to feel like I did when I got
> there and realized how much I didn't know… so I think
> trying to be on top of that so I don't feel that way again.
> There's just so much that you don't even hear about that I
> still think contributes to the complexity of the area

She explained, however, that although her "everyday behavior" has not changed, she feels

> more able to analyze the things that people say or the
> situations that I'm in and why they're happening. Just
> being able to sort of like critically look at something, and
> understand why it's happening and yeah probably just that

sort of… that has probably changed it more and probably more critically aware than I was before. Not necessarily in my everyday behavior or the way I act toward my family.

She explained that she constantly adapts her behavior to the situation, not just while traveling, but also in her own country, and she expressed that she has not particularly changed her circle of friends, because she does not feel like she has time to develop new friendships because of her busy schedule. However, she has noticed that she tends to be more active at intercultural events in Melbourne, including conferences where she perceives that she listens more to what people who hold different beliefs from hers have to say, leading her to exemplifying her change in an "academic sense." She perceives that her personal relationships have not changed, but that her "educational perspective" and current employment have undergone some changes. She believes that she has changed as a student in her approach of texts and discourses, and in her confidence to interact with people who are different from her, to listen to their opinions. She believes that her experiences in Israel

> have helped me to critically engage with given material that I might not have otherwise. It has also helped me to recognise the biases in Australian media and academic literature.

However, she perceives that her experience is difficult to communicate with people who did not live it with her.

> I don't think they understand completely and I don't think they possibly could without being there and experiencing themselves, they would only understand what I've told them I guess. And I mean, it's not necessarily their interest or their passion or anything like it is mine, so, what they think or what I've told them I guess is different to my actual experience.

She explained nearly six months after her return to Australia that she perceives her experience in Jerusalem to have had a very positive influence on her because

> I felt like I finally had a bit more of an understanding than I did before. I felt a bit more open minded and open to what Israelis had to say and their experiences, yeah it just felt like I actually would get more not historically or anything but I felt like I knew the way that the social situation worked, what it was like to be there and what the people were like.

However, she emphasized that her change is not an "obvious result" but more a "personal" change. For example, although she would have approached people from different cultures and backgrounds even before studying abroad, she feels that she is

> now more confident in interacting with people who have different beliefs or opinions to mine and can still engage with those people, respecting, you know, their opinion and their beliefs and their background.

*Analysis of Hailey's Experience*

**1. What were the participants' experiences in a short-term study abroad program in Israel?**

In her responses to the survey, Hailey indicated having experienced some elements of transformation. She acknowledged having an experience that caused her to question the way she normally acts and to question her ideas about social roles, realizing that she had changed her beliefs and felt uncomfortable. During her in-depth interview and follow-up interviews and emails, Hailey acknowledged that she had also adapted her behavior based on her interactions with people, and she indicated having changed more than what she had selected in the survey. This might be due to the impact of the

conversation, being perhaps more introspective that the survey which she did not spend much time on as it did not ask for specific stories. It seems that by digging into her experiences and exemplifying her statements, she discovered or rediscovered the extent of her change during our interview. She confirmed this point when I sent her the narrative analysis.

Thinking about your educational experiences abroad, *check off any statements that may apply:*

| | |
|---|---|
| I had an experience that caused me to question the way I normally act. | x |
| I had an experience that caused me to question my ideas about social roles. (i.e. what a student or teacher should do.) | x |
| As I questioned my ideas, I realized I no longer agreed with my beliefs or role expectations | x |
| Or instead, as I questioned my ideas, I realized I still agreed with my beliefs and role expectations. | |
| I realized that other people also questioned their beliefs. | x |
| I thought about acting in a different way from my usual beliefs and roles. | |
| I felt uncomfortable with traditional social expectations. | x |
| I tried out new roles so that I would become more comfortable or confident in them. | |
| I tried to figure out a way to adopt these new ways of acting. | |
| I gathered the information I needed in order to adopt these new ways of acting. | |
| I began to think about the reactions and feedback from my new behavior. | |
| I took action and adopted these new ways of acting. | |
| I do not identify with any of the statements above. | |

*Figure 20: Hailey's responses to the Learning Activities Survey*

Hailey emphasized that talking with different people as part of the course provided experiences she could not have had had she not taken Ehud's course, even if she had simply studied abroad in Israel and taken her other course on Radical Islamic Movements, because talking with local people was out of her comfort zone, and because Ehud's course provided a unique experience. Indeed, it seems that the course and our instructor acted like a cultural mentor, by meeting nearly five times a week, organizing numerous hours of observation and conversations outside of class as well as field trips

resulting in more thorough perspective on what we had learned. Hailey had, as a result, a multitude of experiences which she described as "overwhelming" and having reinforced each other and led to her transformation.

According to Hailey, her conversation with the ultra-orthodox teenage girls in the Old City as well as talking with the street musicians in Tel Aviv and with the college students having finished their military service, were the most significant experiences in having triggered her change. It seems that her interview of the teenage girls was a turning point in her change as her discomfort led her to feel shame for her lack of knowledge not only about their religion, but also about Israel in general. While she had already felt similarly during her first set of conversations and decided to prepare for her second round of interviews in the Old City, it seems that talking with these young girls made Hailey grasp a higher level of her own ignorance, leading her to realize not only her own biases and that she had been exposed to primarily one narrative via her studies, an academic bias seeing Palestinians as victims rather than trying to comprehend the existence of all narratives. Gaining knowledge and understanding of her own positionality made Hailey increasingly curious about the Israeli context, helped her formulate new questions, and and imparted to her a desire to interact with more diverse people in order to get a more complex and nuanced picture of her research topic on the views of Israeli youth on coexistence. It seems that in her case, the inquiry-based learning project acted as an umbrella, forcing Hailey to overcome her discomfort, to get out of her comfort zone by talking with people she would not have talked with had she not taken Ehud's course, and then to spark curiosity for the assignment which then became genuine desire to

understand more and to not feel ignorant anymore. Furthermore, it seems that this process led her to being increasingly critical of her own culture and environment.

Another turning point was in class when she realized the difference between multiculturalism and melting pot, and became aware that she had mainly been exposed to multiculturalism as a failed attempt of the Australian governments to create a melting pot of all populations and new arriving communities--compared with Israel which, by integrating its Jewish immigrants into a greater Jewish culture and by encouraging and supportive the learning of Hebrew as a means to integrate, allowed for the creation of a larger Jewish definition. However, she also noticed that this applied mainly to international Jewish communities settling in Israel, but not to Arabs, who remained in their own Arabic-speaking communities, studied in their own schools, and stayed in their Arab towns and neighborhoods.

However, she also emphasized that Ehud's course design and his pedagogy created an environment propitious to change. She felt like Ehud created an environment encouraging students to ask questions and to feel at ease with the absence of Truth. She perceives that this, in return, favored positive and supportive interactions between all classmates, not only by allowing us to express our opinions, understanding, and emotions in class, but also to push each other to surpass ourselves and overcome our own discomfort by seeing that everyone was going through similar journeys. She believes that the assignments of observations and talking to people were the most significant aspects leading to her change, but that written reflections, sharing our reflections in class and then reflecting more on our experiences through our final papers allowed her to constantly reflect. Interestingly, Hailey remained primarily "factual" in her written reflections for

the course, compared with other students such as Alex and Katherine who used their written assignments not only to report on the interactions and observations but also to report on their emotions and feelings, and who took advantage of the reflection to let their thoughts wander away, as reflecting on their interactions triggered more questions. In addition, sharing her emotions and experiences with her family also helped her become aware of how her sojourn was impacting her.

Hailey emphasized that there were clear differences between her two courses. Ehud's course was more of a learning experience leading to exploration of emotions rather than facts, whereas her other course had no place for anything else than a purely academic presentation of facts, preventing students from interacting with Israelis as part of their course, but also perhaps preventing them from developing the desire to engage with local populations.

## 2. In what ways, if any, do study abroad participants perceive that they changed?

Hailey did not expect much change beyond developing some knowledge about the country, but even during her stay in Israel, she perceived that she did change, and that her change was positive. She believes that she became aware of her change while interacting with ultra-orthodox girls, especially the group in the Old City, realizing that their only friends were Jewish and that their cultural and religious environment sheltered them in a way preventing them from interacting with outgroup members. It seems that by acquiring knowledge about Haredi communities, she adapted her behavior to the cultural differences she was becoming aware of in order to be more conservative in the questions she asked them. She perceives that by developing knowledge and understanding about

Israel which bounced back to helping her understand her own experience in Australia, she became more openminded to other perspectives and types of experiences, such as the role of one's upbringing but also the disruptive role of the IDF on Israeli youths' ideology of coexistence compared with the influence of university.

She perceives that interacting with different people and progressively gaining clarity and understanding of her research topic via the conversations with Israelis helped her develop not only awareness of cultural differences, but also appreciation and respect for such differences. Although she claimed that not having preconceived ideas about Israelis prior to studying abroad, she seems to have changed opinions regarding certain aspects of cultural dimensions, such as the conscription of the IDF, or even the ways in which ultra-orthodox communities support their youth. Further, she also developed understanding and a new opinion regarding the Arab-Israeli conflict by becoming aware of her exposure to academic biases, and feeling that it wasn't her place to judge. This awareness led her to practicing new behaviors once back in Australia regarding her approach of the media. She perceives that she is more intentional with the media and with her professors and the books she reads for her class--not only about Israel, as she makes efforts to confront sources and not be a bystander. This seems to be an expression of her desire to educate herself by being more critically culturally aware of the positionality of herself and others.

She articulated that the refinement of her research topic allowed her to be more focused in her conversations and questions to Israelis, perhaps more attentive in a way, which seems to have allowed her to develop more pleasure in talking with people while in Israel. Indeed, it seems that preparing more for her interviews and understanding more

the complexity of her topic led her to feel increasingly confident when talking with people; this confidence pushed her to interview more people and to allow her to enjoy the diverse opinions she was having access to. This enjoyment might have made her want to genuinely listen to her interlocutors, not just for her research topic, but for her own personal growth, as if she had a sort of epiphany realizing that she was now learning for herself. This might explain her reported increased comfort with not knowing and asking questions not only when talking with Israelis, but also in class in Israel and since her return to Melbourne. This change of attitude towards Israelis and then towards learning seems to have influenced her way of studying, now that she is in her MA program.

It seems that most of Hailey's reflection happened after she returned to Australia, and she has noticed that her change transcends the Israeli context as she believes that it has been affecting her in the academic sense although her studies do not focus on Israel nor Arab-Israeli tensions. Further, she also feels that while her change in attitudes was very present in Israel, it is indirectly influencing her in Australia in the way she interacts with people from other cultures both at work and at conferences for example, making her feel more confident when interacting with them, and more willing to listen and withhold judgement before talking with them, making conscious efforts to always remain critically culturally aware of her own biases, positionality, and system of references.

*Figure 21: Participants and instructor observing divisions of territory between Israel and Palestine. Photo courtesy: Katherine and Sarah.*

## *Sarah's Experience*

"At this point in my life in my academic career, I've kind of learned that my expectations will often be wrong. I often get the feeling that your perception of a place before you go there is going to be different than when you actually get there. At this point in my life that's not the first time that I've had that experience, but I guess particularly with Zionism, I didn't UNDERSTAND the nuances, I didn't understand all the various aspects to it first of all."

Sarah was raised in a small community in Minnesota. At the time of her study abroad experience in Israel, she had just completed her junior year in a college in Washington D.C., majoring in international affairs with a focus on East African studies, and minoring in Arabic. During the interview, Sarah had just started her final semester of undergraduate. Prior to studying in Jerusalem, she had had several international experiences. She attended a Catholic private high school, with which she participated in a study abroad in Rwanda as a junior. "It was a very big deal for me" and she believes that this short program triggered a greater interest in East African cultures and human rights. The year prior to studying in Jerusalem, she interned in Uganda over the summer. She also has traveled to several countries growing up, recently going to Canada and Mexico and visiting Ireland and Scotland as a child.

She decided to study in Jerusalem because it was not a typical destination, and she "wasn't very attracted to the traditional ideas of study abroad." Most of her classmates in her university had studied in European universities, but Sarah "didn't want to go to somewhere that like everybody was going to." Although her major did not revolve around the Middle East, she chose Jerusalem because she would be "exploring new topics, learning new things, going to new places. I don't know it was just a lot about adventurousness."

Sarah expected limited change from her study abroad in Jerusalem. She thought she would learn about history in a factual way and because her parents were coming to join her for a few days, she could display her knowledge by showing them places around the city and "tell them a little bit about what I had learned." In preparation for her study abroad in Jerusalem over the summer, she had enrolled in a course on the founding of Israel. She felt that, prior to starting her study abroad program, she had some basic knowledge about the different wars involving Israel and her course had informed her about the rise of Zionism before the creation of Israel. However, she perceived that she "didn't know that much," about Israel since 1948 nor about specific cultural aspects such as communication or the diverse communities living in Israel.

Sarah took two courses while in Jerusalem: one taught by Ehud on immigration and identities in Israel, and the other taught by Gershom on city planning, and both were selected as part of a program on interfaith studies.

*Initial Reflection*

Before formally starting her study abroad program in Jerusalem, Sarah had limited knowledge of Israel and its diverse types of immigration. In her initial reflection in which she needed to think about her knowledge of immigration in Israel and her own country, she compared Israel with the U.S., with which she is familiar as she has interned with Homeland Security and has a particular interest in asylum seekers:

> While my impressions of Israel before going on the study abroad program are that most immigration to Israel is on the basis of religious reasons, this is a vastly different model than my home country's approach.

She mentioned that she "had sufficient knowledge on the refugee and asylum seeker process in the United States from past experiences." She also had prior knowledge of the Falasha community in Israel from her studies and she was familiar with the existence of large communities of Eritrean and Sudanese refugees in Israel.

*Observation and Conversations in Central Jerusalem: noticing cultural similarities and differences*

Sarah found this first observation assignment to be very interesting as it helped her debunk some of her ideas about Israel and Israelis. She talked with three men in the neighborhood, learning about their families and ties to Israel. She first met Eli, whose parents were originally from Iran and had made *Aliyah* because they were Zionists. She also talked with Yossi, whose family had been in Israel for seven generations, and whose mother's family had emigrated from Iraq to Israel in 1949, and with Eliyahu, whose grandparents had come from Morocco 50 years ago. She noticed through these interactions that "family history seemed very important to them." She emphasized that she was "surprised by how easy people were to talk to," and "surprised about how open people were with their opinions," and how people seemed to have "a fair amount of knowledge about their families and where they were from." While she noticed cultural differences with her own culture where people do not usually approach strangers, she also realized how similar Central Jerusalem is to her country, "like a very typical shopping center in any city." She concluded her first report with her plan to ask specific questions about recent immigration to Israel next time, already having an idea about her research topic on Israelis' "positive or negative attitudes to current waves of immigration."

During this first set of conversations, she felt like she started gaining knowledge about the population and diversity of origins of Israelis, already noticing how more complex things were compared with her expectations.

*Experiencing Directness and Adapting her Behavior*

Quickly after this assignment in Central Jerusalem, Sarah and Alex met with Rona, their program director, who had selected their courses for them and organized a few additional field trips focusing on interfaith dialogue. During their first encounter, they met at a restaurant and Sarah observed a "shocking" interaction between Rona and a waiter. Quickly after Rona had just welcomed her students, she told the waiter how cold she was, to which the waiter replied that they could move if they wanted, and Sarah felt like the interaction "evolved into this little confrontation." This event made Sarah realize how different communication was from her culture in the US, noticing how direct Israelis were compared with the Midwestern culture of descendants of Norwegians in Minnesota. She was particularly "surprised by a lot of the directness of the culture," because she "didn't realize that that was such an aspect to it" before experiencing it in Jerusalem. This started making her realize the value of being in a place to study its culture. She noted:

> you just have to ask for things if you want them and that kind of thing. They don't usually think that this might be something that you want or they wouldn't ask you 'hey, is it really cold over here, do you want to move?' you'd have to address that.

When she called her parents, this was a story she told them, warning them before their arrival that in Israel, "you have to speak up or you will never be heard." She experienced directness in almost all of her interactions with Israelis, adapting her behavior in

restaurants, when taking a taxi, or when haggling, but never enjoyed the directness and the arguing culture. Although she "gets it" and practiced it herself, being "vocal" to "get by," she felt like "it wasn't too bad, I mean it was livable," but she grew increasingly "very tired of it the longer she was there":

> I never really liked it that much so it always felt like I was doing this so that I could do things, so I could go about my day so it always felt like I was never being direct with people because I wanted to do it or because I liked it and I was really embracing this new culture, it was always just kind of a chore and so I was just kind 'I have to do this' but by the end of it I was getting pretty tired of that.

*Reading about Zionism and the Arab minority: hermeneutical reflection of her first conversations*

Sarah noticed the differences between the Zionist and Palestinian narratives, and reflected on the readings, arguing:

> I see the critique that Masalha makes that Zionism is linked with colonialism because there is only consideration for ruling powers to divide out land with so little consideration for local populations.

Her reflection on the readings emphasized her "surprise" when learning about differences in treatment and services between West and East Jerusalem, realizing that her development in knowledge was gradually leading to a more comprehensive understanding of the complexity of the current situation in relation to the discrepancy in access to public services between Arab citizens of Israel (living anywhere in Israel) and Arab residents of Israel (East Jerusalemites). She explained that was already beginning to understand how the separation of educational systems based on languages in Israel could "perpetuate the conflict," and concluded that she was starting to see the complexity

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regarding the Arab-Israeli tensions because "there's no easy answer" as the groups have conflicting narratives.

The readings also provided insights on the conversations she had just had with people in the Old City. This made her quickly realize that although she thought she had come in feeling like she "did not have a personal bias," there was "a lot more dissent in the country than I realized, and also there's a lot of varying degrees." Sarah explained that she often is open about getting her opinions changed:

> At this point in my life in my academic career, I've kind of learned that my expectations will often be wrong. I often get the feeling that your perception of a place before you go there is going to be different than when you actually get there. At this point in my life that's not the first time that I've had that experience, but I guess particularly with Zionism, I didn't UNDERSTAND the nuances, I didn't understand all the various aspects to it first of all.

Although she felt like the readings did not significantly participate in her change, she realized, by confronting the readings to her conversations with Israelis that not all Israelis are Zionists nor support the current government. Reflecting further, she became aware of the academic biases she had been exposed to on her campus, which "always sees Israel as the aggressor." She felt that

> a lot of people use that word without realizing what it means in the first place but without realizing that there are levels to Zionism, without realizing that you can be an Israeli person and not be a Zionist.

This collective attribution of the "Zionist" stigma to all Israelis, she felt, denies that "people are more complex." She explained for example that professors and students tend to be liberal and pro-Palestinian, and U.S. campuses tend to be "very dismissive of all the

Jewish people that live in Israel," denying individual agency and opinions on the basis that "if you live there at all, you have to support all of the actions that the Israeli government is doing." She felt like she quickly changed her beliefs about Israel, but that not a particular and specific event acted like a turning point. Rather, it was "an accumulation of a lot of different things."



*Figure 22: East Jerusalem, from the French Hill. Photo courtesy: Sarah.*

*Observation and conversations in the Old City*

In the Jewish Quarter of the Old City, Sarah noticed more cultural differences and started paying attention to different aspects of the culture compared with her first observation, noticing the languages of street signs were in both Hebrew and Arabic and how signs on stores were only in Hebrew or English. She also started feeling more

observant with her new knowledge about communities, feeling like she "could more easily recognize Jewish Orthodox people than on our first day of observation because I now knew more about what to look for."

She talked with two women who were originally from France but had made Aliyah two decades earlier. The interaction was punctuated by them being untrusting of Sarah's intentions for talking with them. Sarah noticed that people in this area of Jerusalem were generally more difficult to approach, and less loquacious compared with Central Jerusalem, where people actually approached her:

> I just noticed that generally I had a harder time getting people to talk to me here because I approached a lot of people who were not interested in being interviewed at all really.

Sarah started asking specific questions about people's perspectives on Falashas (Ethiopian Jews) and on Sudanese and Eritrean refugees, already exploring aspects related to her final research project.

Sarah then talked with a woman who "was much more open" with her as "She gave me some really good ideas about possible things to study later." As the woman demonstrated empathy towards Falasha communities because their hardships reminded her of her own parents coming from Libya in 1948, Sarah felt like her empathy was directed towards them because they were Jews. However, her perspective on African refugees was very different, almost hostile. Sarah concluded from this interaction that some Israelis tend to place different immigrants in a hierarchy:

> She told me that while her first instinct personally is to empathize with [Sudanese and Eritrean refugees], she felt that, politically, Israel is a fragile country and cannot take on very many refugees. She stressed there was a big difference

between the refugees and Aliyah. She stressed that while she didn't want to generalize she sees a lot of crime and violence within that community and young Israeli girls are afraid to be in their neighborhoods.

Sarah was wandering in the Jewish Quarter, looking for potential people to talk with, when a man approached her

> in a way that just made her feel very unsafe and at a certain point, putting his hands on her shoulders and trying to get her to go with him somewhere.

She felt "very disoriented by that." She explained this unwanted interaction, on which she reflected both with our classmates and our professor, trying to analyze what had happened, trying to justify it by her lack of directness coupled with the perceived possible ill intentions of the man:

> I just don't like to be touched by men in general. I don't feel like that's an unusual complaint. I don't know how to deal with that, and it was probably me not being direct. I don't mean to completely blame myself, we never know what his motives were. I also felt I couldn't be direct and rude about it and say 'no I don't want.' I was still trying to be nice and if I'm assuming the best in him maybe he just didn't understand that I actually really you know. I don't know what his intentions were either, but I thought about that, too I was like, 'maybe he's just a nice guy who didn't understand.' But on the other hand, I think that I was fairly like, 'no thank you.'

*Readings on Recent Immigration Waves in Israel*

Sarah noted in her reflection on the readings that "the recent waves of immigration in the last 30 years have made the diversity of the country much more complex than it already was." Among the readings, she found that the "most interesting to her was the articles on the Ethiopian Jewish immigrants," confirming her interest in issues related to African studies and immigration which carried over from her major in

the U.S. Sarah reflected on her readings, paraphrasing and yet interjecting some of her take on the readings and getting confused, mixing up "Jewish" and "Hebrew" as the quote below exemplifies:

> The story of the Ethiopian Jewish immigrants illustrates both these sides of the spectrum. When they first arrived they were encouraged to assimilate to majority culture even to the extreme of having their names changed to Jewish ones and separating children from parents to further the children's assimilation.

She learned from the readings and from an in-class video about Eritrean and Sudanese asylum seekers that their situation and status in Israel diverges greatly from how the US deals with refugee populations, noting that "while she was aware there was a refugee population in Israel she was not aware of their 'limbo' status in the country."

Sarah concluded her reflection on the readings emphasizing the complexity and nuances that not only did she not know much about, but that are rarely taken into account when people think about Israel:

> Overall, the readings show that understanding diversity in Israel is much more complex than just embracing Jews and Arabs. Recent waves of immigration of people who do not fit the mold of traditionally Jewish physical features or do not identify with the Jewish religion have called into question that simple narrative.

*Observation and conversations in Tel Aviv*

Sarah reported having noticed great differences between Tel Aviv and Jerusalem, not only in terms of racial diversity, but also in terms of how people dress, noting that Tel Aviv seems to be "a much more Western place." She had difficulty finding people willing to talk with her, she "found it harder to talk to people in Tel Aviv than in

Jerusalem," and encountered three people who simply did not want to speak with her, furthering the differences between Tel Aviv and Jerusalem, even in a "western" and modern neighborhood. Sarah encountered Lina, whose parents had immigrated to Israel from Russia before she was born, and who emphasized how similar she felt Ethiopian Jews were to her, compared with Sudanese and Eritrean refugees who were "dangerous and violent," recommending Sarah to be "careful" with them. She then referred Sarah to the shopkeeper next door, who is Ethiopian Jew, but who "didn't want to talk about the subject of his own immigration and Israel." Because she felt like she was disturbing shopkeepers while they were busy, Sarah decided to move to a park in order to interview people about African immigration.

In the park, Sarah encountered Esther and Miriam, who told her that Ethiopians do face racism, having a different discourse than Lina on the hardships of Ethiopian Jews. One of them insisted that Ethiopian Jews tend to complain about racism and not having the same opportunities as other Israelis, emphasizing that every arriving communities face difficulties which are alleviated with the following generation. However, the women acknowledged not knowing much about Eritrean and Sudanese refugees.

Sarah then talked with a young girl from Colombia, whose father was working in Israel for a short time, and whom did not know much about Israelis of Ethiopian origin.

Sarah tried to talk with an Ethiopian woman who had been living in Israel for over 20 years, but "she didn't speak English very well so it was hard for the woman to communicate with her." However, when she asked the woman if she liked Israel, the woman replied by saying "a little," which attracted Sarah's attention. She noticed how

the language barrier was preventing communication, but also how Ethiopian Jews were

reluctant to talk about Israeli politics.

> She felt, after her experience in Tel Aviv, that

>> there were a lot of people who didn't know much about the
>> other groups there. The two women in the park I talked to
>> didn't know anything about the refugees and the young girl
>> I talked to also didn't know anything about the Ethiopian
>> Jews.

She felt like this set of interactions in Tel Aviv was particularly interesting, but she

attributed much of her growth and change to "interacting with a lot of different people

from different perspectives." She explained that had she not taken Ehud's course, she

would not have talked with people:

>> I think that was pretty outside of my comfort zone to like be
>> going up and asking people. I feel like if I wasn't pushed to
>> do it, I probably wouldn't do it. I'd have interactions with
>> people, but I feel like they'd be more if people came up to
>> me and started talking to me. I probably wouldn't have
>> approached people and asked them directly about this topic.

*Final Research Paper*

Sarah reflected on her preconceptions on her research topic prior to studying in

Jerusalem based on her previous experiences with immigration processes in the US.

While she feels that she learned much about her the actual integration (or lack thereof) of

Ethiopian Jews into Israeli society and about the situation of asylum seekers from Eritrea

and Sudan, she also learned about the variety of opinions and lack of agreement not only

in the literature, but also among "everyday people" about her topic. She felt, however,

that she was "engaged" and "interested" all throughout the research process, feeling

increasingly "curious" about the topic.

*Sarah's Growth and Change*

Sarah felt while in Israel that she constantly developed knowledge and did not have one specific time in which she realized that she knew more, but rather multiple instances, feeling constantly aware that her knowledge was growing and that she was gaining understanding of her topic and of Israeli society. She indeed felt that "everything that she would read" and "every time that we were doing something together as a class, I felt like I was learning something new."

*Returning to the U.S.*

Sarah felt like our course in Ehud's class focused on "personal growth," which she felt naturally leading to students having a "more personal," in a "non-traditional class format," than "formal" relationship with the professor. She felt like the course was "a lot more personal and relationship-driven and very personal growth-driven," which is why she perceives that she has "grown a lot as a person" and changed as much as she did.

In addition to gaining knowledge and developing understanding about Israel about its various communities and their diverse sense of identity and their opinion about African immigration, Sarah feels that she has changed her opinion of Israelis, seeing them more as individuals than as a collective all agreeing with the same degree of Zionism and with the current government. She also feels like she developed more understanding of communication in Israel, leading her to adapt her behavior when addressing Israelis.

She felt that for this reason, her other course with Gershom was "less memorable." Additionally, she perceived that what was possible in Ehud's class was prevent in Gershom's because of the large class size.

She perceived that the growth was made possible through a combination of different experiences, because she perceives that "our perspective in life is an accumulation of personal experiences." However, she believed that being abroad was the main contextual reason for her growth:

> being in a different environment and being in a place that you're actually learning about is so much different than learning about it from another from far away. It's also really important to have like professors and people and teachers who are actually like involved in what's going on, and not just from like a faraway distant thing. It gives you a totally different perspective than you could have when you're studying from afar in America.

Upon her return to the U.S., Sarah felt like it was a very positive change:

> it's definitely changed my perspective. All of those things I feel like are good for me and positive for me and I am always looking learn about new things and be challenged and so to feel like I had both of those things accomplished. It is a good feeling. And I feel good about it overall.

She reflected that she attributed much of her change at any level to the combination of our class assignments, and therefore to our instructor. She believed that Ehud had framed much of her experience in Israel with the design of his course and the inquiry project in particular which was built around all of the other assignments. She perceived that "giving us a lot of freedom about like what the topic we wanted to talk about was" helped with her growth:

the projects that Ehud gave us to go out and talk to everyday people doing their everyday routine, really was helpful to learn a lot more about people, the average every day person who's not maybe that involved or might not really have their lives revolving around the certain issue that we're interviewing them on, but they have opinions.

*Change as a Student*

Sarah perceived that the class dynamic and our instructor contributed to her changing as a student, affecting not only how she perceives relationships between instructor and students, but also how his teaching "fostered that you can ask a question if you don't know the answer," making her more comfortable not knowing and asking questions:

my expectations for like a teacher student relationship changed a lot with Ehud's class because I think he just encouraged us to ask a lot of questions that we didn't understand. I guess Ehud encouraged us a lot to feel like there doesn't have to be an answer. It was a very comfortable environment to be open about the fact that you might not know something about a subject but you're asking why. I think a lot of the times in college, we don't want to admit that we don't know something, so, you don't get that comfortable environment where you can ask a question, but I don't understand this a lot of the times. So, it was really nice that we had that environment where we can be open about how maybe we don't know something but that's okay.

She insisted that her "biggest take is just like being able to grow as a student" and on the lasting impacts of the questions she was asked and asked herself, "being able to grow in a class that I think encouraged me to ask a lot of the 'why' questions." Sarah perceived that her increase of knowledge led her to being able to formulate these questions and have made her not only a better student, but a better person:

> I feel like I could talk about it for a long time. I feel
> knowledgeable about it, I feel well educated, I feel like I've
> become a better student because of that and I feel like it's
> just made me into a better person who asks more of the why
> questions.

She felt that our instructor's personal attitude toward teaching also "encouraged us to explore the questions that have no easy answers," and that he insisted on making us "leave this course more confused than we came into it." She felt like Ehud's pedagogy was very unique compared with what she had experienced in the US and compared with the other course she took, because he was "issuing a challenge for us to grow outside of our comfort zone."

> letting students ask things, letting students figure things out
> for themselves and exploring questions, or a topic that
> might not be simple or easy, and might be complex.

Sarah perceives that she has been carrying this in the courses she has been taking in the U.S. since her return from Jerusalem, now feeling more "open about not knowing things, or not having to know everything," but also more "comfortable with being able to like ask about what I don't know":

> I think it's influenced my behavior a lot as a student.
> Definitely like asking more questions but also just asking
> questions that I guess you might be afraid to ask because
> you'd be worried that it looks like you don't know that much,
> but… they could still have validity even if you don't know.

Sarah felt that the freedom of choosing her research topic and talking with people and reflecting in multiple forms, especially in writing, "helped with the end goal of the class" by leading her to "figure out what I wanted to ask people in the future and that kind of thing or what direction my project was headed for." Although she could not directly associate a causal effect to written reflection to her change of values, she felt that

"they helped me a lot with like the final project in the end." Further, she also believed that talking about her experiences in class and with her roommates and family helped her digest what she was living, because she "processes things by talking to her friends and forms what her opinions are on things based on how she's retelling things." Indeed, she mentioned that she is "not a *journaler*," even though she also acknowledged that her written reflections for class helped her identify a research topic more easily.

Sarah also felt like our classmates in Jerusalem contributed to this environment, because "none of us were very harsh on each other" for not knowing something. She perceived that this was made possible by the small class-size, which led her to feeling more comfortable with her peers. She compared both classes:

> Gershom's class was a really big class, it probably had 20 students or so, but a smaller class size was definitely better. I mean I got to know the people in Ehud's class way better. I don't even know if I ever hung out with any of the other people outside of class. So, I feel like a smaller class size in all the classes would be good. In a larger class you got less out of it. I think that even if it was less than 10 in Gershom's class, I feel like we would have been a little bit closer and more interested but when it was that big, everyone kind of like had their own separate lives.

*Intercultural Interactions in the U.S.*

Since her return to the U.S., Sarah does not feel like she has changed in her interactions with people from different cultures. She pointed out that she grew up in Minnesota with friends whose first language was not necessarily English and that she has never had issues understanding people's English and being accustomed to variations in accents. She has not particularly changed her circle of friends, nor does she refer to her study abroad experience as having directly influenced this aspect of her life. She has not

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encountered Israelis or Palestinians since she got back, but now feels like she could have

long conversations about Israel because she feels more "educated about it." Having a lot

of classmates around who went to Israel on *Birthright*, Sarah feels "weird" about knowing

more about Israel than some Jewish students whose experiences revolved mostly around

Judaism and the Jewishness of the country, whereas hers allowed her to know address

many different aspects within immigration and identities, while keeping us aware that we

had only touched the surface of things:

> I don't just know about the Jewish side of Israel like I don't
> know about other things that are going on too, not even with
> just the African migration thing, but I learned a little bit too
> about the Arab Israeli conflict. So, it feels like I know more
> about different aspects of Israeli culture than maybe
> someone who just went on birthright for like 2 weeks.

She feels like she talks about her experience "all the time," either with her family,

or with Alex, with whom she was sharing a course when I interviewed her, and with

whom she intends to move in after the end of their semester.

However, she is increasingly critical of the way she sometimes is taught in courses

tackling non-US cultures, and more generally critical of discourses regarding "otherness."

She gave the example of a course she took the semester after our experience in Jerusalem,

explaining she was assigned a project on southeast Asia on sustainable development goal

and female empowerment. She felt that although the criteria for evaluating development

used to make sense to her, they do not anymore, and even seem "paternalistic." Giving

further examples such as female genital mutilation and women wearing hijab, she

explained that while she used to perceive those as "negative to women," she does not

anymore, elaborating on cultural relativism, she explained that she "changed her view

point about that" and "now understands that a lot of these things are more like aspects of culture":

> you're coming from an American woman's perspective and going in and telling another woman from another country that she is oppressed or something and it's because women in America have it 'so great,' or whatever cause we're 'such a liberal nation for women.' But I think I am now realizing that a lot of it is an aspect of culture and it is an aspect of choice for women and it feels very like 'who am I to come down and say to a woman that like you didn't choose to do this?' Of course she did, she chose to get up and put that on in the morning. That is the example I can think of, and that's not the way I feel anymore.

Sarah explained that she is still processing her experience in Jerusalem and talks about it constantly, especially since Alex's return from Scotland, showing that their friendship, which started in Jerusalem and continued while they were apart, continues beyond Israel.

*Analysis of Sarah's Experience*

1. **What were the participants' experiences in a short-term study abroad program in Israel?**

Thinking about your educational experiences abroad, *check off any statements that may apply:*

| | |
|---|---|
| I had an experience that caused me to question the way I normally act. | x |
| I had an experience that caused me to question my ideas about social roles. (i.e. what a student or teacher should do.) | x |
| As I questioned my ideas, I realized I no longer agreed with my beliefs or role expectations | x |
| Or instead, as I questioned my ideas, I realized I still agreed with my beliefs and role expectations. | |
| I realized that other people also questioned their beliefs. | x |
| I thought about acting in a different way from my usual beliefs and roles. | x |
| I felt uncomfortable with traditional social expectations. | |
| I tried out new roles so that I would become more comfortable or confident in them. | x |
| I tried to figure out a way to adopt these new ways of acting. | x |
| I gathered the information I needed in order to adopt these new ways of acting. | x |
| I began to think about the reactions and feedback from my new behavior. | |
| I took action and adopted these new ways of acting. | |
| I do not identify with any of the statements above. | |

*Figure 23: Sarah's responses to the Learning Activities Survey*

Although Sarah did not identify a particular experience as having specifically influenced her change, nor did she think of a turning point in her sojourn, she perceived that any change in her perspective was framed by our course's assignments. Indeed, she perceived that our instructor's "philosophy" was to make us question everything, giving her agency to choose her own research topic and develop her inquiry via talking with "normal" people. She noted that had she not taken this course, she would not have talked with people, because it was out of her comfort zone, which might not have led to a perspective transformation.

The first set of observations and interviews she conducted in Central Jerusalem helped her gain knowledge and develop understanding of the academic biases she had been exposed to in the US - biases that she also held because she felt like she did not

know much. This allowed to raise her awareness of her lack of knowledge of current Israelis and make her feel that her interest and curiosity increased.

The only experience Sarah considered to be "disorienting" was when a man made her feel very unsafe during a field trip to the Jewish Quarter of the Old City. Although she perceived that she did not reflect on this particular event, she questioned cultural differences and on her adaptation to the cultural norms, questioning her adaptation to direct communication for example.

Sarah did not have a particular disorienting experience leading to a clear perspective transformation, but rather an accumulation of experiences which made her critical of her prior assumptions. However, she did not feel much discomfort replacing them while learning more about the culture. While she thought she did not have many preconceived ideas about Israelis, she thought that they were all uniformly Zionists. She explained that talking with "normal people," reading (which she argued was not particularly influential), and that reflecting in writing and orally in class and talking with her family and roommates helped her debunk such ideas and form a newly informed opinion about the complexity and nuances she was becoming exposed to and aware of.

Sarah perceived that the combination of activities and assignments offered by our course was unique and memorable as she would not have been able to experience nor learn the same had she not studied abroad, and not taken Ehud's course.

Further, she perceived that our instructor encouraged us to ask difficult questions which do not always have easy answers, and our classmates did not prevent each other

from developing comfort with acknowledging what we did not know and asking genuine questions to learn, an aspect which she perceived was reinforced by the small class-size.

## 2. In what ways, if any, do study abroad participants perceive that they changed?

Sarah perceived herself to have positively changed in multiple ways, both during her study abroad sojourn while in Israel, but also beyond Israel.

She insisted that her increased knowledge helped her gain a wider understanding of Israelis, which helped her become aware of cultural differences and similarities with the U.S. and of the extent of her lack of knowledge. For Sarah, realizing how biased she was because she did not know much about current Israelis and modern Israel led her to changing her opinion about Israelis, regarding Zionism in particular. She believes that this change of opinion is synonymous with her change of beliefs and values.

She thinks that noticing such cultural differences, such as communication styles (via directness) in Israel participated in helping her adapt her own behavior in Israel, when interacting with people in order to get things done. However, although she respected such cultural differences, she perceived that she never really enjoyed the directness of, nor being direct with, Israelis because it was never natural to her to communicate in such a way. She constantly felt outside of her comfort zone and yet appreciated the challenge of having to confront her discomfort.

Sarah's growth transcended the Israeli context. Experiencing a non-traditional format of a course with an instructor who aimed to develop personal relationships rather than what she perceived to be "formal," she thinks that this experience changed her expectations of student-teacher relationships in general. She also insisted that such format

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and course design fostered personal growth, as it was less academically driven but more focused on triggering change in students. Interestingly, Sarah's final research paper was particularly academic, with almost 15 references to the literature of refugees and asylum seekers in Israel, compared with other students who often had 2 or 3 articles in their final papers and focused more on intertwining their own understanding of their topic with their prior beliefs and how learning had affected their emotions and personal change, if any. Sarah's paper did not contain many dimensions of acknowledgement of personal growth, for example, whereas her in-depth interview really focused on this aspect.

Further, she perceived that our course's insistence on destabilizing what we thought we knew made her critical not only of Israel, but also of her own cultural contexts and of herself. Making her critical, she felt, was achieved via the comfort of asking questions, not having easy access to answers, and the support of both her instructor and classmates. She perceived that this led to further changes in her as a student, as she feels that she has been continuing to question since her return to the U.S. She feels more understanding for cultural relativism than she used to, although she does not feel that her experiences in Israel are the only factors contributing to this change, as they interact with all of her other experiences leading to her current state of mind which is continuously in movement.

Finally, Sarah believed her intercultural interactions, and friendships in particular, did not change after her return to the U.S, because she has always been surrounded with people from diverse backgrounds while growing up, making her feel like the definition of "otherness" is very questionable and contextual. Although no one has pointed out her change, she has been vocal about her change of opinion about Israelis since her return to

the U.S. as she feels that she is constantly talking about her study abroad experiences and

in this sense continues holistically processing and reflecting on what she learned.

### *Maria's Experience*

"The research project was like a tube to get this experience of, of digging into things. Because it's not like now when I'm back home, I've not been exploring that subject even more, but it inspired me because it's just a nice way to learn. Also, the way that we were expected to do HIGH quality work. I think the expectation from the teacher was so outspoken, and I think I have met that sometimes, but not a lot. It's very much your own responsibility to do good work. Of course, you get grades for what you hand in, but we had a very engaged teacher and we always got good responding and more questions on what we had delivered. We were not allowed to be lazy, either. Engagement from the professor and from the teacher was very encouraging as a student. he didn't start a class with teaching, he always started the class with asking, and we were expected to have questions."

*Note: As Maria is not a native English speaker, many of her writings do not conform*

*common American English grammar and spelling. Her writing is nevertheless quoted*

*below, unaltered from her original texts except where bracketed.*

Maria was raised on a pig farm in a small village in Denmark in a "conservative

Christian environment" and was 38 years old at the time of the interview. Maria's early

career involved a variety of religious and charity work with orphans in Venezuela (for 9

months) before earning a BA in bio-analysis, work experiences in bio-analysis both in

Denmark and Norway and later in teaching in a primary school, and on her most recent

sojourn, India, where she volunteered with a religious organization for three months.

While in Calcutta, she met a few Israelis and realized that although they "like to discuss,

they were not necessarily nice," and she worked with mentally and physically disabled

children (mostly girls).

Upon her return to Denmark, Maria decided to study theology full time for a year and a half while working part time with children with autism and ADHD.

Raised as a Christian, her faith was extremely important in her decision to participate in a study abroad in Israel, as well as in how she decided of which course to choose. She was initially interested in enrolling in an Old Testament Hebrew course, but had to revise her plans because she would have had to miss the end of the schoolyear with her students, leaving earlier. Therefore, on a ferry, she asked God to give her a sign about what she should do:

> I had to make this choice and then I was just like 'okay, God, what should I do?' And he said, or the only thing I heard was 'immigration or integration.' And it was actually not my first choice, what I would have chosen, but I was like okay, I'll do it. And then that was it.

She took the opportunity to study in Israel not only for her own benefit regarding her study of the Old Testament Hebrew, but also as "an opportunity to kind of figure out what is my opinion about what is going on in Israel." Further, she was also trying to understand how the current situation in Israel fits into the biblical stories, because

> The talk back home is also about if the state of Israel is seen as a fulfillment of the promises of the prophets in the Bible about God bringing his people back to their land from the diaspora (Jer. 23.1-4) or if those promises are to be understood imaginary. And even so, if it should be both physically and imaginary or neither, and the State of Israel is only to be seen as a sanctuary for Jews in a piece of land where they have a lot of ancestral history, which regulations should the state then put up, when it has people from both views in power, and people from outside wants to enter, stay and become citizens?

*Observations and Interviews in Central Jerusalem*

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Maria's first observation and set of interviews in Central Jerusalem happened to begin on public transportation, where she met a woman with whom she started to talk before being interrupted by Roni who had heard she was from Denmark. Maria noted that his "unhidden curiosity surprised her," because most Danes would not act in this way. She also met Rachel, who was born in a Russian family who had immigrated to Israel before she was born. Rachel recounted stories about her childhood and her feeling that she was not fitting in because of her Russian background, while Roni told her about his parents who had migrated from Hungary and Morocco and had changed their names upon their arrival in Israel. Maria reported that she understood this feeling, attributing it to all children wanting to fit in, and retelling a story about her own name which she had wanted to change to fit in.

> I was curious about this name changing with adult people. Why do it when Israel is this melting pot of people from many countries and cultures where the diversity should be the normal. I can understand it, when it comes to kids, but also with adults they assured me, it happened a lot.

When she got off the bus, Roni and the woman from the bus decided to help Maria with finding our meeting spot, and she realized that "I was surprised by their concern. Not expecting Israelis to be as open and welcoming as I had just experienced. Might have been some bad experiences from India kicking in there." Immediately, a woman approached her asking for help in Hebrew, which "surprised" Maria:

> I thought I looked so foreign, that I didn't think Hebrew speaking people would approach me for help. Maybe they are so used to people from all parts of the world here being able to speak the language.

The woman, called Marianna, realized Maria could not speak Hebrew and they ended up having a short conversation in English, during which Maria learned that the woman was born in Russia to a Christian family. Maria noted in her first reflection:

> I figure that she might not have citizenship, since she is not Jewish, but I really don't know. I didn't know much when I first went to do this assignment, not even about what to ask people, so I just asked about there backgrounds.

Maria explained that Marianna did not speak English very well, and she noted during her first reflection that many people in Jerusalem do not speak English fluently, forcing her to question the so-called Israeli "melting pot." She then realized that

> "Hebrew apparently is the common language to combine all these nationalities. Still wondereing though, since Im thinking of Jews to be a very well educated people. Guess I'm a bit biased here equaling the capability of speaking english with a person or a peoples level of education. A lot of very well educated Chinese people doesn't speak English either."

Maria asked for Marianna's phone number to meet with her later in the month at her congregation near Tel Aviv. After Marianna left her, Maria

> sat, crying on a bench in Ben Yehuda, touch by her story and my own situation. It shaked me to hear her proclamation of Jesuah as the Messiah, sitting there in a city where most of its citizens 2000 years ago and still today rejects Jesus and his 'apostacy.' It is still not the most popular thing to trust this Jeshuas claims according to the ultraortodoks. But she claimed both that and Gods love for me, a doubting Christian, to be true.

Maria explained in her final paper that this first set of interviews helped her realize how little she knew about Israel as "it hit me when I was on my first observation-assignment, that I had no idea of what happened to the area of Israel after 70AC" (70 CE corresponds to the destruction of the Temple of Jerusalem by the Romans and the beginning of the

most recent Diaspora). Further, she emphasized that this first set of conversations helped her realize that she had "encountered with a really broad part of the specter of people living here."

In our in-depth interview, she also expanded on the way in which noticing the ease with which one could converse with Israelis encouraged her to pursue these interactions:

> from day one where we were doing these interviews, it made it very clear that the people, at least the people I met, liked to talk. So, I think that gave me a lot of encouragement for the rest of the stay.

*Awareness of discriminations*

Maria then met an Arab Muslim man, Majd Daud, and was "surprised" by his name, thinking that David (Daud) was a Christian name, but she then learned that "the monotheistic religions all love David. We have a lot in common I see." Majd's family had been living in Jerusalem for generations, and he told her that he faces discrimination from Jews who tell him that he should leave Israel. He shared with Maria that he was not able to attend university in Israel unless he spoke Hebrew, even though he lived in Jerusalem.

> I learned it from on the first night that it was not easy for everybody to live in Israel, even though they had been living there for generations. But I think I forgot it again until I was there in the situation where it was very present, because Jerusalem was so Western in a way.

She then observed people in Central Jerusalem and was "surprised" by the similarities with Copenhagen, and by the number of women in the street, as she noted in her written

reflection that she "had expected Israel to be more conservative when it comes to social life."

Maria was still in Central Jerusalem in the early evening and observed the beginning of night life in the city, noticing the presence of both men and women in bars, and realizing that her expectations of Israel being a Jewish country in a religious sense meant that she expected people to be conservative and certainly not to hang out in bars, especially women. Once again, she was "surprised" and reflected on the actual place of religion on the Israeli population, acknowledging that

> That was actually a surprising and almost disappointing experience to me, when I found out that so many people consider themselves Jewish without being religious. Jewishness is a nationality and it is a belief.

Finally, she talked with Rebecca at a kippa shop, and who told her that young boys start wearing their kippas at 3 years, which provoked in Maria some surprise followed by reflection on her own upbringing and religious education: her parents had raised her as a Christian, taking her to church as a child and reading her biblical stories growing up. This reminded her that "religious identity is shaped very early" through the passing of traditions and habits via family members. Maria was very curious about Rebecca's hair, noting "And her hair, I had to ask about it." Indeed, during the first days of her trip, Maria had noticed that some women wrapped their hair "looking a bit Rasta," and she had begun to think that it was a type of fashion in Israel, or perhaps to protect from the sun. Maria had bought a hat for herself as well, thinking that she would not be so different from Israeli women, but Rebecca told her that married women wrapped their hair for religious reasons. Maria felt empathetic and reported that she

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felt so sorry for them, never being able to just have their hair hanging the way they wanted or being able to wear a cap if they liked (I saw a girl trying it out, with her hair wrapped in that clothing – it was just not possible). But maybe it becomes normal, since this is just how it is. Though, I still feel a bit sorry for them, putting myself in their shoes.

Maria asked Rebecca about her background and learned that her family had been living in the area for over nine generations. Maria was "shocked" to learn that people had been living there between 70 and 1948. Reflecting on her "ignorance" and why she had come to believe the land was empty before massive arrival of Jewish populations, she realized that many Jews had not settled in Palestine as the fruit of the Zionist movement at the end of the 19th century or right before 1948, as some of them had remained in the area.

*Reading about Zionism and the Palestinian Nakba*

In her written reflection on the readings about Zionism and the Palestinian *Nakba*, Maria came to increasr both her knowledge and her understanding of how Zionism and the Arab minority of Israel interacted in the early days of the development and foundation of Israel, leading to the current tensions of today. For example, she acknowledged in her written report that she

used to think that the Arab people could have chosen to do like the Jews did, build communities and political parties, build schools and kindergardens and take ownership of their territory in a more profound way, eventhoug the British were in charge, but according to Masalha, (Remembering the Palestinian Nakba), only 15 % of the Arab population could actually read and write before 1948, which could make it difficult to organize things in accordance to the British authorities overrule.

When reading about the *Nakba* and about the destruction of Deir Yasin, a Palestinian village, Maria learned that the Holocaust Museum, Yad Vashem, was in fact built on the same hill where the village used to stand. Noting the "irony," she explained in her written report:

> So now there is a place were Jews and supporters of the Jewish state can go and tell themselves how good it is, that now there is a land where Jews can live and feel safe and free from harassments. And in the very same place Jews could not let other people, civilians, live in safety, free from harassment. Instead to the contrary. This is one of the things wich make Zionism a very bittersweet fenomenon to many Arab Palæstinians.

*Observations and Interviews in the Old City*

Maria expected to encounter difficulties in the Jewish Quarter of the Old City, thinking that people would not want to talk with her because they would be busier than in other neighborhoods, or that they would not want to take the time to talk about aspects related to immigration and other contentious topics with a foreigner. She started her written reflection acknowledging her surprise: "Well it was difficult, but not because they were more busy on the contrary actually, but because of the language barrier."

She noticed the presence of more ultra-orthodox Jews in this neighborhood compared with Central Jerusalem, and she reflected on the fact that she could not talk with them, feeling sorry not only for their restrictions, but also for the pretenses of such restrictions and therefore showing disapproval of their cultural and religious practices:

> I thought to myself with sadness, because they do not talk to women, I do hope they talk to their wifes, though. I felt sorry for them. All these rules they had to follow, it was so visible that they were in invisible chains. From my christian perspective I felt sorry for them, because I saw

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> them carry burdens to satisfy God, eventhough that is not
> what God is after. They do not need to keep themselves
> clean, because as far as the bible tells Jesus lived this
> perfect life, wich they are trying so hard to maintain. It is
> not that we should not live good lifes, but the motif is to
> love others because we are loved by God, not because we
> want him to love os, we don't need to earn his love.
> [Maria's written report]

She then tried to communicate with an Orthodox mother of four who could not communicate much with her in English, and Maria commented that the woman's husband was "wearing kippa and normal clothes, so he could have been an orthodox zionist bringing a lot of new jews into this world, into Israel, doing his duty as a good Jew."

She noticed, reflecting on these various conversations she had in the Old City and comparing them with Central Jerusalem, that the interactions were always very different, men and women having different restrictions, but also that "they have all different levels of welcoming you I guess," realizing that Israelis are all different.

Finally, Maria tried to approach people "looking African," thinking she would get a different perspective on the Law of Return, hoping they would be Falashas (Ethiopian Jews), but she was "surprised" to find out they were simply non-religious French tourists. She ended up looking for one last conversation before leaving for the day and found Samuel. He was a Jewish student from the Netherlands, attending a summer school and hoping to make Aliyah because he thought it was difficult to be Jewish in the Netherlands. This "surprised" Maria who "never thought that such things could make Jewish people leave European countries, but I have learned to think differently," especially when she realized that many French Jews had left France since the 1990s with the increasing terrorist attacks on Jewish populations. She found it "*strikening*."

A few days later, Maria went back to Central Jerusalem in order to conduct a few interviews for her research project, which she had finally decided to be about the Law of Return. She met some people who had made Aliyah from Colombia and Venezuela, and she was, again, "very surprised," especially after having spent time in Venezuela. She commented that she "never thought of it as a place where also Jews existed. It's fascinating how some religions spread around the world and stays there."

During the last few days of her stay, she learned about the restrictions for becoming an Israeli citizen through marriage, which is a common practice in many countries, including Denmark, and which she thought, Israeli looking so similar to Denmark, would be the same. However, she learned how religion impacted civil rights and noted in her final paper that she "really didn't expect religion to impact politics and thereby peoples' lives in such a practical and tangible way."

Maria became increasingly interested in the process of becoming Israeli, through the Law of Return and through conversion. She noted

> How sincere are these conversions, I mean, you could just learn a lot about the religion and culture the same way you learn maths and do a "culture"-conversion, but since it depends on a rabbi to confirm the conversion, it might be pretty hard to fake. I guess also if you work very intense with the material in such a conversion-class, it must affect you to some degree. It could be interesting to see the material though, if it is purely study of readings or if it is also to practice the spiritual part like learning how to pray. I'll try to look into that.

*Observations and Interviews in Tel Aviv*

In Tel Aviv, Maria talked with many people about the Law of Return, looking for people who had made Aliyah recently, but when talking with a 50-year-old woman

working on the market, she learned that many young Israeli are actually trying to go abroad.  Maria was

> surprised, I thought young people lived good lifes in Israel.
> But I do understand if they want to go abroad an explore.
> Once own backyard sometimes just become too small.

The following day, Maria visited a messianic congregation in Kfar Saba, in the suburb of Tel Aviv, meeting again with Marianna (with whom she had talked on the first observation day and with whom she had exchanged contact information) thereby honoring what she had told her when they had first met. She acquired a lot of knowledge there regarding Messianic Jews, which led to more curiosity regarding the intricacies of the Law of Return, and the regulations regarding who is allowed to make Aliyah.

*An interaction which added to the Complexity of who Israelis are*

While in Jaffa, an Arab town just south of Tel Aviv, Maria met a few young Israelis and they bonded around fries at a fast food restaurant:

> I guess I might have talked to them anyway, but I guess the
> way I dared to ask them about their view on immigrants
> and so were a product of our course. Yeah. Because if not
> I might have done it anyway, I'm not sure. But of course,
> the situation pushed it also. Like everybody I met were not
> a part of my class, were like an opportunity to get
> information.

She explained that the couple "were just very inviting" and asked her if she would like to join them in Jerusalem to attend an ice hockey game, giving her a ride to the city. Maria accepted and ended up attending the game and talking with the couple and their friends. She noticed that the girl

was eating Kosher, but her boyfriend were not, and all her friends, and they live together, and all her friends, they didn't understand her, but for her it was important. So, all of her friends didn't pay any attention really to Jewish eating laws or anything like that, but she was very concerned about it.

This interaction, she recalls, led her to understanding more about the extent of secularism in Jewish communities of Israel, which she mentioned she did not know about prior to studying abroad in Jerusalem. Indeed, when she arrived, Maria thought that all Israelis were religiously Jewish and that their definition of belonging to Judaism was more rooted in religious beliefs rather than ethnic sense of belonging.



*Figure 24: Maria attended an ice hockey game in Jerusalem.*

*Reflecting on her privileges*

The day of the Temple Mount/Haram al-Sharif incident, Maria had planned to go to the West Bank and visit Ramallah with two Chinese girls. She though "this is a bad idea" before going, even feeling some stomach pain, but the two Chinese girls tried to

reassure her as they had been before. Maria was afraid of antagonizing Palestinians and

being perceived as provoking them.

> I was afraid that because I'm so blonde I would look, I
> would put them in danger. I look to western or I wouldn't
> want any Palestinians to see me as a provoc-[ation]

However, to her surprise, she did not attract any attention in Ramallah, and the visit ended

up being a "good experience":

> we actually had a very good time until we were going home.
> And maybe that was why, maybe I had my stomach pains
> for a good reason. It was not the best decision to go,
> because in the evening there were… yeah, there were like
> fires and people who were angry at the check point, but we
> were going, and so we were trying to catch a bus home, but
> no buses were going. And so, we had to catch a cab.

The three girls ended up sharing a taxi with a couple of young adults and a couple of

elderly Palestinians whose families had lived in the Old City of Jerusalem for eight

generations. Maria remembered that she "felt safe in that situation, even though I should

not feel safe," but she noted that

> it could have went very bad if we had chosen to go home
> like an hour or two earlier, we would have been in a bus
> where, I think there was, there was a bus that was stopped
> by these people, and it would have been a very bad
> experience. But everything worked well, thanks to God I
> will say, despite me not following my gut feelings.

This experience caused Maria to reevaluate her privilege

> There it hit me that this is every day for them. They are
> used to this and they have to try to live as normal as they
> can in this situation, going up and down, heating up,
> cooling down, heating up again, and then I felt really
> privileged, and yeah, it really hit me in the face that maybe
> I'm not afraid now, but they really, really have another way

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of life that I'm so grateful that I don't have to deal with,
but it was, yeah, that was eye opening.

*Being voiceless – Last day*

On the last day of our program in Jerusalem, Maria encountered an old lady on

the bus and took advantage of the situation to ask her a few questions about her opinion

regarding the Law of Return. The woman replied that "she saw the African immigrants

as the bad guys in a way." Maria noted that "she was very outspoken about it. It was not

taboo to say or to show that you are racist in a way." She reflected:

> it was the first time I heard it from a person itself. Other
> times I had heard it, for instance when I talked to this boy
> the first evening in Jerusalem, and he was telling about
> people not liking him and asking why he was there even
> though he had been here for generations, it was like a
> secondhand experience, but this was the first time where a
> person expressed to me how she felt about immigrants.

Maria recognized that she "got a bit upset," explaining that the immigration of Eritrean

and Sudanese people probably creates discomfort for this woman because "she has to

share her privileges, but maybe it's not the immigrants who are the trouble, but the way

they are handled." Maria then explained that she also feels conflicted, drawing parallels

between this woman's discourse and how many Europeans view the immigration of

refugees:

> At the same time, I do understand her because I do
> understand the fear of things getting out of control, or we
> are not capable of taking care of all of these people, they
> are just becoming a burden and things like that. But I think
> it just, I just wish that she was able to see more, to see the
> nuance.

*Cultural differences*

Maria noticed some cultural differences that made her "uncomfortable" at times, and which she even qualified as "culture shock."

On the first day in class, the day after the first observation, she almost had an argument with our instructor because she had expressed interest in studying immigration in relation to Denmark to which he replied that if she wanted to study that, she did not have to come all the way to Israel. She explained being thrown off by his directness in front of everyone, and noticing a cultural difference in how he addressed her:

> To him it was nothing. I guess that was just his attitude, being straight forward and not always that diplomatic. To me it was a cold shower in front of everybody. Suddenly and in no time I felt that I had to justify my attendance and if not I would just loose face big time. I was angry and a bit shaken for a moment, and the shock just stayed with me for a while. I still think he was being too aggressive in his approach at that moment, but I liked his teaching style for the rest of the course and I liked that he had high expectations to us as students.

She also mentioned how shop owners tend to be pushy and direct with customers who decide they do not want to buy. Maria considered that "they are not so professional," before moderating that opinion, saying that it is "not the way I am used to."

*Awareness of transformation via the in-depth interview*

Maria started our in-depth interview saying that she had not changed in Israel, although her survey meant that she had. Over the course of the interview, she then became aware that she had in fact changed:

> Of course, it made me curious and because I had, I was
> forced to go out and talk to people, I was surprised. Yeah,
> I guess then I did change some things.

She attributed her increased curiosity to the class design, which forced her to talk with people on a regular basis. Although she explained that she would have talked with people even without the class because it is in her nature to talk with people, abroad or not, she insisted that her curiosity was developed by the structure of the class, and her comfort zone maintained by the presence and encouragement of our classmates, because she could interview Israelis with a partner, but also because she knew that we were all doing this similar activity of conducting interviews to develop our understanding of a topic we had not chosen from the beginning of the course:

> I was in a comfort zone the same time I was encountering
> new people like, yeah. I knew that there were other people
> doing the same as me, doing the interviews. It was kind of
> my normal. That was, that was okay to ask a lot of
> questions because, I mean, I might have done it anyway
> because of the woman I am. But it was, it was, I don't think
> it was ever uncomfortable. It was always pretty easy in the
> situations.

She explained that connecting with Israelis was easy because she quickly realized people were talkative and approachable most of the time, but also because many people "were not so grounded in their Israeli identity" due to their recent immigration history.

*Influence of her Experiences: "it's made it okay not to have an opinion"*

Maria explained that the main influence of her overall study abroad experiences were that they made her feel like she could be a good student: it "gave her encouragement that she could actually be a good student when she's studying another way." She also mentioned that her experiences in Jerusalem made her more curious and engaged, as well

as changed her perspective of Israelis regarding the sense of belonging and who can be

Israeli, and her understanding of the conflict. She insisted that for her,

> fitting into a class is always a bit discomforting. I'm best
> with people like one on one, and not really good in groups
> where I don't know people that well. So, that's always a
> challenge and can make me feel not comfortable.

She expanded on this idea, arguing that the cultural difference with the rest of the

classmates as well as the age difference and hosting situation difference made her feel

like she did not fit in at times, insisting that another reason was that some students had

strong opinions:

> I think this sense of fitting in, is also just about how
> comfortable you feel in your own skin. I often feel insecure
> about who I am, what I think and what I want in life. When
> I then meet a whole group of people with diverse attitudes
> towards life and different subjects, and some more strong in
> their opinions than others, it can be a whole lot to cope with.
> Not always knowing what will happen if I flash my own
> opinion. Often a whole lot afraid of being too different, too
> much, too little.

On the last day of our course, Maria was very emotional when telling the rest of the class

what she was "bringing home with her." She mentioned that it was unusual for her to be

in a competitive environment, and she was moved and inspired by the younger women

she had shared time with.  She insisted that meeting "different kind of Israelis in their

own environment" affected her curiosity because she wanted to "find out how different

Israelis are thinking." While she explained that she would have talked with people no

matter what, "the way I dared to ask them about their view on immigrants and so were a

product of our course," such as the design of the course, the nature of the assignments,

the expectations of the instructor, and the relationship with our classmates. Maria

mentioned for example that Ehud encouraged her to talk with a variety of people and therefore get a variety of opinions on a topic of her choosing, which allowed her to gain insights not only in the complexity of the interactions within Israel and with their neighbors, but also to embrace a more comprehensive understanding of nuances within the Israeli population. The critical and reflective questions Ehud asked at the beginning of each class or when commenting on our papers paired with his general engagement made Maria feel very engaged as well:

> we were expected to do HIGH quality work. I think the expectation from the teacher was so outspoken, and I think I have met that sometimes, but not a lot. It's very much your own responsibility to do good work. Of course, you get grades for what you hand in, but we had a very engaged teacher and we always got good responding and more questions on what we had delivered, so, yeah. We were not, we were not allowed to be lazy, either. So, I think that was a, yeah. Engagement from the, from the professor and from the teacher was very encouraging as a student. Yeah, the way we are always expected to… he didn't start a class with teaching, he always started the class with asking, and we were expected to have questions.

Maria explained that the pedagogy of Ehud was very much inquiry-based, but also allowed a lot of fluidity. She explained that Ehud was not fixed on anything specific and therefore gave us a lot of freedom in the choice of our research topics. She paraphrased him:

> When you are out there and you are doing your research, if you find something interesting you should go with it. Don't be too fixed, allow yourself to follow something which really keeps you interested.

Reflecting on the way we were taught, I asked her what she thought of this type of teaching and she replied that "it's the goal to make you want to learn more or make you

want to know more because it's important to you." While she said that "you can't use this type of teaching in all types of… or in all subjects," she also acknowledged that universities usually do not teach this way, but that

> in subjects where it's possible it would be nice to encourage kids and young people to really dig deep on what questions they have and not just, and let the readings be inspiring to them and not, but it's not the goal just to get a lot of information inside your brain… it's the goal to make you want to learn more or make you want to know more because it's important to you.

She explained that her research topic acted "like a tube to get this experience of, of digging into things." She detailed that although she has not necessarily been thinking about her research topic since her return to Denmark, "it inspired me because it's a nice way to learn."

Since her return to Denmark, she went back to working with children with autism, but did not renew her contract after the winter holidays. She is now "in a transitional time," volunteering with immigrants, teaching them Danish just a few hours every week. While she is inspired by the way we were taught and by her overall experience in Israel and Palestinian territories,

> I haven't like been very specific on trying to connect the encounters I had in Israel with these new people in Denmark. But of course, it's in my luggage, so I might have used it. I don't know. Yeah, but I have tried myself to be a stranger in other countries so many times, so it's not that difficult for me to understand the feeling of wanting to be able to speak the language in a good way and not sound like a baby.

She acknowledges that her experiences with immigrants in her home country was not instilled by her time in Israel looking at immigration and identity related topics, and

she recognizes the difficulty of implementing a similar curriculum in her Danish language courses. She explained that her wish to teach has been around since she was studying for bio-analysis, but also that immigration and integration were topics that God inspired her to pursue, therefore saying that her time in the Middle East did not initiate her interest in teaching and immigration, but perhaps furthered it and gave her access to more perspectives about immigration and integration in Israel, drawing comparisons with Denmark.

Regarding her change of opinion regarding Israelis and what it means for them to belong to the nation of Israel, Maria explained that she did not know much about Israelis but thought they were all Jewish in a religious sense. When reflecting in her last assignment, her final research project, Maria acknowledged that "I came to Israel not knowing much about Israel and the ongoing conflicts here." She insisted many times on how often she was "surprised" and changed her opinion thanks to her conversations with "different kinds of Israelis," because the course "made me talk to a lot of different people with a lot of different backgrounds." For example, when she was walking in a renovated neighborhood of Central Jerusalem, she ran into a religious man playing pop music:

> "I was surprised, happy and confused about how my boxes
> didn't always fit the reality, when for instance I saw and
> listened to the Orthodox Jew playing American pop songs
> on his guitar (Orthodox clash)."

*Figure 25: Jewish musician playing American pop music in Mamilla. Photo courtesy: Maria.*

This allowed her, she implied several times, to gain a comprehensive understanding of nuances of what makes one an Israeli, or what makes one want to be an Israeli in the context of the Law of Return, as well as what makes some Israelis reject some people from the area.

Finally, Maria insisted on her prior lack of opinion about the conflict, explaining that she initially thought that coming to Israel would help her to "figure out whose side I was on.":

I didn't have enough knowledge to speak about it. So, people could say what they meant or what they felt, and I was like 'okay, I just really have to get into this somehow', but it's too big and issue to just sit and read about it. So, no, I really didn't, and I chose not to have an opinion about it.

However, learning about the actual complexity of the conflict and of the internal tensions inherent to the conflict, between Israeli Jews and Palestinians citizens of Israel, Maria gained comfort with the idea of what she calls "not having an opinion," which she also calls "not having to choose a side":

It's made it okay to not be able to make a decision about what I feel about Israel or the Palestinian. Then I just found out that it's really difficult to have an opinion about, because it's so complicated, and maybe that's okay. I don't have to choose a side in this conflict.

She exemplified how she has been more vocal about this acceptance of not having an opinion, or instead, of being okay with not being able to choose sides and with the ambiguity that it represents. Since her return to Denmark, Maria had a short conversation with one of her colleagues who had been primarily to the West Bank and who was very hostile towards Israel, but Maria interjected, saying that "it's not an easy situation," and that her own experience in Israel had also enlightened her regarding the refusal of some people to cooperate or to participate in Israeli society or in peace efforts, "that it was difficult." She recalled that in this conversation, she did not want to give reason to her colleague nor saying that 'Israel is not guilty', but rather emphasized how complex the situation is. She explained to me that the conversation did not last long because she did not feel comfortable arguing, because "I still feel like I don't know very much about the conflict." However, she concluded in her final paper that

It has been a big gift to have the opportunity to do a summer course about both the history of the state of Israel and of

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the current situation and thereby to gain some kind of understanding of the diverse identities of people living here and of the widespread immigration issues within Israel today.

*Analysis of Maria's experience*

1.  **What were the participants' experiences in a short-term study abroad program in Israel?**

Maria believes that her experiences primarily revolved around talking with many different people in their environment, meeting the couple in which only the girl observed diet restrictions, getting to learn about Palestinian citizens of Israel being discriminated against from the mouth of an Arab on the first day of class, hearing racist comments from a Jewish woman on her last day in the program, and being caught in the context of a protest while coming back from Bethlehem to Jerusalem. Talking with people was the core of her set of perspective transformation experiences which accumulated in having access to multiple perspectives and opinions leading to awareness of nuances within the Israeli society.

Maria did not think, at the beginning of her in-depth interview, that she had lived any type of transformation from her study abroad experience in Jerusalem. However, her responses to the Learning Activities Survey, which she had completed about a month prior to the in-depth interview, suggested that she had:

Thinking about your educational experiences abroad, *check off any statements that may apply:*

| | |
|---|---|
| I had an experience that caused me to question the way I normally act. | |
| I had an experience that caused me to question my ideas about social roles. (i.e. what a student or teacher should do.) | x |
| As I questioned my ideas, I realized I no longer agreed with my beliefs or role expectations | x |
| Or instead, as I questioned my ideas, I realized I still agreed with my beliefs and role expectations. | x |
| I realized that other people also questioned their beliefs. | x |
| I thought about acting in a different way from my usual beliefs and roles. | x |
| I felt uncomfortable with traditional social expectations. | x |
| I tried out new roles so that I would become more comfortable or confident in them. | x |
| I tried to figure out a way to adopt these new ways of acting. | |
| I gathered the information I needed in order to adopt these new ways of acting. | x |
| I began to think about the reactions and feedback from my new behavior. | x |
| I took action and adopted these new ways of acting. | x |
| I do not identify with any of the statements above. | |

*Figure 26: Maria's responses to the Learning Activities Survey*

It seems that Maria had a multitude of "small" disorienting experiences initiated by her conversations with people. These conversations were for the most part encouraged or furthered by the nature of the class which encouraged her to dare to ask questions about a specific topic and to follow her interest. Maria did not seem to express any feelings of shame, guilt, or anger towards herself via self-examination in her written reflections nor in class when realizing that she did not know or that she was initially misled or had misunderstood something prior to talking with people. She instead was very often "surprised" by many things she learned, which caused her to develop knowledge of Israeli cultures and of the variety of opinions - which she did not know about as she believed at first in a more homogenous character within Israeli society. However, both in her final research paper and in her in-depth interview, she misused terms, mixing up "Israeli-Arab" and "Palestinian," revealing that some confusion remains very vivid in areas that she did not thoroughly explore. Indeed, as her topic was specifically about the perception of the

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Law of Return by Israelis, she did not get to interact much with Israeli-Arabs to learn from their own perspectives. However, this new knowledge seems to have turned into a greater understanding via the hermeneutical dimension of the course which encouraged her to constantly reflect on what she was encountering and learning: from the interactions and observations, the written reports, the conversations in class, the reading shedding a new light on the previous interactions but also preparing for the next interactions, and the conversations in class bringing new layers and nuances not only from her classmates who all had different takes on their experiences, but also from her instructor.

It seems like Maria did not develop any specific awareness of a plan of a course of action in order to be transformed further. She appears to have followed a sort of flow, acquiring knowledge in each of her interactions but not having a major change in her life causing her to reintegrate into her life, either while in Israel or since back in Denmark, a major shift of perspective, with the exception of the idea that the social, economic, and political situation in Israel is complicated to a point that she tolerates the ambiguity of not having to take sides or having an opinion. She tolerates not knowing and did not seem to express any urgency to gain knowledge and understanding in order to fight her biases and to confront her ideas of Israelis.

## 2. In what ways, if any, do study abroad participants perceive that they changed?

It seems that Maria's change did not go beyond the Israeli context, unlike other research participants. She indeed emphasized that her experience had allowed her to have an opinion on the conflict, or rather to be okay with not having an opinion by gaining understanding of the complexity of the situation in Israel. However, she did not make any

strong claims regarding the influence of her study abroad experience on a clear ideological, political, or religious transformation, unlike other participants. This could be related to the fact that she is significantly older than the other girls interviewed, and she might have had more long-lasting or more transformative experiences in the past, the intensity of which was much higher than her experience in Israel/Palestine. This could also have been reinforced by a greater cultural distance in both places compared with Israel, which she often considered to be very similar to Denmark, especially Jerusalem, which she noticed was similar to Copenhagen (Central Jerusalem in particular). Further, her experience in Israel was much shorter in length compared with Venezuela (9 months) and India (3 months) and also much more "sheltered," by living in the dorms, having an advisor, etc. It is also plausible that her previous experiences abroad might have created a sort of "experiential inertia" or filter, in that perhaps the more experiences one accumulates, the less transformation one acquires from them, or perhaps the more intense experiences one undergoes, the less transformative next experiences can be, in that the bar would be raised for future experiences.

Further, Maria is the only participant who is not currently scholastically involved. Although she is planning on enrolling in the equivalent of an MA program in theology, her initial degrees are in bio-analysis and theology, and global or international studies or middle eastern studies could be perceived as very distant from her field of study and professional career. Additionally, not being used to expressing her opinions in papers nor in class, as she mentioned in her interview, could provide an explanation for her limited articulation of her opinions.

Maria insisted on how the course, including the engagement and high expectations of our instructor and the type of assignments encouraged her and motivated her. Although she was not enthusiastic about how demanding the course was, since we were meeting almost 5 days a week and she was originally planning on visiting the country by going on more regular trips, Maria almost had an altercation with our instructor, which he also reported in his own interview, mentioning that she was the least engaged student that summer. However, Maria briefly mentioned that she admired her younger classmates and their competitiveness. Seeing her classmates working a lot and trying to understand their research topics and seeing them fully engaged might have helped her find motivation in progressively finding a deeper interest in the class and the assignments, which could have been related to performance avoidance goals.

Additionally, out of six students, three were American citizens, who are often perceived as being competitive even in their studies. Having talked about it with two of the US students who participated in the program, they both mentioned that they did not feel any particular competitiveness, suggesting themselves that it would be so engrained in their culture that they would not have noticed it. Indeed, this course was not Maria's first choice, as she mentioned several times during our interview, and our instructor corroborated during his own interview, saying that Maria, by seeing the rest of the class working energetically and by seeing our level of engagement, ended up being swept up in the flow. However, during our interview, she mentioned that although she had thought about replying to our instructor's comments to her final paper, she had not as she had felt uncomfortable, not only because time had passed, but also because she had thought for a very long time that her final paper was not of much quality compared with others', and

for this reason she had not even checked her grade until very late in the fall. This lack of interest in her grade might have been "aggravated" by the fact that she did not need any grades nor credits for this course and was simply participating in this study abroad program for the experience it represented rather than the credit-bearing nor career-related experience.

## Inductive Thematic Analysis Across Participants

### *Introduction*

The following section provides answers to the research questions.

The research questions were:

1. What were the participants' experiences in a short-term study abroad program in Israel?
2. In what ways, if any, do study abroad participants perceive that they changed?

The answers are presented thematically as a result of the inductive, thematic analysis described in the methods section. Although participants' experiences and types of change are dependent upon the contexts in which they emerged, the findings are presented here in a more "decontextualized" way in order to show similarities among students.

The diverse data sources generated nine central categories:

1.  Directed and Diverse Conversations

2.  Hermeneutical Reflections

3.  Emotional Disequilibrium

4.  Cross-Cultural Competence Development

5.  Student Engagement in a Classroom Culture

6.  Intercultural Sensitivity Development

7.  Student Change

8.  Ideological Shift

9.  Career Refinement

These categories are explored in this chapter through the answers to the research questions.

### *Research Question 1: Experiences*

**What were the participants' experiences in a short-term study abroad program in Israel?**

*"It was an amalgam of things. It was an amalgam. I can't pinpoint it, I feel like pinpointing it and assigning one event would be doing the others injustice." (Alex)*

This study found that all students had some level of perspective transformation resulting from experiences during their study abroad in Israel, allowing them to renegotiate their initial perceptions of Israeli society. It is difficult to disentangle the various categories because the study abroad experience as a whole influenced students'

perspectives in an organic way. Findings fall into five main categories presented in order of decreasing perceived influence:

**Directed and Diverse Conversations**

**Hermeneutical Reflections**

**Emotional Disequilibrium**

**Cross-Cultural Competence Development**

**Student Engagement in a Classroom Culture**

Certain aspects of these experiences emerged from the data as very present and yet students often were not aware of the phenomenon or the change.

Students perceived that none of their change would have happened had they not been abroad and not taken a course with a specific instructor, at a specific time, creating a "unique experience," which they believed "could not be replicated." Under this overarching experience, the intertwined character of the five aspects mentioned above emerged over the course of several weeks and possibly months. The participants perceived that, while the most significant experience was the talking with different people, participants would not have engaged in conversations with local people had they not taken a specific course requiring them to do so in order to develop a research project based on such interactions. They also perceived that the reflections on the conversations they had with people triggered new questions and awareness of aspects of past interactions. These reflections also fostered change at the cross-cultural level, which, itself, was part of their

experiences abroad. The pervasiveness of strong emotions and the engagement of students facilitated by the classroom culture via their relationship with their instructor and group cohesiveness were prevalent aspects of the students' experiences.

The course design and instructor interactions were of paramount importance in the experience – ubiquitous and inseparable from everything that followed. They framed the whole experience for students did not have much free time to travel the country on their own. The experiences of participants cannot be disentangled from the course environment that caused them to have those experiences.

According to the Learning Activities Survey results, all participants reported having experienced overall perspective transformation in at least four phases (King, 2009). Alex reported having experienced 9 phases, Maria selected 8, Katherine 7, Sarah 6, and Hailey 4 phases. The survey and interviews did not always match. For example, Katherine's interview revealed that she experienced more phases of PT than what was reported on the LAS. This mismatch between surveys and interviews could be related to misunderstandings of the survey questions, or reflections that occurred post-survey. Sometimes, interviews allow for depth that surveys cannot achieve.

## Directed and Diverse Conversations: Disrupting Expectations

*Directed and Diverse Conversations: From Class Assignment to Intrinsic Interest*

The most significant perspective transformation revolved around experiencing Israel through social interactions with people living in Israel, or "directed and diverse conversations." Most participants explained that talking on their own with Israelis was

out of their comfort zone and that they probably would not have talked if the course had not required it. Participants perceived that talking with different people was significantly more important than the academic learning of more formal classrooms. They perceived that the more traditional courses, which focused on lectures and which remained classroom-based were far less consequential. In light of this finding, the following section focuses on the holistic experience of student participants based on written assignments completed during their short-term study abroad, and memories collected during interviews.

Students who enrolled in two courses emphasized that Ehud's course was memorable, because it was immersed in the Israeli context, forced them to interact with Israelis and to learn about their opinions which threw them out of their comfort zones on a regular basis.

No participant, prior to their arrival in Jerusalem, expected change beyond the development of some historical knowledge. Most students' experiences abroad had been limited to a tourist perspective, spending only a few days in a location with minimal interactions with local communities.

Alex insisted that she was initially uncomfortable with interacting with Israelis, not only because she is Arab, but also because of her opinion of Israelis and Jews. She explained that she would not have talked with Israeli Jews if she had not been enrolled in a course requiring her to do so:

> I would have no motivation to speak to an Israeli citizen if I was not enrolled in my professor's class at all. If I didn't have this project to do or if I wasn't motivated by my

classmates or my professor, there would be no way that I
would be getting up early to talk to someone that was going
to potentially disregard my entire beliefs.

Hailey had a similar initial impression regarding her discomfort with engaging in

conversations, because it is not something she would naturally do in her own country or

while traveling. She explained that what started as an assignment evolved into becoming

a source of enjoyment:

At first, it was an assignment and so I was terrified, but then,
after the first one, I really enjoyed it and wanted to speak to
people outside of class, which is probably something that I
wouldn't usually do. It was outside of my comfort zone but
after the first time I really began to enjoy it.

Like Hailey, Sarah felt the course encouraged her to engage in conversations and that her

early and easy interactions with Israelis surprised her:

I think that was outside of my comfort zone to be going up
and asking people. I feel like if I wasn't pushed to do it, I
probably wouldn't do it. I'd have interactions with people,
but I feel like they'd be more if people came up to me and
started talking to me. I probably wouldn't have approached
people and asked them directly about this topic.

Contrary to the younger students, Maria explained that her prior experiences abroad had

made her comfortable talking with local people. However, she emphasized that while she

would probably have talked with people outside the course, she probably would not have

explored certain topics in conversation nor been as blunt as she ended up being thanks to

the course:

I guess I might have talked to them anyway, but I guess the
way I dared to ask them about their view on immigrants
were a product of our course. I might have done it anyway,
I'm not sure. Of course, the situation pushed it also. Like

everybody I met were not a part of my class, were like an opportunity to get information.

Once they had overcome their initial anxiety and discomfort, all participants mentioned how much more at ease they ended up feeling after the first conversation, realizing that Israelis were "easy to talk to" and "open about their opinions." Students reported their emotions in their first written reflection, focusing not only on the cultural differences they had been exposed to, but also on their own reactions and feelings.

*Directed and Diverse Conversations as Disorientation: Reflecting on One's Assumptions*

Talking with different people in different areas of the country gave participants access to different perspectives provided by "normal" people who were not specialists of participants' topics such as immigration in Israel. Participants perceived that interactions with "normal people" led to a perspective transformation experience. More significant interactions elicited strong emotions and pushed them to reevaluate their own positioning, either during or after the conversations, or upon return home. Alex asked: "How would you understand a country without talking to its people?" For her, talking with people was central to her experience, and she insisted on the necessity of talking with people over studying remotely:

> conversations with the people were the most important part of this class. Conversations with people outside of the class were very important because everyone in my class was very intelligent. Everyone was well read, everyone had an insight and a perspective that was different than the other, but it's one thing to sit in a group of academics and solve a problem and it is another to sit with the people who are the problem.

Katherine's conversation with a young Arab teenage boy followed by walking in the Jewish Quarter and seeing plaques in the memory of victims of the 1948 and 1967 wars, juxtaposed with observing a Jewish toddler dancing in the shade of the synagogue (which had been destroyed in 1967) triggered strong emotions. Overwhelmed by the vast differences among possible futures for the children and by the disparate narratives they are exposed to, she burst into tears and reflected on her own ideas about Israelis:

> I came to realize how simplistic and presumptuous my understanding of the conflict was before beginning this course.

Katherine had another encounter making her feel "discomfort" about her prior assumptions. When talking with street musician who were sons of migrant workers from southeast Asia who had not started their military service, she realized that not all perspectives on the IDF were the same. This made her reflect on her own positionality as a foreigner, as a student on a liberal US campus, and as a journalist wanting to work on the Middle East:

> One particular observation assignment that comes to mind more often than others that I think plays a significant role in my shift in mind was in Tel Aviv, Hailey and I came across two street musicians and they were both in high school, one about to begin his IDF training and the other one had another year to go before he started.

Similarly, Hailey mentioned that encountering a group of ultra-orthodox teenage girls led her to realize her own ignorance of entire communities, which she felt she would not have known about or ever talked with, had she not studied in Israel:

> In the city I think one particular moment when I spoke to a group of ultra-conservative girls who were growing up in a very conservative area and it was really just when I realized

> 'wow there are so many people in the world that I didn't even realize that they lived in this particular way or to that extent they were telling me.' And I just felt a bit ignorant. I think that was probably one of the moments that I realized it was changing and where I sort of looked back and felt a bit uncomfortable about what I knew beforehand.

Almost immediately, Hailey had feelings of embarrassment over having assumed that she knew about Israel prior to coming to Jerusalem. She forced herself to talk with people and to prepare for conversations that would allow her to get rid of the feelings of ignorance and shame, demonstrating the desire to learn by herself. Talking with people motivated her to talk with more people to get a more comprehensive understanding of her research topic:

> I just wanted to speak to sort of everyone and I think that definitely compelled me to keep talking to people so that I had a bit more of a well-rounded perspective. A bit more of an unbiased group of people that I'd spoken to for my research.

Hailey's "successful" interactions seem to have generated feelings of self-efficacy, agency and emancipation from fears of being rejected, being intrusive, or simply getting "yelled at," a perspective shared by other participants.

Alex felt "shame" and "embarrassment" after a conversation with an ultra-orthodox man, realizing she had tried to behave in a way that was religiously restricted for him, trying to look at him in the eyes, when as a man he was not supposed to interact with women outside of his familial circle:

> Before the start of the interview, he did something very surprising. He moved his chair so that Hailey and I faced the back of him. I later found out this was because of ultra-orthodox laws. I feel somewhat embarrassed because I kept

> trying to make eye contact with him, but now, I understand
> his motives behind this action.

She felt similarly when trying to engage with Arabs in the Muslim Quarter, thinking that because she is Arab, they would bond around feelings of oppression towards the Israeli government. The embarrassment she felt made her aware of her assumption of the existence of a pan-Arab comradeship.

All students quickly wound up investigating research topics related to power structures or oppression within the Israeli society. Conversations naturally brought some level of reflection, and participants reported that the structure of the course created a dynamic for sharing knowledge and understanding, as well as questions and emotions.

## Hermeneutical Reflections

Reflections happened in many forms and instances, individual and social, written and oral, structured and unstructured. Their ubiquity was a context for deepening perspective transformation regarding past interactions with people, and for preparing final research papers. Written reflections were guided by explicit instructions and topics on which students focused their attention. Such reflections contributed to participants' critical knowledge and understanding of the cultures and the peoples they encountered. All participants mentioned that multiple reflective tasks helped them gain awareness of new understanding, old biases and progress toward change. Alex felt that she was constantly marinating in her interactions with Israelis, leading her to continuously reflect, and to compare:

> After the conversation ends you're able to kind of marinate
> in what was said and his point of his class, there was a

hermeneutical aspect to it, you would reflect, you would reanalyze, you would go into it and look at it over and over again and that allowed me to really become more in tune with what people were trying to say but weren't saying, but their body language towards me, I would reflect on that a lot. The experience as a whole I was able to reanalyze after, you know I usually interviewed people with partners. I think it made the person more comfortable as opposed to just a singular person going up and asking them questions, so the person that was usually with me, like we were able to make this person feel more comfortable and then this person and I would talk together after the interview was over about what we had experienced and maybe this person had a different interpretation about what was said than I did, and we were able to bounce that off of each other.

She felt that, while many aspects contributed to her overall perspective transformation, the act of dialoguing with members of the class was particularly powerful. She gave the example of class readings:

even discussing the readings was more beneficial than just doing the readings at home. Because I was able to bounce off and feel other people's interpretations of what was going on.

While Alex's case was the most poignant regarding the perceived impact of the hermeneutical nature of reflections, other participants also experienced reflections as a spur to perspective transformation. Katherine explained that the repeated exercise of reflecting to report on her experience, writing her report, talking about her report with her classmates and hearing about their own experiences helped her gain a more comprehensive understanding:

I definitely think that putting it to paper and then having to take what we'd written and share it again with the course, with the class, definitely helped. Just that repetition of exploration, personal reflection, having to format it and write it out and just share that vocally all helped build on that growth.

Hailey felt similarly about the repeated analysis of her interactions being reinforced by the readings and conversations with classmates:

> I think that written assessment time where I came to reflect and re-write my own observations because it's one thing having a conversation with someone but then actually coming back and analyzing that conversation, wondering why it occurred that way and also doing research and reading on it and seeing that other people have had this shared experience.

She emphasized that vocally expressing her reflections with classmates helped her formulate clearer ideas about her experiences.

Similarly, Sarah felt that "none of us were very harsh on each other." She explained that writing the summary of her interactions helped her define her final research paper:

> I think it did overall. I think it helped with the end goal of the class. It helped me, to do the reflections, so that I could figure out what I wanted to ask people in the future or what direction my project was headed for. I remember that being really helpful. I feel like the reflections were kind of a summary of what I did the night before.

## Emotional Disequilibrium

Participants' emotions were alive during experiences in Jerusalem. Going into an unknown culture can raise anxiety and fear, as well as excitement. As Hailey states, even the course was "engaging with emotion more so than the facts."

Some researchers argue that transformation requires willingness to seek out uncomfortable situations, to step out of one's comfort zone and be transformed. Engberg

and Jourian (2015), for example, argue that this intentionality is crucial to "intercultural wonderment."

*Anxiety and Fear replaced with Enthusiasm*

Both Hailey and Sarah insisted that prior to their first set of conversations they were "terrified" because the exercise was forcing them to try something new. They feared that people would be reluctant to engage with them because they were not interested. They also mentioned being afraid of people's reactions to potentially controversial questions. Alex explained that she had felt overwhelmed by not knowing how to do laundry on campus, leading her to feel embarrassed by the simplicity of the task:

> I couldn't figure out how to work the washer, and I cried a lot, in the washing machine room. And someone had to help me, and I felt very silly."

Alex described feeling "tense" regarding conversations because of her Egyptian background, suggesting that her fear of conflict was engrained:

> at first it was a bit tense because I was afraid that they would be hostile towards me for some reason, even though I don't look Arab, but I guess I just kind of have that like programmed into my head. But after I started Ehud's class, I felt much more at ease, and I began talking to more people, and it was completely natural and organic.

Engaging with Israelis was not as difficult as she thought. Overcoming her first fear via simple conversations made her realize that people were approachable. A pattern of high anxiety followed by enthusiasm happened several times during her experience. Once she started her research project on ultra-orthodox women, she decided to interview women on her way to the center of the city. After a meaningful conversation with a woman she began to enter "unsanctioned" spaces, such as Haredim neighborhoods: "I

was so inspired by my previous interview with Nurit that I embraced venturing to Mea Shearim." However, she immediately understood that her newly developed enthusiasm might bring new levels of anxiety and embarrassment.

*Shame and Embarrassment replaced by Effort to Learn*

Shame was recurrent in participants' experiences and evolved into efforts to avoid embarrassment. Shame was most often triggered by participants realizing their lack of knowledge. Students experienced shame powerfullys when debunking stereotypes, such as "Jews are cheap" or "Jews are the enemy" (Alex).

Hailey emphasized that encountering a group of ultra-orthodox teenagers allowed her to become aware of her ignorance not only about this particular community, but also about Israel in general. She described how this lack of knowledge affected her views:

> I felt like I lacked a lot of knowledge of the people. I felt a bit uncomfortable with how closed my views were to begin with, not necessarily in relation to one particular thing but I mean in general what I knew beforehand or what I experienced beforehand was like completely different. I felt like I had closed myself up to a lot before I got to experience the people in Israel.

She decided to prepare for interviews more thoroughly, to read more about Israel, and to find diverse news sources. She began to act more curiously in a systematic manner to avoid shame.

Alex felt ashamed during her encounter with an ultra-orthodox man in the Old City who had to avert his gaze from her. She realized that, prior to coming to Israel, she knew nothing about Haredim, and her lack of knowledge about the rules within the community had led her to acting inappropriately. However, while she initially felt hurt

and insulted by his behavior, she realized that it was not hindering the content of their conversation. While writing her report, she realized her inappropriate behavior was prompted by her lack of knowledge about Judaism. This realization led her to read more about this specific community and to ask questions about her topic and the community. She tried to expand her knowledge and understanding of the collective mindset and individual variations. Shame fostered a desire to understand Haredi women, as well as understand how her own countries and cultures were perceived by others. Shame prompted an awareness of cultural differences and new openness to such differences.

*Anger and Frustration Funneled by Awareness of Social Issues*

While students who identified as Pro-Palestinian arrived in Jerusalem with anger directed at Zionist beliefs, personal encounters helped diffuse the anger. Students who identified as more "neutral," claiming not to have any beliefs about the Arab-Israeli conflict developed feelings of anger at injustices they learned about from readings and conversations with locals. Anger was often developed as a result of increased understanding of oppressive relationships within Israeli society.

Maria felt frustrated when an Arab man she encountered on the first night told her about the discriminations from which he was suffering. Previously, she had been more supportive of Israeli Jewish communities than of Arabs. She also experienced anger when talking with an elderly woman, who blatantly shared generalizations about African refugees.

Hailey felt frustrated at her helplessness regarding the conflict, gaining awareness of its complexity and how she was unable to contribute personally. She became conscious

that the foreigner "savior complex" was out of place in such a complex issue that is the Arab-Israeli conflict:

> not being able to do anything… again, it made me feel a bit uncomfortable I think and helpless, not that they need my help, I mean I know that and I know that a 21 year old girl from Melbourne isn't going to do anything, but just knowing that the reality is so much more complex than you first thought I think was a little bit… made me feel a bit uncomfortable, a bit overwhelmed and a bit helpless and I've no idea why. I mean I knew that I couldn't do anything but knowing that you know the solution or whatever it is isn't… and that there is so much that I hadn't considered previously again made me feel a bit ignorant I guess to some extent.

Katherine perceived the complexity of the conflict as both "both frustrating and freeing." While her opinions were fairly set before study abroad, adding complexity to these opinions allowed her to welcome ideas that she would not have accepted to prior to coming to Israel.

Alex started to move away from her previous opinion of Israelis, experiencing her "identity crisis" as liberation from her family's biases. Alex also felt a different kind of frustration during her early interactions with Haredi women and teenagers. She felt frustrated because she thought that these women were living in oppressive structures, but the more that Alex learned about ultra-orthodox lives, the more respect and tolerance she developed.

Emotions were prevalent in Alex's experience. She asserts "I was moved by everything. The faith, the conviction, the women, the people, the environment, the spirit, the professor."

**Cross-Cultural Competence Development: Changing Opinions**

Findings related to cross-cultural competence emerged in three interrelated sub-groups:

*Knowledge and Understanding – Cognitive*

*Attitude/Sensitivity – Affective*

*Behavior - Behavioral*

Participants' written reflections displayed a pattern, starting with cognitive change (knowledge and understanding), then moving to affective change (sensitivity and attitudes) and finally altering interpersonal behavior, according to newly acquired knowledge.

*Knowledge and Understanding: Awareness of Complexities and Nuances*

Knowledge and understanding developed as an initial type of change. Without this first layer of change at the cognitive level, the other types of change would not have manifested. Hailey explained she gained knowledge and understanding of the complexities and nuances as a result of talking with people in order to pursue a research project and of reflecting upon each interaction, which made her aware of cultural differences and of her lack of knowledge:

> there are so many people in the world that I didn't even realize that they lived in this particular way or to that extent they were telling me. And I just felt a bit ignorant. I think that was probably one of the moments that I realized it was changing and where I sort of looked back and felt a bit uncomfortable about what I knew beforehand.

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In a somewhat different way, Katherine developed what she called a "sense of urgency"

to confront her prior knowledge so that she would become less biased:

> I definitely came to realize how unaware I was of Israeli
> culture and interested in it when I was over there, because
> yeah, I didn't really have much of an understanding of
> particularly the secular Israeli culture, or that it even
> existed, before going over. But the fact that I THOUGHT I
> knew what was happening there was something that I was
> very convicted about, and that I wasn't aware of how
> unaware I was, made me really eager to do as much as I
> can, or could while I was there, to learn about the culture,
> about people's perspectives of their history, because I was
> familiar with the history but I didn't have a very nuanced
> understanding of the individuals' outlooks on it.

A specific interaction shed light on her assumptions about the Israeli military service

requirement:

> that particular experience with that younger Israeli really
> fully turned the light on and made me aware of my
> preconceived and biased opinions, and I was able to push
> those other ideas aside and approach the following
> conversations that I had with youth in the weeks that
> followed free of that. That was something that a whole
> other identity that he held that I would never have imagined,
> and it made me realize that I had a very specific idea of
> what the youth and the IDF looked like. And so, that was
> almost an immediate realization of the fact that I had to be
> more open and that there were specific images,
> understandings that I held that, because I came into a
> thinking that I was very unbiased and that I didn't have any
> preconceived opinions of what they looked like, I was only
> aware of other people's preconceived opinions.

Nuanced opinions emerged as a result of having access to more complex and diverse

viewpoints and reflecting upon them. Students' knowledge grew from conversing with

locals, talking in class, learning from other's experiences (including those of the

instructor), and from the readings.

*Attitudes: Accepting Cultural Differences*

Students' attitudes in cross-cultural interactions were altered during their study abroad experiences. These changes took various forms: listening more and talking less, feeling more joy during interactions with Israelis, feeling more confidence, feeling more engaged, or feeling more respect for cultural differences.

Katherine felt like gaining a more focused understanding of her research topic helped her feel more *joy* during her interactions with Israelis:

> I enjoyed the interactions more when I had a more focused research topic and when I was still getting a diverse varie-, like a variety of information but it was diversifying that one topic and not just kind of spilling all this on to me, because that was overwhelming in the sense that I didn't know what to do with it all in the beginning. Not that it wasn't exciting though, like it was an enjoyable process in the beginning as well, just more focused towards the end for sure.

Alex noticed that her overall attitudes changed over the course of her study abroad. She reported feeling more *confident* and comfortable when talking with Ultra-Orthodox Jews:

> it was very normal. Like it just felt fine. And then I was like, okay, this is not so bad, like regardless of the people's political alignment or religious restrictions, I can still do this.

Speaking with members of the Haredi community led her to become more tolerant of cultural "Others." Such meaningful encounters made her aware of her tendency to stereotype "others." She stated:

> I have spoken to some women and men in the Haredi culture that do reflect an oppressive, patriarchal society. Nonetheless, I will never again generalize the Haredi people because I have met some women that mirror my personal beliefs. I think the experiences that I had with

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people were based on topic matters that were sensitive. They were, it could spark confusion in the identity of the person that was interviewed, like they could have confused me, I could have left questioning my belief in feminism or Islam, but instead, they just provided me with the opposite perspective, but I understood it, I understood where they were coming from, I tolerated their views. I understood where they were coming from, I was not confused, I just didn't agree with it.

Maria reflected on her own privilege when talking with Palestinians crossing the check point with her from Ramallah, feeling a greater level of empathy for a population living under constant tension, which made her feel greater respect for people's cultural/contextual differences:

There it hit me that this is every day for them. They are used to this and they have to try to live as normal as they can in this situation, going up and down, heating up, cooling down, heating up again, and then I felt really privileged, and yeah, it really hit me in the face that maybe I'm not afraid now, but they really, really have another way of life that I'm so grateful that I don't have to deal with, but it was, yeah, that was **eye opening**. Yeah. And we, I didn't experience it in Jerusalem.

Students became increasingly accepting of cultural differences, more tolerant of them and became more systematic in checking their own prejudices. Students who had complex and longer conversations with locals (Alex in particular) shared more about the content of their interactions and their own change.

*Behavior: Adapting to Cultural Differences*

Interpersonal behavioral adjustments while in Israel were reported by participants in order to adapt to the Israeli cultures they encountered. Some behaviors revolved around

religious restrictions dictating how to interact between men and women, whereas other behavioral changes focused on the directness of the communication.

Sarah emphasized that, although she acknowledged and respected cultural differences in the Israeli context, and adapted her behavior, she never fully felt comfortable in her new role:

> I never really liked it that much so it always felt like I was doing this so that I could do things, so I could go about my day so it always felt like I was never being direct with people because I wanted to do it or because I liked it and I was really embracing this new culture, it was always just kind of a chore and so I was just kind 'I have to do this' but by the end of it I was getting pretty tired of that.

Hailey adapted her questions to ultra-orthodox teenage girls during their conversations, while learning about their religious restrictions, even though she felt uncomfortable with the cultural differences she was discovering:

> I did feel myself sort of being a bit more… I guess you could call it conservative with the conversation and the topics, like the things you discuss because there was a lot that they weren't open to discussing or they felt uncomfortable talking about that a teenage girl where I am.

Learning about cultural differences and demonstrating respect for cultural "others" precede adaptation of behavior. After learning the proper protocol, Alex adapted her behavior to religious restrictions when interacting with ultra-orthodox communities and entering spaces in which she was hyper visible. She dressed more modestly, and remembered not to touch men or look at them directly:

> As I walked around Mea Shearim, I felt, for the first time, very uncomfortable. I clinged to my shawl in an effort to maintain my modesty. In fact, I would've much more appreciated being dressed in a burlap sack.

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Students' desire to adapt behavior to Israeli cultures was present, as they wanted to be appropriate, not to offend their counterparts, and to genuinely understand why people were behaving as they were. Sarah insisted on the merits of "being in a place that you're actually learning about is so much different than learning about it from another from far away. It gives you a totally different perspective than you could have when you're studying from afar." Alex stated: "it's one thing to sit in a group of academics and solve a problem and it is another to sit with the people who are the problem."

Participants mentioned they used strategies such as observing various neighborhoods, talking with different people and, most importantly, engaging with people in "unsanctioned" spaces to learn about their cultures and opinions, noticing and learning to imitate communication cues or making and later correcting inappropriate cultural "errors". They decided to act upon their lack of knowledge to adjust their intercultural incompetence, making conscious efforts towards the negotiation of their intercultural growth.

**Student Engagement in a Classroom Culture**

All participants (including the instructor) insisted on the prevalence of engagement with the study abroad experience. In the context of studying in Jerusalem, two aspects of engagement emerged:

1) the learning community

2) the influence of the instructor

While the two appeared to be intertwined and co-dependent, the instructor insisted that, while he perceived the students to be engaged, he did not feel like it was his place to build a community. Community building was the responsibility of the students.

*Learning Community*

Horizontal relationships participants built allowed them to create a supportive environment. Classmates pushed each other, encouraged each other, and developed trusting relationships. Hailey explained that the influence of her classmates had a positive impact:

> we felt like we could freely express our own opinion without the judgement of someone else, especially when it's not from an academic perspective, you don't have someone constantly shutting down your ideas.

Interestingly, Ehud pointed out the value he sees in developing knowledge through group conversations of students' individual reflections: "a 'public' group reflection in the class allows us to learn from each other. And second, not that it's less important: is to understand that we are not alone."

Hailey and Sarah emphasized that they did not feel any pressure from classmates who were more knowledgeable about Israel. Not feeling pressured allowed for students not hesitating to share their vulnerability, mistakes, and faux-pas in class. This might have been reinforced by the small class size, which participants perceived to contribute to their comfort.

Alex felt like the engagement of her classmates motivated her to go beyond what she would normally do. She explained:

> I think everyone in class was doing a very interesting piece
> um and they, they nuanced the project for me because there
> were elements of education present, there were elements of
> healthcare, there were elements of civil rights and human
> rights. Um, and I wanted to do something that kind of
> encompassed all of that if possible. So, it was a motivation,
> it was a motivation for me talking to my classmates about
> their projects and wanting to produce something equally as
> prolific as they were producing.

Katherine valued her relationship with her classmates more than the mentoring of her instructor, creating a sort of peer effect. She stated:

> had you guys not been as engaged as you were and Ehud
> mentioned this toward the end of the course, the session that
> he felt it was the most proactive and productive course he'd
> ever held because we were all so willing to jump right in and
> I definitely believe had you guys not been as engaged as you
> were, I also personally wouldn't have got as much out of it,
> because so much of coming to realize what I was discovering
> was catalyzed by having to vocalize it to you all. As a
> collective, the six of us, and then Yore off to the side, really,
> I think connected and then also encouraged one another to
> grow and to challenge ourselves.

Maria had a different experience. Being slightly older and not from an English-speaking country and working fulltime for a few years, she explained that "fitting into a class is always a bit discomforting." She mentioned:

> I think this sense of fitting in, is also just about how
> comfortable you feel in your own skin. I often feel insecure
> about who I am, what I think and what I want in life. When
> I then meet a whole group of people with diverse attitudes
> towards life and different subjects, and some more strong in
> their opinions than others, it can be a whole lot to cope with.
> Not always knowing what will happen if I flash my own
> opinion. Often a whole lot afraid of being too different, too
> much, too little.

While the rest of the group was pushing each other early on, Maria, sometimes isolated herself from the rest of the group. Ehud explained:

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> With Maria, I think she struggled with on one hand my expectations of her and on the other hand what she hoped to be able to do in Israel, which was to take a class and then also kind of travel around and see interesting places. But even she eventually was sucked into or suckered into doing something that I think in the end was very meaningful to her. But she engaged with it later and engaged with it a different way than everybody else.

Maria seems to have benefitted from what Ehud called the "willingness to engage."

Group cohesiveness was simultaneously a means and a result of engagement, contributing to cross-cultural growth, and being influenced by it in return.

*Faculty-Student Relationship*

The instructor facilitated student engagement by encouraging critical questions. All students perceived him to be challenging with the content of the fast pace of the course, but also because he challenged interpersonally and intellectually. Participants mentioned that the instructor required them to have difficult conversations about oppression, discrimination, racism and conflicting narratives.

Sarah perceived that the "non-traditional class format" and the focus on "personal growth," rather than facts was an important part of her experience. The pedagogy was "a lot more personal and relationship driven and very personal growth driven," allowing her to "grow a lot as a person." Being encouraged to ask questions on topics she did not know anything about and being pushed to ask difficult questions which do not have simple answers allowed her to become a more reflective person.

Similarly, Alex felt like the support of her instructor to "explore something that I hadn't experienced before" encouraged her to engage with a community she initially felt

hostile to. Initially, she thought Ehud was a Zionist who would neglect the Palestinian side of Israeli society. She stated:

> My instructor took a very non-biased approach to this class even though he was from Israeli origins and already in fact, he actually was the one that educated me about the *Nakba*, and about how Deir Yasin was the same location as Yad Vashem. This man from Israel was helping ME strengthen my own opinion about, about Palestine and Israel, and their relationship. And I'm forever grateful to him and it also made me um, change my opinion on Israeli people, his family welcomed me into their home, they didn't have to do that, they didn't ask me you know, they didn't know where any of us were from, they just were warm, welcoming, there was no political debate, it was just, it was a dialogue that was inclusive. No one was excluded. It was really positive and peaceful.

By allowing her to choose the research topic Ehud deepened her interest and engagement: "He just let me loose, he let me do whatever I want. How cool is that, that you get the opportunity to explore something personal to you and be supported by your professor?" This freedom seems to have prompted self-directed learning: Alex went to various neighborhoods in the early morning to talk with women instead of sleeping in, demonstrating her desire to learn, read additional books about Haredi communities, watch documentaries, and engage in more conversations, numerically, than her peers. Ehud felt that he could see a clear progression of Alex's dispositions through her written reflections and final paper which ended up being on a "different level than she was when she started her project."

Maria also perceived that Ehud's high expectations and caring made her feel like she had no choice but produce "HIGH quality work." She emphasized that his constant

feedback on each of her papers in the form of new questions challenged her thinking even more, forcing her to get deeper. She explained:

> I think the expectation from the teacher was so outspoken, and I think I have met that sometimes, but not a lot. It's very much your own responsibility to do good work. We were not, we were not allowed to be lazy, either. Engagement from the professor and from the teacher was very encouraging as a student. He didn't start a class with teaching, he always started the class with asking, and we were expected to have questions.

Ehud's role was that of a mentor, framing students' experiences, while also challenging them.

## Summary of Perspective Transformation Experiences

Striving for a monocausal answers or trying to emphasize the importance of one experience relative to others, is to miss the point, according to participants. The experience ha to be understood as a *Gestalt*.

### *Research Question 2: Change*

**In what ways, if any, do study abroad participants perceive that they changed?**

*"I feel that almost every aspect of my life has been affected by my study abroad experience, whether it be my time in the classroom, my pursuit of my own faith, my interactions with other faiths, my understanding of where my career's going to, I mean, I don't have like a really clear understanding of where my career's going to go, but having a more nuanced understanding of what clear options will look like in the Middle East. My, even my interactions with my family have been affected in the sense that both Israelis and Jordanians are really affectionate, really committed to the family unit. Yeah, so I would say every aspect of my life has been positively affected by my study abroad experience, and I feel much more focused since coming home from abroad. Much more, yeah, just everything seems a little clearer and I'm really happy that that's the case." Katherine, January 29.*

Students perceived that change took various forms and resulted from interactions with local people, the hermeneutical reflective character of the course, emotional disequilibrium, cross-cultural competence development, and engagement in the classroom culture. Four types of change emerged from the data:

- **Intercultural Sensitivity**

- **Change as a Student**

- **Ideological Shift**

- **Career Change**

While the mechanisms leading to change were fairly consistent across participants, (Directed and Diverse Conversations; Hermeneutical Reflections; Emotional Disequilibrium; Cross-Cultural Competence Development; and Student Engagement in a Classroom Culture) not all participants were affected equally. The intensity of change varied across participants, affecting the quality of the change.

## Intercultural Sensitivity

Students demonstrated greater knowledge and understanding, more sensitivity during interactions, and increased adaptation of behavior – cognitive, affective, and behavioral changes, respectively. These changes were generally confined to the Israeli context, but some participants expressed that they had expanded their sensitivity to non-Israeli environments, transcending the Israeli cultures they had encountered while studying abroad.

Several participants perceived that their interest in "otherness" had increased as a result of their study abroad, making them want to deconstruct the meaning of "other."

Hailey felt that her experiences interacting with Israelis made her feel more comfortable with different people in general:

> now more confident in interacting with people who have different beliefs or opinions to mine and can still engage with those people, respecting, you know, their opinion and their beliefs and their background.

Increased confidence in intercultural interactions was prompted by the amount and quality of interactions. Participants who had more interactions with local peoples enhanced interaction confidence and self-efficacy.

Katherine hopes to "continue to practice the things that that class sort of made me aware of." She perceived that she had become "a better listener," noticing it in Jordan as well write after her program in Jerusalem, but increasingly so in the U.S. after her return.

> not trying to impose my own perspectives or allow my questions to get the information out of them that I'm looking for, but to just let them share with me what their, what their perspective is of themselves, of their country, of their relationship to my country, of their relationship to me or both.

Alex also explained that her experiences in Israel led her to change beyond the Israeli context, affecting her curiosity about other cultures, making her not only know more about people, but also more interested in learning about her own culture and being tolerant of and comfortable around diverse opinions:

> I love to interact with people that don't agree with the west or my views. It really provides me with a nuanced idea of my own country and my own opinions. How do I

> understand their perspective without it clouding my own,
> or my perspective clouding theirs?

She perceived that the effect transcended Israel in influencing her socialization since her reintegration into the United States. She made international friends after going to Jerusalem, actively seeking intercultural encounters, and is currently living with South American international students. She stated:

> When you engage in the international community, you don't want to leave, you don't want to just revert back to being an American, being an Egyptian. You want to be able to have connections and meet people that are beyond yourself. And so, it just sparked that curiosity.

Her study abroad in Israel was a turning point in her socialization. It is possible that the positive experience she associates with Jerusalem, because of its greater cultural distance (Haredi-feminist/Arab) impacted her in a way that made her more accepting of certain types of otherness than culturally "closer" ones, perhaps making her more culturally relative. Alex gave the example of a controversy in her university involving a white girl posting a racist photo on social media:

> Now, I don't think that we should ostracize her as a pariah of the community, I think this girl's ignorant. I think we should educate her. I think we should welcome her back into the community after her education. But completely shaming her and completely isolating her, not only do I think that's detrimental to TOLERANCE in general, but I think what that will do in the long term was DEEPEN her anti-black rhetoric. Maybe that comes from the fact that I've said some pretty shitty things about Jewish people before going to Israel. It's awful, it's absolutely awful, and if I could take it back, I totally would. And if someone snapped a picture of me saying those things and that was, and I am putting myself in her perspective right now, I would have appreciated the opportunity to understand and learn and become more tolerant,

**Change as a "Student"**

Change as a student, not limited to an academic context, emerged from the data. After Israel, all participants said they made conscious efforts to educate themselves outside of class - a new behavior.

Sarah mentioned having changed in her expectations of teacher-student relationship, as well as her more systematic behavior of asking questions when she does not know:

> my expectations for like a teacher student relationship changed a lot with Ehud's class because I think he just encouraged us to ask a lot of questions that we didn't understand and… I guess encouraged us a lot to feel like there doesn't have to be an answer. It was a very like comfortable environment to be open about the fact that you might not know something about a subject but you're asking why. I think a lot of the times in college like we don't want to admit that we don't know something so we're like, you don't get that like comfortable environment where you can ask a question like, but I don't understand this a lot of the times. So, it was really nice that like, we had that environment where we can be like, open about like how maybe we don't know something but like that's okay. I think it's influenced my behavior a lot as a student. Definitely like asking more questions but also just asking questions that I guess you might be afraid to ask because you'd be worried that it looks like you don't know that much, but… they could still have validity even if you don't know.

Hailey perceived that she pursues a more intentional confrontation of documents in order to be more critical of what she is presented, not only in her course materials, but also in the news. This might have been strongly influenced by her efforts to discuss with different peoples of different ages and from different communities for her research project. She felt:

more able to analyze the things that people say or the situations that I'm in and why they're happening. Just being able to sort of like critically look at something, and understand why it's happening and yeah probably just that sort of… that has probably changed it more and probably more critically aware than I was before.

Some participants developed a sort of individual responsibility to inform themselves about their environment (close and remote):

more open minded and aware of the information that I'm being given and where that information might come from and the kind of person presenting that information where they might have formed these opinions, so I think instead of just being a bit of a bystander and absorbing all the information I think making a conscious effort to analyze your given information and sort of acknowledge where it came from and why it might be given to you. Not just one side of every story which is sort of what I felt before going to Israel and then when I got there and realized that there was so much that I hadn't even, like, been subjected to, I feel like I need to be a bit more conscious of you know different media sources and I'm a bit more curious about what both… not both, but every side of the story is in, and try, even though I'm not there, try and understand what's going on because I just don't want to feel like I did when I got there and realized you know how much I didn't know. So, I think trying to be on top of that so I don't feel that way again.

Becoming more critical has allowed Hailey to unveil more biases, not only in herself, but in academia and the media:

[Now I] critically engage with given material that I might not have otherwise. It has also helped me to recognise the biases in Australian media and academic literature.

Alex's systematic search of different opinions for her research project encouraged her to be increasingly critical of the news. When she learned about an article about ultra-orthodox communities in which Reza Aslan, having talked with Haredi women,

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presented them as very conservative, she demonstrated empathy, for the Haredi community. Beyond the lack of understanding shown by Aslan, she also perceived that his work was ethically questionable. She mentioned that since her return from Israel, she submitted an abstract on her research topic to present it at a national conference but decided not to after being accepted: "I want to share it with people, but on my own terms and when I feel like it best reflects my goal: to accurately represent Haredi women." This example suggests that beyond her individual responsibility to be informed, she has developed a sense of collective or social responsibility to educate others, an interest seemingly born in the feeling of agency she developed when conducting research abroad. This development implies that trusting undergraduates to do research, even during their sophomore year, can influence their conception not only of academic work at the college level, but also of what academic work can do: educate others and develop social responsibility.

Katherine emphasized her desire to "expose myself to more news outlets," but also to expose herself to academic topics she would not have studied prior to going to Israel, such as rabbinic literature:

> something I definitely wouldn't have enrolled in before going to Israel, but I'm very curious about the texts that accompany the study of the Old Testament because I've studied the Old Testament as a Christian all my life, but there are lot of other texts that define the Jewish faith.

She also reported that her way to interact with professors and materials:

> I noticed a clear difference in how I approach my readings and how I'm digesting information and engaging with my professors as opposed to before I left.

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**Ideological Shift**

Ideological shift emerged from the data in relation to Israel in particular, and sometimes transcended the Israeli context. Some participants reported a change in their political views towards the Israeli government and its citizens, "mellowing out" for example. Another type of ideological change tackled feminism specifically.

Katherine felt that her intercultural competence influenced her ideological shift. While she did not necessarily shift politically, from being pro-Palestinian to being pro-Israeli, she perceived that learning about both sides helped her get a more nuanced understanding. She felt:

> open to various opinions that maybe I wouldn't have been otherwise, in the sense that I understand the necessity for certain security measures, certain border control tactics and what not that prior to my time in Israel I would have maybe have disregarded or swept away as an unnecessary use of force, but being on the ground and seeing, I guess something that's happening there. It's so difficult, though, because I do still believe it's an occupied state, and we were able to go and see some of the differences of what it's like to live on the other side of the wall, and that was really hard. But I guess, being there and everything kind of becoming, not clear in the sense that I understand, but clear in the sense that there's a clear picture of everything, the way that everything's entangled made me understand, and not necessarily agree, but be willing to listen to various opinions.

Alex's transformation tackled two distinct dimensions. One revolving around Israel as a state and her preconceptions about Jews and Israelis, the other tackling how learning about a community of ultra-orthodox women led to expand beyond the Israeli context.

Her intercultural competence development led her to change her views about the very existence of the Israeli state, an ideological change she perceived to be like an "identity crisis":

> I have become more sympathetic to a side that wasn't mine, which I even hate saying that I was on a side. When I physically and audibly verbalized those words, I was like 'okay this is real, like this is very real.' Like maybe I had the subconscious sentiment of it in my head, but then I was confident enough to say them out loud. It was a little bit of an identity crisis because I had been subjected to so many pro-Palestinian ideologues before that. I think it was kind of tranquil in a way that I was able to separate myself from my family a little bit, and come up with my own opinion on the subject matter rather than theirs.

Further, as mentioned before, she has been making conscious efforts to debunk lazy generalizations about Haredi women, and she deconstructed the prior misconception she held that Jews were "cheap" and that they were "the enemy":

> You know the stereotypes of Jews, they're cheap, they're exclusive, they don't like outsiders, I was welcomed into a Jew's home, I was given food, small trinkets, things, sentimental things, material things by Jewish people. It's so trivial but debunks the whole 'Jews are cheap.' I know it sounds silly, but it carries over, right? It resonates with other stereotypes. You know? It's a small stereotype that's significant of the larger form of intolerance. By debunking the whole Jews are cheap stereotype, it's so much easier to debunk the Jews are the enemy stereotype from an Arab perspective. Right? When you're shown kindness and when you're in, when you're welcomed into a community as an outsider, as an Arab, it's very hard to not like that community.

Finally, she reported that her intercultural competence development allowed her to overcome biases towards definitions of feminism and womanhood differing from hers, such as Haredi values, pro-choice arguments who "still have a seat at the table."

after talking with those Haredi woman, I still am a very strong believer in feminism, but I think there is an elegance and grace to modesty that sometimes get overlooked. But for me personally, interacting with these women made me want to have that element of femininity that I did not have. I wanted to enhance my ability to feel feminine while being modest. I think my values changed personally but not only there but in the Middle East in general.

## Career Refinement

Academic and professional orientation emerged from the data as being impacted in different degrees by the study abroad experiences. While the change was not necessarily a complete shift in career plans, it seems, however, that students became more critical of their positioning career-wise, or furthered interests and redefined their professional expectations more clearly. For example, Maria started volunteer-teaching Danish to immigrants. Although she does not think that her desire to teach was born from her study abroad, as she had been teaching along her work as a bio-analyst, and that she perceives that she wanted to work in "integration" prior to studying in Jerusalem, it is possible that her experience in Israel facilitated the connection between her desire to teach, and her interest in integration, as her research topic tackled immigration laws and encompassed aspects related to language learning. Interestingly, Maria seems to be among the only participants to be socially active to change unfair situations. While it is unlikely that her social responsibility emerged as a result of her study abroad in Israel, it could be argued that it reinforced, along with her other international experiences, her desire to change society.

Similarly, Alex perceived that her research project on ultra-orthodox women increased her interest in religion, making her declare religious studies as her dual major upon her return, desire to pursue graduate studies in philosophy of theology, and want to work on the articulation of theology and interfaith dialogue for women. She declared: "now it's my goal in my academia to create and foster an environment of interfaith dialogue so we don't have these problems anymore." She attributes her career change to her study abroad in Jerusalem:

> Israel changed my life. It really did. It's cliché, it sounds so icky, but it is. I went in very confused about my major, I wasn't as interested in religion, and I came out wanting to provide a platform for women, regardless of their belief. Extreme, fundamental, liberal, I wanted to create a better vocal table for everyone, so we can discuss our beliefs in an environment that is inclusive, includes marginalized representation, has conflicting views. Conflict is good. Conflict is, I learned that conflict is good. It means passion. But what I want to do is use academic to channel that passion and turn it into something tolerant, interfaith, interdialogue, intercultural communication. Let's learn about each other in a way that's respectful and provides insight so we can create a global sisterhood.

Alex emphasized that the impact of her study abroad was of a rare intensity, a sublime experience that was at once positively transformative, but also uncomfortable and disconcerting:

> the overall experience of it was so groundbreaking to the formation of my academic and professional identity that I could never replicate the experience, but if I could, I don't think I would do it, because what I have right now is SO GREAT from it that I don't want to touch it. I would never want to continue altering it, only developing it. Like altering in the extreme sense. I don't want to go back to Israel and think that I want to be a dentist. I know what I want to do, I know where I want to be. I would go back to Israel to add details and maybe answer some questions

about academia, but I don't want to have another mindboggling experience."

Katherine reported that while she was already interested in working in journalism and in the Middle East, her commitment to the region and to her career became much more personal and reflective of her professional positioning:

> it wasn't my place to be my gaining from an Israeli and Palestinian issue. I just felt like it wasn't my place. I'll never have a sense of ownership over that space and those places. Those events will never be mine, because I'm not Palestinian, I'm not Jordanian, I'm not Israeli, I'm not Jewish, Muslim, whatever. I am Christian and some of those spaces are tied to my faith, and so that's one thing that's still very hard what part of this is mine and what part of it do I have to respect as not being something for me to approach. I'm still trying to figure out how much can I emotionally attach myself to the place without being disrespectful. How much can I claim it as part of my identity without being inappropriate? Just what sense of ownership do I have over that space as someone who's studying it versus someone who has heritage there.

### Summary of Types of Change

Participants reported that while they perceived they changed during their study abroad, some of them also gained awareness of change transcending the Israeli context. Israel can evoke very antagonistic reactions because of the context in which the country was created, as well as the continuous tensions within its society and with its Arab neighbors, with global effects.

### Quantitative Findings: Intercultural Sensitivity Scale

Below are participants' results of the Intercultural Sensitivity Scale six months after their study abroad in Jerusalem. In the columns labelled "General," are the

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participants' responses to the questions when they did not address a particular culture, such as "I think people from other cultures are narrow-minded." In the columns labelled "Israel" are the participants' responses to the questions when they specified the Israeli context, such as "I think people from Israel are narrow-minded." The results were tabulated using a weighted 1 to 5 Likert system following the process outlined in Fritz, Möllenberg & Chen (2002).

Although five participants are not enough for generalizable statistical purposes, the individual results below indicate that some participants had a clear sensitivity difference when they thought about general cultural "others" than when they though specifically about Israelis.

| Intercultural Factor | Alex | | Katherine | | Hailey | | Sarah | | Maria | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | General | Israel | General | Israel | General | Israel | General | Israel | General | Israel |
| Interaction Engagement | 3.51 | 3.21 | 3.71 | 3.71 | 3.74 | 3.44 | 3.42 | 3.58 | 3.26 | 3.16 |
| Respect of Cultural Difference | 4.64 | 1.75 | 4.65 | 4.12 | 5.00 | 4.46 | 4.47 | 4.00 | 4.30 | 3.76 |
| Interaction Confidence | 3.81 | 4.81 | 3.91 | 3.62 | 3.98 | 3.18 | 3.62 | 3.62 | 3.39 | 2.67 |
| Interaction Attentiveness | 4.46 | 5.00 | 4.73 | 5.00 | 3.95 | 4.34 | 3.05 | 3.66 | 3.73 | 4.00 |
| Interaction Enjoyment | 3.34 | 2.86 | 4.71 | 4.00 | 4.71 | 4.43 | 4.32 | 4.00 | 4.00 | 4.32 |
| Average | 3.95 | 3.53 | 4.34 | 4.09 | 4.28 | 3.97 | 3.77 | 3.77 | 3.74 | 3.58 |

*Figure 27: Participants' Scores on the Intercultural Sensitivity Scale*

All participants perceived their scores for Israeli-specific contexts to be the same as or lower than their general scores, a finding which would seem to contrast with a hypothesis that cultural exposure increases cross-cultural competence. However, both amateur and expert participants at various tasks tend to rate themselves as simply above average (Burson, Larrick & Klaymon 2005).

All factors except interaction attentiveness revealed a discrepancy between general and Israel specific contexts. However, interaction attentiveness to Israelis was higher than the general for all participants, which might be explained by students' new familiarity with Israeli contexts.

Alex's scores demonstrate a difference between general and Israel specific intercultural sensitivity on all factors. Respect for cultural differences is much lower for the Israeli context (1.75) compared with general IS (4.64), whereas confidence and attentiveness were higher in the Israeli context. The large discrepancy on cultural differences was primarily due to her response to the statement "I think people from Israel are narrow-minded" to which she replied she strongly agrees. Interestingly, Alex mentioned during her interview that she did not always enjoy her interactions with Israelis because of the intellectual conflicts they were bringing, but that she saw their value.

One possibility for Alex's overall scores being so low might be that she was humbled by her study abroad in Israel and realized that the extent of her intercultural experiences remains very limited. Another explanation could be that other participants' scores were inflated in particular in the unspecified context, which is not uncommon with such instruments (Jackson, 201; Paulhus, 2002).

Maria was incontestably the participant who had the most intercultural experiences. However, her general scores on the survey were significantly lower than other participants. This might be explained by her awareness of what intercultural sensitivity really means, leading her to "humble" scores, or perhaps by the cultures she might think of when answering questions related to "general cultural other." Indeed, she might be thinking about cultures she encountered, and which are notably different from hers, such as Indian and Venezuelan cultures, which could be explained by the "cultural distance" theory. Other participants might be thinking of cultures they were exposed to as tourists, which might not necessarily have led them to comprehend the extent of cultural distance and thus only allow them to have positive and perhaps shallow interactions compared with their Israeli experiences. Another potential explanation could be that Maria did not get an academic opportunity to debrief after her return from Israel (Jackson, 2012).

These findings might suggest that when such surveys are administered, we do not know what participants have in mind when instruments refer vaguely to "people from other cultures."

**Quantitative Findings: Learning Activities Survey**

All research participants reported having gone through perspective transformation as a result of their study abroad in Israel, perceiving the experience as challenging and leading to personal growth. However, not everyone named their change "transformation." Interestingly, Maria reported having undergone 8 TL phases in the LAS but did not report having undergone a disorienting dilemma. She rejected the term of "transformation" at first during the interview, before acknowledging that she had radically changed her views

of Israelis. All students developed some level of transformation, although not every participant acknowledged having an experience catalyzing disorientation. Further, some students, like Alex and Sarah, argued that their transformation resulted from both specific events and an "amalgam of things." Alex mentioned talking with ultra-orthodox girls and going to Yad Vashem triggering her change and making her aware of the need to change. Katherine had a similar disorienting experience with street musicians, and Hailey mentioned speaking with ultra-orthodox teenagers as a disorienting conversation. These interactions with Israelis echo a "disorienting dilemma" (Mezirow, 2000). This disorienting dilemma is the major predictor of perspective transformation (Stone et al., 2017), as quantitative findings suggest that the first phase of perspective transformation begins with the disorienting dilemma. Maria seemed to be less moved by her experience, which could potentially be explained by her professed lack of disorienting experiences. Indeed, although she reported having experienced 8 TL phases in the LAS, her papers, interview, and Ehud's interview suggested that she did not change significantly compared with the other participants.

**Summary of Findings**

Going on field trips and meeting with social actors of Israeli society, reflecting systematically, being confronted with emotional disequilibrium, developing cross-cultural competence and staying engaged allowed students to renegotiate the initial representations of Israelis.

**Discussion**

Zull (2012) argues that "educators are most likely to succeed when they give their students the right kinds of experiences, those they cannot help thinking about' (p. 174). Studying abroad increased students' intercultural literacy. Literacy is, for Freire and Macedo (2005), at the core of what is worth knowing. Macedo defines literacy as not only "reading the word," but also as "reading the world." Macedo states that "literacy is an eminently political phenomenon and it must be analyzed within the context of a theory of power relations and an understanding of social and cultural reproduction and production" (Macedo, 2003, p. 13). In this study, students became aware of power relations within Israeli society, and their own attitudes towards the host culture. The following section highlights the ramifications of each of the categories identified and connects them to the existing literature.

*Discussion of Directed and Diverse Conversations*

Informing students about cultural differences and their complexities and nuances appeared to be particularly significant in the holistic growth of participants. Engagement with locals while abroad was fundamental to students' understanding. It allowed students to see how communities are shaped by place, which is in turn shaped by people. As Maria and Sarah noticed, Israelis know a lot about their ancestry and about the stories and history of their country. Had they not studied in Jerusalem and taken Ehud's course, they might not have had access to these opportunities. Place-based pedagogy was essential for engaging those students in critical learning (Pipitone, 2018).

Meaningful interactions with cultural "others" is an important part of the expectations of study abroad experiences. However, for a variety of reasons these meaningful interactions do not always take place. When interactions happen, they are not always "meaningful," partially because students do not necessarily know how to engage with locals. In this case study, all students reported having experienced a conversation that had a significant impact on them. The category reported as "talking with people" offered a parallel to the "disorienting dilemma" mentioned in the TL literature. All participants quickly realized the ease with which they could interact with local populations, but they also acknowledged they would not have talked with people if they had not been required to do so. This finding echoes that of Jurasek, Howard, and O'Maley (1996), who argued that "students observe, participate, and engage in meaningful conversations in which the complexities and contradictions of individuals and cultures are constantly in play on both sides-which is so critical in cultural interactions. Views and perspectives must constantly be refined for understanding to occur" (p. 29). Ethnographic learning, which encompasses observation and conversation with people from local communities, has proven to be an effective activity to develop students' knowledge of the place, but also to trigger intercultural growth.

Dialogue is, according to both evidence and theory, central to transformation and humanization. Freire (1970) places dialogue at the core of transformative pedagogies, meaning-making and disruption of status quo. In the context of talking with locals abroad, these dialogues, acted like "stimuli" (Bennett, 2008, p. 17), even when students had interactions which they perceived to be "unsuccessful." Covert (2014) also found that instances of unsuccessful interactions in Chile led students to reflect on their intercultural

competence. The conversations participants had with locals often revolved around issues of power, asking them about their views on Palestinians and neighboring states, on the commitment through the IDF, on the integration of refugees and migrant workers and on the self-actualization of Haredi women. Kolb and Kolb (2005) state that "Conflict, differences, and disagreement are what drive the learning process." (p. 194). However, although this might be true in the case of Alex who had conflictual and controversial conversations about ultra-orthodox women and feminism, it is not necessarily the case for other students who instead experienced disagreement with themselves rather than with others. These conversations were not necessarily followed by complete changes in perspective but provided instead a nuanced layer, adding complexity to students' understanding.

Participants often reflected on their own positioning by asking questions, adapting their inquiries and behaviors, and taking into account the relative power they had with their interviewees. These conversations helped with the humanization and individuation of Israelis and other local populations on the basis of "horizontal relationships" (Freire) and enabled transformation of the participants. An important part of the conversations and of the subsequent learning, however, revolved around the diversity of opinions, which generated awareness of heterogeneity among people living in Israel.

The amount of time spent with locals and the quality of these interactions is an important and growing part of the literature on study abroad characteristics and effects. Students all hypothesized that had they not talked with locals, they would likely not have been affected by their study abroad experience as much. This finding regarding students being affected by their interactions with people from the host culture confirm those of

Martinsen (2011) who argued that spending time with native speakers acts as a predictor of students' intercultural sensitivity increase, even during a short-term study abroad. Lee (2012) found students appreciated interviewing people from the host culture to gain insights in the culture via "ethnographic interviews."

Talking with different people seems to have boosted some participants' confidence (Hailey, Katherine, and Alex in particular). This finding is consistent with those of Petersdotter, Niehoff, and Freund (2017) who found that social contacts with members of the host culture "play a decisive role in developing higher self-efficacy while sojourning" (p. 177). In this study, self-efficacy development grew when cross-cultural competence grew. However, the two do not seem to follow monotonic or causal paths.

*Discussion of Hermeneutical Reflections*

The act of reflecting on change seems to include a strong performative element, as if thinking about change was a self-fulfilling prophecy. Paige (2015) argued that reflection is a "key principle of learning" (p. 566) as it helps students' intercultural competence development, which Savicki and Price (2017b) also argued helps foster perspective transformation. Savicki and Price (2017b) state that "cognitive complexity sets the stage for reflection both in terms of describing in detail distinctions observed and in terms of integrating all aspects of the self" (p. 53). The centrality of both cognitive and affective aspects, which they assert to be essential to effective reflection, was confirmed in the findings. Participants' hermeneutical reflections mentioned knowledge, understanding (cognitive) and emotions (affective). Interestingly, emotions appeared in the data as to emerge during conversations with locals, during reflections as a result of

written or group recapitulations, in class, and after students' return. The omnipresence of emotions and reflections on emotions was particularly salient. Participants who displayed the most cognitive and affective phenomena in their reflections (written reports and final paper) and during their in-depth interviews seemed to have gone deeper in their intercultural growth, echoing Savicki and Price's (2017b) findings. While it does not mean that their intercultural competence is "objectively" higher than students who did not share emotions, the awareness of personal change was perceived to be more impactful. For example, Alex and Katherine constantly articulated cognitive and affective dimensions in their reflections, systematically examining their assumptions and behavior, whereas Maria and Sarah did not open up as much. Different types of reflection have different influences on individuals: critical self-reflections appear to reinforce examination of one's positionality, for example. Students who reflected on their perspective, their positionality, the influence of their culture and of their upbringing on their understanding of Israel clearly demonstrated that they developed a new critical perspective during study abroad.

Mezirow (2000) argues that not all phases need to be experienced for someone to be transformed. However, participants' responses to the LAS sometimes appeared to be in contradiction with what they said during interviews. Maria indicated more TL phases than Katherine, and yet did not insert much personal reflection in her papers and interviews. Hailey selected only 4 phases in the LAS, but her interviews and papers were much more reflective and she presented herself to be more affected by her study abroad than Maria. The hermeneutical reflections seem to have created the opportunity for triggering self-examination (Phase 2 according to Mezirow, 2000), and the "deep

assessment of personal assumptions and alienation created by new roles" (Phase 3). As the data from the written assignments and interviews indicate, the repetitive nature of reflection was perceived by the participants as contributing to their emotional awareness and prior opinions. This finding on the importance of reflection confirms those of Biagi and colleagues (2012) who argued that guided reflection had a positive effect on students' intercultural competence development. Reflection can influence both perspective transformation and intercultural competence, making an argument for intercultural competence as an aspect of perspective transformation.

Additionally, the importance of multiple forms of reflection, and time spent alone were beneficial for cross-cultural competence. Martinsen (2011) found that taking time away from the target culture affects students' intercultural (cross-cultural) sensitivity, suggesting that "cultural sensitivity tends to increase the more students interact with native speakers, but only up to a certain point" (p. 133).

The usefulness of guided reflections via explicit topics given by the instructor helped students focus their attention on specific aspects of the cultures they were encountering. Pipitone and Raghavan (2017) suggest that reflection can be tackled in three distinct ways such as: 1) how the place is thought about (which refers to issues regarding representation), 2) how it is felt (referring to embodied experiences and emotions), and 3) how it is seen (regarding students' perceptions of the culture). Participants addressed all three aspects via the guided reflections provided by our instructor. This helped students identify specific similarities and differences across cultures and develop critical cultural awareness about their positionality and their biases. The importance of guided reflection on critical cultural growth confirms studies by Biagi

and colleagues (2012) and those of Tajes and Ortiz (2010), although their studies assessed such gains quantitatively and Tajes and Ortiz' framework encompassed students reflecting in groups.

*Discussion of Emotions*

By providing more nuanced perspectives on immigration, Palestinian conditions, or identity, the process of talking with people, seems to have brought a certain level of cognitive dissonance to several participants. Alex mentioned shame, guilt, and discomfort during and after some interactions, but also an "identity crisis" after changing her opinions. This intense emotion disturbed one of the core elements of her cultural and familial identity, echoing Ellwood's (2011) idea that her "molar" (core cultural identity) was shaken and created a sort of movement leading Alex to let go of "molarized roles." Alex's emotional disequilibrium created a "line of flight," allowing her to dissolve her molar and open to the unknown, which she felt was "liberating." Katherine also talked about feeling humbled and liberated when she realized her biases, whereas Hailey felt embarrassed when she became aware of her lack of knowledge. These findings align with aspects of the transformative learning phases which include a "self-examination with feelings of fear, anger, guilt, or shame" (Mezirow, 2000, p. 22).

Emotions were omnipresent, but mainly through reflections did emotions become reified into longer term cognitive, affective, and behavioral changes. According to Bennett, "things become more real as we perceive them in more sensitive (i.e. more highly discriminated or complex) ways" (Bennett, 2012, p. 103). The strong emotions acted as disequilibrium in response to chronic stressors coming from disruption of opinions. They led students to develop strategies to cope with such disruption. Participants developed

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ways to address their stress by confronting it in their written and group reflections. They identified it before fighting it through active plans to increase their knowledge in order to affect the source of their stress (feeling ignorant, for example). This process led students to develop their self-efficacy and their feelings of satisfaction, and it confirms findings from the literature on coping strategies (Savicki, 2010). This pattern also resonates with transformative learning phases. Moinette (2011) identified the "primacy of emotions" (p. 54) to be the initiator of perspective transformation during a study abroad program and argued that negative emotions were constantly counterbalanced by more positive ones. Participants sometimes reported positive emotions replacing negative ones, but it was not always the case, as some negative emotions, such as anger and frustration, deepened in the light of more understanding of social issues participants observed in Israel. Although Mezirow claims that transformation happens only from a disorienting dilemma, transformation emerged in some cases from an articulation of conversations, having strong emotions during and after such interactions, self-examination leading to feelings of shame, planning a course of action to avoid negative emotions; and acquiring knowledge (Cranton, 1994; King, 2009; Mezirow, 2000). This suggests that unlike much of the literature on TL, which argues that perspective transformation occurs from an explosive event, participants' reflections and strong emotions occurred cumulatively, via a series of disruptive encounters. Talking with different people did not in itself necessarily lead to transformation. However, some types of conversations, because they contradicted students' assumptions and beliefs, led students to feel shame—a feeling they critically explored.

*Discussion of Cross-Cultural Development*

Unsurprisingly, participants intercultural knowledge (cognitive) preceded their intercultural sensitivity (affective) which developed before their intercultural adroitness (behavioral), supporting the long-established evidence that all three aspects are dynamic processes in constant evolution (Chen & Starosta, 1997). Most participants' emotions seemed to go from negative to positive, and their written reports also went from intolerant to tolerant, which led to informed adaptation of behavior, as on a "continuum" (Bennett, 1993; Covert, 2014).

Participants made intentional changes to their interpersonal behavior when interacting with Israelis (Covert, 2014), which finds similarities with certain transformative learning phases (Mezirow, 2000). Indeed, phases 5 through 9 seem to be encompassed by students' agency and self-efficacy development, leading them to plan how to avoid being unsuccessful in interactions, and implementing these new behaviors.

Participants demonstrated that their cross-cultural competence was affected at the cognitive, affective, and behavioral levels, a finding confirmed by studies by Medina Lopez-Portillo (2004) and Martinsen (2011).

*Discussion of Engagement*

School engagement is argued to be the "holy grail of learning" (Sinatra, Heddy, & Lombardi, 2015), its multidimensionality encompassing behavioral, emotional, and cognitive dimensions (Fredricks et al., 2004), but also an agentic dimension (Reeve & Tseng, 2011). Behavioral engagement leads to certain actions including attendance or

participation in class. Emotional engagement is described as leading a student to a feeling of belonging in a school community. Cognitive engagement includes efforts to achieve tasks and include self-regulation (Fredricks et al., 2004). Finally, agentic engagement occurs "when a student constructively contributes to the flow of instruction" (Sinatra, Heddy, & Lombardi, 2015, p. 2). Participants' mindset towards Israelis and their learning experiences evolved. The feeling of belonging to the group and feeling accepted by classmates encouraged students to get out of their comfort zones, confirming research on the influence of peers on students' school engagement, not only at the emotional level, but also at the behavioral, cognitive, and agentic levels (Fredricks et al., 2004). The role of their instructor and the positive and supportive relationship they had with their instructor was central in fostering students' engagement not only in class with the content, but also with locals.

These findings are consistent with earlier studies examining the role of personal investment (Braskamp, 2009), as well as that of instructors in fostering student interest in the host culture (Anderson, Lorenz, & White, 2016; Spenader & Retka, 2015). Engberg and Jourian (2015) argue that the role of faculty being both supportive and challenging is pivotal not only in students' engagement, but also in their intercultural wonderment, which is fairly similar to intercultural competence.

It seems that the curiosity which was fostered by students' engagement to explore the target culture allowed students to ponder their biases.

Bennett (2013) argues that intercultural sensitivity constantly evolves because it is a continuum. While the study did not collect quantitative data as a pre-post-post survey, it is important to note that students were constantly reminded of their study abroad. Participants' intercultural sensitivity continued to evolve after students returned to their home countries. While Alex and Katherine were the most vocal about their increased intercultural sensitivity beyond the Israeli context, others expressed such change in more discrete ways.

Prior international experiences are often perceived to be a factor leading students to experience more transformative learning phases, as Stone, Duerden, Duffy, Hill, and Witesman (2017) argue. However, findings seem to contradict their findings regarding the influence of prior travel experience which "increases the likelihood of experiencing TL" (Stone et al., 2017). Maria's intense and longer international experiences might influence her perspective transformation in Israel, perhaps hindering perspective transformation as if the intensity of her prior experiences had rendered her "desensitized" to smaller intensity experiences. Another explanation could be that Maria was used to interacting with people from various cultures in her everyday life. She had previously volunteered in India and Venezuela. Maria not having identified her change earlier might be explained from multiple angles. First, she has had many international experiences, such as when she volunteered in Venezuela for 9 months and India for 3 months, which were perhaps more emotionally disorienting than Israel. These longer working experiences might also have been more disruptive to her than a three-week study abroad program in a country she considered to be fairly Western and similar to her Danish culture.

Cultural distance might indeed have been a factor. Indeed, having experienced cultures more different from hers than Israeli cultures seem to be, the relative similarities she experienced in Israel might not have pushed her out of her comfort zone as much as her three months working with children with disabilities in Calcutta. Katherine, who had only traveled to Brazil the year before her study abroad, reported a higher transformation that students who had extensive short-term vacation with family. This could confirm the findings of Pedersen (2010) that intervention is significant for students who have never been abroad.

The intensity in perceived change varied greatly among participants. For example, Maria did not perceive having changed until the interview six months after the experience, whereas Alex and Katherine knew they changed while in Israel. Sarah felt that every experience, reading, or conversation, was leading to change in a gradual way.

Many students' statements in interviews did not correspond to the Transformative Learning phases they selected in the Learning Activities Survey. Similarly, students who demonstrated a high cross-cultural sensitivity and competence towards Israelis and even general intercultural competence may have had lower scores on the Intercultural Sensitivity Scale, suggesting that self-assessment has the potential to lead to inflated perceptions (Jackson, 2011). While some students perceived a higher intercultural sensitivity, others might have been humbled by their study abroad experience, leading to lower scores on the IS scale. Although both instruments have records of reliability and validity it seems like they did not always capture the experiences of the participants of this dissertation.

*Discussion of Change as a Student: Personal and Social Responsibility*

With the exception of Maria, all participants returned to academic settings after their study abroad in Israel, and they all reported that being in their classrooms made them think about their experiences in Israel. Alex explained that her courses in Scotland constantly reminded her of the learning experience she had had in Jerusalem and how the freedom of inquiry she had there was invaluable compared with the formal structure of her courses in Edinburgh. Katherine made similar comments regarding her courses on her U.S. campus. Although she explained that she appreciates her courses as they remain the windows to the Middle East, she is constantly reminded of her experiences in Israel. It seems that returning to an academic setting, especially with a focus on the Middle East help continue the cycle of reflection initiated in Ehud's course in Israel and could help explain why Alex and Katherine seem to have changed in more intense ways. Both Katherine and Alex have remained in close contact with Ehud, either emailing him on a regular basis, seeing him over winter break in Israel, or skyping with him every other week, a way for both students to further their reflections and keep a close connection to their "mentor." This finding of the continuous reflective cycle confirms Vande Berg's (2004, 2007, 2009) and Pedersen's (2010) argument that "cultural mentoring" is recommended for helping students' intercultural development. They argue that study abroad programs should be structured before, during, and after in order to follow students' growth.

The centrality of the research project emerged strongly from the data and seems to have had a positive impact on all participants. Alex's wish to present her findings about the self-actualization of Haredi women at a conference followed by her decision to cancel

her presentation made her perfectly embody what Paul (2006) calls a "public scholar" (p. 13). While most students developed a sense of urgency to educate themselves (Tarrant, Rubin, & Stoner, 2015), Alex developed a sense of social responsibility to educate not only herself, but others as well. While this dissertation did not compare the outcomes of courses quantitatively, it provides a basis for arguing that courses on sustainability are not necessarily the primarily means to instill a sense of social responsibility in students (Tarrant, Rubin, & Stoner, 2015). Inquiry-based learning's positive effects abroad and the proportion of students engaging in research abroad remain neglected areas in the literature that even Open Doors has not documented (Streitwieser, 2009). While Alex did not specifically attribute her desire to pursue graduate education to the inquiry-based learning such a finding seems to correlate with Hathaway and colleagues (2002) who argue that research at the undergraduate level, abroad or not, can foster interest in graduate education. The importance of inquiry-based learning to develop appreciation for research processes and students' intercultural growth confirms Streitwieser's (2009) argument that undergraduate research can be "a powerful vehicle for more deeply exploring what global citizenship means through immersing students in the intensive study of an issue of personal interest in another culture" (2009, p. 401). Indeed, while research training might be preferable for students planning to conduct more rigorous research in the future, initiation to research through study abroad can profoundly affect students in their search for understanding.

## *Discussion of Ideological Shift*

The critical pedagogy employed by Ehud, although he did not use the term specifically, seems to have influenced students' perceptions.

Interestingly, both Alex and Katherine reported having an ideological shift, or at least a redefined vision of their political stance towards the Israeli state, and feminism. It seems like having access to the Israeli narrative, and even to the Jewish narrative in the case of Alex's experience at the Holocaust Museum of Yad Vashem, led them to have a "perspective consciousness" (Hanvey, 1976), or a "peripheral vision" (Stoddard & Cornwell, 2003). The findings of their ideological shift affirm Stoddard and Cornwell (2003) regarding global citizenship being achieved via the intentional and deliberate research of multiple perspectives. Hailey also mentioned her desire to not be a bystander and to critique intensions behind messages.

*Discussion of Career Refinement*

Ellwood (2011) argued that her participants' expectations prior to their study abroad revealed to be different from their perceived change. Indeed, while her findings indicated that her participants thought they would change significantly as a result of their participation in an SA, they realized after their experience that they did not change as much. Interestingly, the findings of this dissertation argue the opposite: while no student had strong expectations regarding their change —a position corroborated by Ehud— they were transformed. Students might have thought that a sort-term program in a country whose languages they do not speak could not bring much change beyond extended knowledge of history or geography (Benson et al., 2013; Ellwood, 2011)

Not all participants experienced a reevaluation of professional goals, but study abroad can impact people's interests in such a way that they reconsider their professional trajectory. As mentioned in the literature review, Vatalaro, Szente, and Levin (2015)

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found that the self-awareness that students often gain in their study abroad experience can give them a new perspective on possible futures.

## Summary of Discussion

Perspective transformation experiences emerged as a *Gestalt* revolving around the course as it lead students to "becoming critically aware of how and why their assumptions have come to constrain the way we perceive, understand, and feel about our world; changing these structures of habitual expectation to make possible a more inclusive, discriminating, and integrative perspective; and finally, making choices or otherwise acting upon these new understandings" (Mezirow, 1991, p. 167). Students demonstrated changes of perspective as a result of their study abroad program, and many aspects of their identity and life were impacted by this perspective change.

Based on the course assignments, Learning Activities Survey results, and the in-depth interviews, all five participants experienced overall perspective transformation according to King's guidelines (2009). This finding supports previous qualitative and quantitative studies arguing that transformative learning occurs in study abroad settings (Bamber & Hankin, 2011; Stone et al., 2017; Strange & Gibson, 2017; Trilokekar & Kukar, 2011). This short-term study abroad led to overall perspective transformation, the type of experiences provided through study abroad might be more influential than length of time regarding perspective transformation and intercultural competence development. Indeed, the types of change perceived by some participants embody the last phase of Mezirow's Transformative Learning Theory regarding the "reintegration into one's life on the basis of conditions dictated by one's new perspective" (Mezirow, 2000, p. 22).

This research demonstrated the perceived holistic nature of the experience for each participant, triggering disorientation and prompting them to having difficulty to disentangle and identify distinct and specific events or experiences as having influenced them more than others. The whole experience of studying abroad, talking with people, reflecting and having uncomfortable emotions can be thought of as a series of events, an "accumulation," which, instead of being a clear-cut dilemma, can be thought as a unit composed of a multitude of transactional learning experiences. Talking with people seemed to have triggered or initiated the other parts of the experience, but talking alone was not perceived as leading to change, in Israel nor upon the students' return to their home countries. Thus, acknowledging that a course design assumed a mentoring role in helping the participants reflect on their multitude of input and output while in Israel can have a positive impact on students' understanding of their experiences. Further, the ubiquity and almost systematic habit of reflecting while in Israel might explain the deeper level post study abroad changes.

## Connections amongst Findings

The following section proposes an interpretation of the links between categories. "Recontextualizing" (Morse, 1994, p. 24) through the findings of established knowledge, is an attempt to contribute to the body of knowledge on perspective transformation and intercultural competence in relation to study abroad.
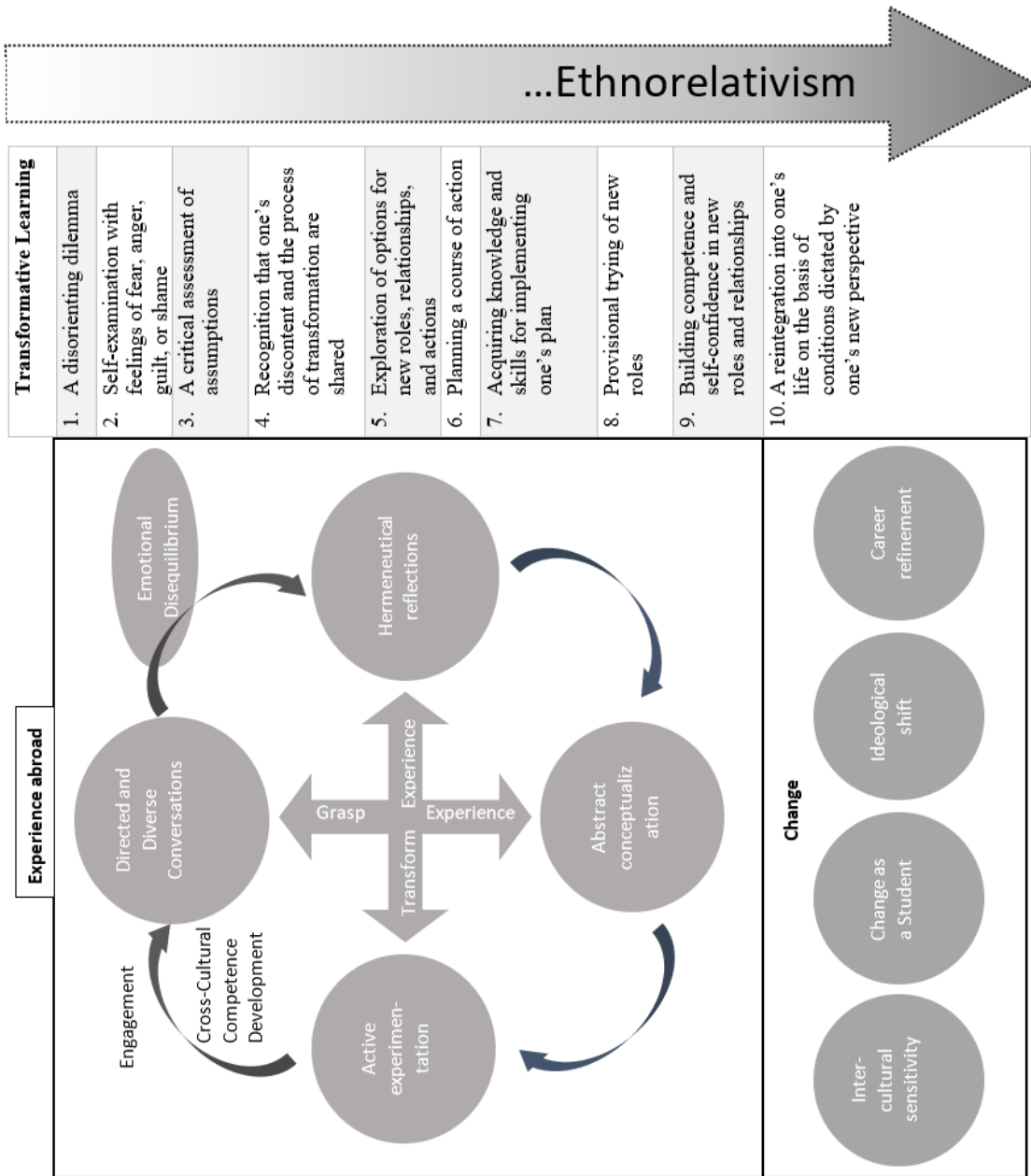
*Figure 28: Model of experiences and change via a study abroad.*

# Chapter 5: Conclusion

The purpose of this dissertation was to explore the experiences of students participating in a short-term study abroad in a non-traditional destination. This research sought to address the lack of knowledge regarding the types of experiences and influence of short-term study abroad programs. Many of the perspective transformation experiences discussed in this study can be implemented in short-term study abroad programs, and study abroad educators may find the type of curriculum mentioned in this case study to be easily implementable.

Participants studied abroad in a short-term program in Israel over the summer 2017. This dissertation was guided by the following research questions:

1. What were the participants' experiences in a short-term study abroad program in Israel?
2. In what ways, if any, do study abroad participants perceive that they changed?

This qualitative case study investigated the experiences of participants during study abroad and the subsequent changes they perceived, if any, up to six months after their experiences. One of the purposes of this study was to identify factors leading to change in perspective and identity. Another dimension of this research was to understand how these experiences influenced the types of change, and what changes students identified during and after study abroad. Data were collected through students' papers and other documents, surveys, and in-depth interviews. My notes as a researcher participant, field notes, students' papers, surveys, and interview transcriptions were analyzed inductively to stay as close to the data as possible. The perspective

transformation experiences and types of change were identified and compared among participants.

This study contributes to the literature by adding insights regarding the broader impact of study abroad on students. It demonstrates that students who participate in short-term study abroad programs as short as four weeks can undergo perspective transformation, cross-cultural competence development, and even sometimes general intercultural sensitivity. The results of this study indicated that students' perspective transformation revolved around five main components all intricately related to each other:

1. Directed and Diverse Conversations

2. Hermeneutical Reflections

3. Emotional Disequilibrium

4. Cross-Cultural Competence Development

5. Student Engagement in Classroom Culture

These components created a *gestalt* leading to perspective transformation. However, participants perceived change differently, based on their individual differences, their mindset in relation to transformation, and prior international experiences. Change emerged in four different areas:

1. Intercultural Sensitivity

2. Change as a Student

3. Ideological Shift

4. Career Refinement

These findings inform the practice regarding study abroad curriculum development and suggest that educators build their courses around interactions with individuals from the host culture and encourage students to explore aspects of the culture of their choosing under the mentoring of faculty. Such interactions should be the center of the curriculum, as a departure point for students' reflections. Interactions should also be complex and address deep aspects of the host cultures, focus on controversial issues, and involve consideration of their home culture. Finally, multifaceted reflections should bracket experience to allow students to set aside individual time to think critically, and to share what they learned and their emotional responses.

## Limitations

This research is subject to inherent limitations. Creswell (2002) considers that "limitations are potential weaknesses or problems with the study that are identified by the researcher" (p.253). The limitations I have identified revolve around: 1) my biases, 2) the difficulty to generalize from the findings, and 3) self-reported surveys.

1) The first limitation I have identified is my biases resulting from my prior study abroad experiences and my current status as an international student. Having participated in several study abroad programs of various length and focus, my positive perspective on the value of international education. My subjectivity might be perceived as a limitation in some instances, as I believe that I had a perspective transformation as a result of my participation in this very study abroad program. Further, the interview process is biased by nature (Fontana and Frey, 1994), despite bracketing efforts. However, several steps were taken to balance this issue, as recommended by Creswell (2007, 2015). The research

design in this case study allowed for data triangulation by integrating diverse sources of data at different points in time, reinforcing the overall quality of this study. The combination of the assignments participants wrote while studying abroad, my own observations as a researcher-participant, the surveys and the in-depth interviews of all participants who took Ehud's course roughly six months after return from Jerusalem, and the member-check, together helped minimize this limitation.

2)  The second important limitation is the small size of the group. As Creswell (2007) argues, the intent of qualitative research "is not to generalize to a population, but to develop an in-depth exploration of a central phenomenon" (p. 173). My participants were not racially or ethnically diverse, and all of them came from Western countries. Although my participants were socio-economically and sexually diverse, collecting data from participants with different racial, ethnic, socio-economic, religious, or gender identification, could provide different results.

3)  Finally, this research likely captures only a snapshot of participants' perceptions. The self-report nature of surveys imposes limitations on the reliability of scores. However, the in-depth interviews with their open-ended questions, enabled a more complex perspective of the participants. The accounts might have suffered from recall bias, because "meanings are situated" (Ezzy, 2002, p. 81). Memories shared during interviews can sometimes focus on certain aspects of experiences and ignore others.

## Recommendations for Future Research

Understanding students' perspective transformation and how students perceive change in relation to their study abroad experience remains an important topic to be researched, particularly in less commonly chosen countries. Further research could

investigate the impact of instruction on perspective transformation in order to inform international educators of the effects of teaching choices on their students. Future research might also consider the ineffective experiences hindering perspective transformation, or even look at negative transformation. Indeed, some transformations are difficult to assess and thus remain marginally studied. Future research might include a larger sample size, as a larger scale would allow a wider understanding of the types of perspective transformation experiences and help identify new types of change.

A comparison between several less traditional destinations might be interesting. Investigating a program in relation to language learning might lead to identifying the effects of language on students' perspective transformation. Another interesting research could explore the religious dimension of Jewish student studying in Israel and how this interacts with intercultural growth and perspective transformation. Research might also investigate if and how short-term study abroad programs may affect subsequent study abroad experiences—that is, whether there is any emergent benefit or effect of "serial study abroad".

## Implications for Theory and Practice in International Education

Several implications can be drawn from this case study. As Stake (2000) states it, "how we learn from the singular case is related to how the case is like and unlike other cases" (p. 442). Many findings support research on the characteristics of "effective" study abroad programs and their impact on the continuums of both transformation (King, 2009) and intercultural competence. Although the data was analyzed inductively, experiences framed most of the students' thoughts about the course. Carefully crafted short-term

programs aiming at experiential learning can lead to transformative learning which can lead to cross cultural and intercultural growth. Studying abroad transcends outcomes that programs continuously seek. The characteristics that emerged from the data, such as meaningful interactions with local populations, systematic reflections incorporating not only cognitive but also affective aspects, experiencing and reflecting on negative emotions, being engaged in an inquiry-based project using ethnographic methods to inquiry, being encouraged by both classmates and instructor, and developing cross-cultural competence towards local communities were all aspects of students' experiences' that contributed to their change of worldview.

Four significant implications emerged from this dissertation. They include:

1) insights into the theories of transformative learning, experiential learning, and intercultural competence development

2) the centrality of having directed and diverse conversations with different people about complex social issues and engaging in various spaces

3) the impact of hermeneutical and multimodal guided reflections

4) the prevalence of critical experiential pedagogy

These implications suggest that if we want students to change while abroad, or as a later result of having been abroad, we need to teach them how to change or how to engage in experiences that might trigger change by teaching them strategies abroad for fostering transformation. We also need to be vocal about our expectations and ideological stances on the goal of international education. Although the findings do not specifically focus on how to develop such dimensions, one potential way to improve these aspects of students'

experiences in short-term study abroad programs could be to teach students action plans or strategies before, during, and after their programs.

1) The first implications of this dissertation are theoretical. Experiential learning encompassing talking with different people and hermeneutical and multimodal reflection creates the opportunity for transformative learning. Hence, perspective transformation, in the context of international education is inextricable from intercultural competence. The transformative learning phases in Mezirow's TLT correspond to the continuum of intercultural competence development, suggesting that multidisciplinary research is beneficial: investigating theoretical frameworks in other fields can inform research even more. Experiences fostering perspective transformation could be similar to the ones fostering intercultural competence growth, and PT might be a mechanism to achieve high IS or readjustment of perceived IS.

Additionally, much of the research on transformative learning remains theoretical, and this dissertation contributes to the understanding of the theory from an empirical perspective. The types of experiences leading to perspective transformation inform us of how transformative learning happens and how it can be implemented.

Finally, while not all students reported high levels of change, transformation takes time. Participants did not change at the same pace. It is possible that some students will feel the effects of change in relation to study abroad in the next month or next decade. Instead, assessing immediately after and 6 to 12 months, and many years after students return to their home campuses might provide insights on the overall "value" and process of study abroad. Life is an "accumulation of things," and as students keep reflecting, such

exercises might affect not only how they feel about cultural "others," but also how they think about themselves.

2) Teaching students to approach their short-term study abroad programs as learning experiences rather than tourism creates accountability, responsibility, and ownership over their own learning, and seems to foster deeper levels of learning. Creating short-term study abroad programs encompassing interacting with people from the host culture is necessary. Not all programs or courses require it, and often leave students independent in their social interactions outside of class. As a result, students engage in small talk primarily with shop owners or in other asymmetrical encounters. Students who do not have the opportunity or the willingness to meaningfully interact with local people or who have little say in their course of study are not as likely to move far from preconceived notions. This case study illustrates that talking with local people is necessary for understanding the complexity within a country and to challenge stereotypes. However, talking with local people should be framed if educators want students to further students' criticality: addressing social issues in conversations to learn about various opinions about controversial topics is a way to build critical cultural literacy (Byram, 2012; Freire & Macedo, 2005), if these conversations are reflected upon and also informed by readings. Talking with different people in different neighborhoods, towns, different educational and socio-economic backgrounds, from different religions and religious sects gives a sense of heterogeneity.

This case study shows that integrating meaningful interactions is difficult and depends on a variety of factors. Not all students had meaningful conversations because not all Israelis were willing to open to them, which demonstrates that the degree of

openness of host communities is also crucial. Requiring talking with people as part of a course to build on a research project about the host culture was an effective means to learn about the culture, to develop sensitivity to its people, and to display respect. Engaging in conversations on controversial topics might not be easy and might require students to have a high level of proficiency in the target language. However, talking about difficult topics with locals helped debunk participants' biases. Students began to engage with real motivations and emotions rather than ponder faceless facts and cultural differences. Talking with different people humanized the host culture.

Field trips and excursions are often part of short-term study abroad programs, often led by faculty. In the context of this case study, field trips always encompassed a few hours alone to observe and engage. Time was also set aside for explanations, not about highly touristy monuments, but about contexts. Readings about communities were assigned to bolster understanding of our experiences and to reevaluate them in the light of new knowledge, furthering the hermeneutical cycle. Study abroad may be more beneficial from a critical cultural perspective than from a tourist perspective.

Entering "unsanctioned" or "off the beaten path" spaces can intensify disequilibrium. Tourists rarely go to unsanctioned spaces and entering them heightens sensitivity and can potentially trigger reflections on positionality. While study abroad should never be dangerous, purposefully off the beaten path destinations can be powerful

3) The hermeneutical and multimodal guided reflections are central in helping students formulate their emotions, opinions, and questions, but also in taking ownership over their learning. However, students must be taught how to reflect, and reflection should be structured, scaffolded, and fostered before, during, and after the study abroad, and not

simply end with the end of the sojourn. Systematizing guided reflections helps students look for specific phenomena while allowing freedom to explore aspects of their choosing, which supports learner-centered education. Guided reflections also help students articulate their understanding of their academic and emotional learning. Developing courses which promote guided reflections shared between classmates, shared expressions of vulnerability, as well as critical self-re-examination of preconceptions could lead to heightened awareness. Creating space for vocalizing emotions and sharing difficulty can facilitate learning. By these methods, one can foster a long lasting reflective community of learning.

4) Short-term study abroad programs can lead to change beyond the host culture context. Critical experiential learning is a key component in students' change, but that critical learning, critical reflection, and critical experiential learning are not enough: students' willingness to expand out of their comfort zone is crucial as well. Critical experiential learning provides students with a framework for evaluating their beliefs in response to the cultures they encounter. It fosters critical thinking by encouraging students to investigate issued related to equality, identity, and cultural diversity. Critical experiential learning lets students become both agents of their own learning and agents of change via their critical cultural awareness. With a program that sufficiently engages, challenges, and disorients students, even a short-term study abroad is able to effect transformation of student perspectives and intercultural competence, helping students to both actualize themselves and to read the world.

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# Appendices

## Appendix A: Student Surveys of IS and PT

### Part 1: Demographic questions

1. What is your full name?
2. What is your email address?
3. What is your date of birth?
4. What is your gender identity?

   Female

   Male

   Other

   Do not wish to respond

5. What race(s) do you identify as?
6. While in Israel, what was your classification?

   Freshman

   Sophomore

   Junior

   Senior

   Master's student

   Ph.D student

   Had already graduated

7. What is/are your major(s)?
8. What is/are you minor(s)?
9. Which language(s) do you speak at home?
10. Are you currently learning a language in a formal language classroom? If yes, which one(s)?

11. Are you currently learning a language outside of a classroom? If yes, which one(s)?

12. Does your degree require you to take a few semesters of a foreign language? How many semesters?
13. Does your degree require you to study abroad?
14. Which languages did you learn in school?

15. Where were you born? (city, state, country)
16. Where were you raised? (city/ies, state/s, country/ies)
17. Prior to studying in Israel, had you studied abroad? If yes, where, how long (from mm/dd/yyyy to mm/dd/yyyy)?

18. Prior to studying in Israel, had you interned or volunteered/worked abroad? If yes, where, how long (from mm/dd/yyyy to mm/dd/yyyy)?

19. Which course or courses did you take in Israel?

20. When were you in Israel? (from mm/dd/yyyy to mm/dd/yyyy)
21. After studying in Israel, are you planning on studying abroad again? If yes, where, for how long and when?

22. After studying in Israel, are you planning on interning, volunteering or working abroad? If yes, where would you like to do that, when, and for how long?

## Part 2: Intercultural Communication

Directions: This section is composed of 48 statements concerning intercultural communication. There are no right or wrong answers. Please indicate the degree to which each statement applies to you by marking whether you: (1) Strongly Disagree, (2) Disagree, (3) Are Undecided, (4) Agree, or (5) Strongly Agree. Please work quickly and record your first impression. Thank you for your cooperation.

_____ 1. I enjoy interacting with people from different cultures.
_____ 2. I think people from other cultures are narrow-minded.
_____ 3. I am pretty sure of myself in interacting with people from different cultures.
_____ 4. I find it very hard to talk in front of people from different cultures.
_____ 5. I always know what to say when interacting with people from different cultures.
_____ 6. I can be as sociable as I want to be when interacting with people from different cultures.
_____ 7. I don't like to be with people from different cultures.
_____ 8. I respect the values of people from different cultures.
_____ 9. I get upset easily when interacting with people from different cultures.
_____ 10. I feel confident when interacting with people from different cultures.
_____ 11. I tend to wait before forming an impression of culturally-distinct counterparts.
_____ 12. I often get discouraged when I am with people from different cultures.
_____ 13. I am open-minded to people from different cultures.
_____ 14. I am very observant when interacting with people from different cultures.

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_____ 15. I often feel useless when interacting with people from different cultures.

_____ 16. I respect the ways people from different cultures behave.

_____ 17. I try to obtain as much information as I can when interacting with people from different cultures.

_____ 18. I would not accept the opinions of people from different cultures.

_____ 19. I am sensitive to my culturally-distinct counterpart's subtle meanings during our interaction.

_____ 20. I think my culture is better than other cultures.

_____ 21. I often give positive responses to my culturally different counterpart during our interaction.

_____ 22. I avoid those situations where I will have to deal with culturally-distinct persons.

_____ 23. I often show my culturally-distinct counterpart my understanding through verbal or nonverbal cues.

_____ 24. I have a feeling of enjoyment towards differences between my culturally-distinct counterpart and me.

_____ 25. I enjoy interacting with people from Israel.

_____ 26. I think people from Israel are narrow-minded.

_____ 27. I am pretty sure of myself in interacting with people from Israel.

_____ 28. I find it very hard to talk in front of people from Israel.

_____ 29. I always know what to say when interacting with people from Israel.

_____ 30. I can be as sociable as I want to be when interacting with people from Israel.

_____ 31. I don't like to be with people from Israel.

_____ 32. I respect the values of people from Israel.

_____ 33. I get upset easily when interacting with people from Israel.

_____ 34. I feel confident when interacting with people from Israel.

_____ 35. I tend to wait before forming an impression of culturally-distinct counterparts.

_____ 36. I often get discouraged when I am with people from Israel.

_____ 37. I am open-minded to people from Israel.

_____ 38. I am very observant when interacting with people from Israel.

_____ 39. I often feel useless when interacting with people from Israel.

_____ 40. I respect the ways people from Israel behave.

_____ 41. I try to obtain as much information as I can when interacting with people from Israel.

_____ 42. I would not accept the opinions of people from Israel.

_____ 43. I am sensitive to my Israeli counterpart's subtle meanings during our interaction.

_____ 44. I think my culture is better than that of Israel.

_____ 45. I often give positive responses to my Israeli counterpart during our interaction.

_____ 46. I avoid those situations where I will have to deal with Israeli persons.

_____ 47. I often show my Israeli counterpart my understanding through verbal or nonverbal cues.

_____ 48. I have a feeling of enjoyment towards differences between my Israeli counterpart and myself.


**<u>Part 3: Diving into your experience abroad</u>**

1. Thinking about your educational experiences abroad, *check off any statements that may apply:*

I had an experience that caused me to question the way I normally act.

I had an experience that caused me to question my ideas about social roles. (i.e. what a student or teacher should do.)

As I questioned my ideas, I realized I no longer agreed with my beliefs or role expectations

Or instead, as I questioned my ideas, I realized I still agreed with my beliefs and role expectations.

I realized that other people also questioned their beliefs.

I thought about acting in a different way from my usual beliefs and roles.

I felt uncomfortable with traditional social expectations.

I tried out new roles so that I would become more comfortable or confident in them.

I tried to figure out a way to adopt these new ways of acting.

I gathered the information I needed in order to adopt these new ways of acting.

I began to think about the reactions and feedback from my new behavior.

I took action and adopted these new ways of acting.

I do not identify with any of the statements above.


2. Since you have been on a study abroad experience, do you believe that you have experienced a time when you realized that your values, beliefs, opinions, or expectations had changed? Yes/No
   If "yes", please go to question #3 and continue the survey.
   If "no", please go to question #6 to continue the survey.

3. Briefly describe what happened.

4.  Which of the following influenced this change? *(Check all that apply)*

Was it a person who influenced the change? Yes/No
   If "yes," was it… *(check all that apply)*
      Another student's support
      Your classmates' support
      Your advisor's support
      A challenge from your teacher
      Your teacher's support
      Someone from the host country
      Other: _____


Was it part of a class assignment that influenced the change? Yes/No
   If "yes," what was it? *(check all that apply)*
      Class/group projects
      Writing about your concerns
      Personal journal
      Non-traditional structure of a course
      Deep, concentrated thought
      Personal learning assessment
      A challenge from your teacher
      Your teacher's support
      Verbally discussing your concerns in class
      Term papers/essays
      Assigned readings
      Self-evaluation in a course
      Class activity/exercise
      Lab experience
      Personal reflection
      Other: _____


If the change was not influenced by class assignments, was it by… *(check all that apply)*
      Verbally discussing your concerns with friends taking classes with you
      Verbally discussing your concerns with friends not taking the same classes but abroad with you
      Verbally discussing your concerns with friends from the host country
      Verbally discussing your concerns with friends at home
      An event you witnessed first-hand in the host country

Reflecting alone or in a journal
Non-assigned readings
An activity you participated in outside of class
Other: _____

Was it a significant change in your life that influenced the change? Yes/No
    If "yes," what was it? (Check all that apply)
        Studying abroad
        Living with people from the host country
        Living with other international students
        Marriage
        Break up/Separation
        Change of job
        Loss of job
        Other: _____

5. Thinking back to when you first realized that your views or perspective had changed, what did your being abroad have to do with the experience of change?

7. Would you say that you frequently reflect upon the meaning of your study abroad or studies for yourself, personally? Yes/No

8. Which of the following were part of your experience abroad:
        Another student's support

        Your classmates' support

        Your advisor's support

        Class/group project

        Writing about your concerns

        Personal journal

        Non-traditional structure of a course

        Deep, concentrated thought

Personal learning assessment

A challenge from your teacher

Your teacher's support

Verbally discussing your concerns in class

Term papers/essays

Assigned readings

Self-evaluation in a course

Class activity/exercise

Lab experience

Personal reflection

Language learning courses

Courses about the host country

Courses about your major, unrelated to the host country

Other: _____

9.  Which of the following occurred while you were abroad: *(Check all that apply)*

Living with people from the host country

Living with other international students

Marriage

Break up/Separation

Change of job

Loss of job

Other: _____

Thank you for your answers to the above questions! If you agree to be contacted for the interviews, please write your name and contact info below. Your identity will not be disclosed but providing your name and contact information will enable the researcher to contact you. If you wish to participate in the interviews, you might win a $20 Starbucks gift card!

- Name: _____Email address: _____

**Appendix B: Interview Protocol for Student Participants**

**[Perspective Transformation Experiences]**

1) Thinking back over your **experience abroad**, have you experienced a time when you realized that your values, beliefs or expectations had changed?

2) Briefly describe that experience

3) Do you know what triggered it? If so, explain.

4) Which of the following influenced this change?
- a. Was it a person who influenced the change?
  If yes, was it:
  - i. Another student's support?
  - ii. Your classmates' support?
  - iii. Your teacher' support?
  - iv. Your advisor's support?
  - v. Someone else's support?
- b. Was it part of a class assignment that influenced the change?
  *If yes, what was it?*
  - i. Class/group project
  - ii. Writing about your concerns
  - iii. Personal journal
  - iv. The format of the course
  - v. Internship
  - vi. Deep, concentrated thought
  - vii. Assigned readings
  - viii. Personal readings
  - ix. Personal learning assessment
  - x. Verbally discussing your concerns
  - xi. Term papers/essays
  - xii. Self-evaluation in a course
  - xiii. Class activity/exercise
  - xiv. Lab experiences
  - xv. Personal reflection
  - xvi. Other?
  *If no, what was it?*
  - xvii. People you met outside of class
  - xviii. Conversations outside of class
  - xix. Activities outside of class
  - xx. Other?
- c. Or was it a significant change in your life that influenced the change?
  *If yes, what was it?*
  - i. Marriage
  - ii. Loss of a job

iii. Moving
        iv. Divorce/separation
         v. Change of job
        vi. Death of a loved one
        vii. Other?
    d. Perhaps it was something else that influenced the change. If so, please describe it.

5) Describe how any of the experiences abroad influenced the change.

6) What could have been done differently in your program abroad to have helped this change? What specific activities?

7) Thinking back to when you first realized that your views or perspective had changed:
    a. When did you first realize this change had happened? Was it while it was happening, mid-change, or once it had entirely happened (retrospective)?
    b. What made you aware that this change had happened?
    c. What did your being abroad have to do with it?
    d. What did you do about it?
    e. How did/do you feel about the change?

   **[Language history]**

8) Can you tell me about your world language education experiences in high school?
    a. Did you study another language in high school?
    b. Which language?
    c. Why did you choose this language?

**[Language Choice and Motivation if participant is currently studying a language]**

9) Can you tell me about your choice of studying the target language?
    a. What lead you to making this decision?
    b. What was your initial goal and reason for choosing this language?
    c. Do you remember when you made this decision?
    d. Did you hesitate with another language?
    e. Are you planning on studying another language?
    f. Now that you have been studying this language for a semester, do you intend to continue?
        i. Why do you plan on continuing/interrupting your world language education?

   **[Language socialization]**

10) Prior to starting to study the target language, did you know any native speakers/people from the target culture?

**[Interaction confidence] / [Interaction enjoyment]**

      a. How would you describe your interactions with them?
      b. How did you feel when you interacted with them?
          i. Did you feel comfortable?

11) Do you now know any native speakers/people from the target culture?
      a. How would you describe your interactions with them?
          i. Which language do you use?
          ii. What do you talk about?
          iii. Where do you meet?
          iv. What do you do together?
          v. (Friends) How often do you see each other?

      b. How do you feel when you interact with them?
          i. Do you feel comfortable?
          ii. Is their culture an important topic in your conversations?

12) Do you interact with people whose language is not the same as yours?
      a. How would you describe your interactions with them?
      b. How do you feel when you interact with them?

13) Can you tell me about your previous experiences abroad, if you had any?
      a. Where did you go? How long?
      b. When did you go?
      c. Can you tell me about your interactions with people from the host culture?
          i. Which language did you use?
          ii. Did a lot of people speak your language?
          iii. Did you have a grasp of the language of the host culture?
      d. Can you tell me about how you remember you felt when you were there?
      e. Do you think you were respectful of the ways of the people in the host culture? Why?

**[Disorienting experience]**

14) During your study abroad sojourn, did you have any disorienting, confusing and/or discomforting experiences? If so, can you tell me about these experiences? Can you tell me about your thoughts and feelings about these experiences?

**[Transformative Learning and Intercultural Sensitivity]**

15) Prior to going abroad, did you expect to feel disoriented, confused and/or discomforted during your international experience? Did such situations influence your understanding of interaction engagement/enjoyment/attentiveness/respect for cultural differences? If so, how?

16) During your study abroad sojourn, did you have any opportunity to reflect on disorienting, confusing and/or discomforting experiences? In class/outside of class activities (journaling, discussions with instructors, friends, family…)? If so, how useful did you find these opportunities to reflect?

17) How often to you socialize with native speakers of the target language?

18) How often to you socialize with people from other cultures?

19) How do you feel when you interact in English with native speakers of the language you are learning?

20) How do you feel when you interact in the target language with native speakers?

21) How do you feel when you interact in English with non-native speakers?

**[Interaction engagement]**

22) Can you tell me about your experiences with exchange and international students on campus?
    a. Do you know any exchange and international students on campus?
    b. Where did you meet?
    c. Did you meet them specifically because they are international/speak the language you are learning?
    d. What did you think when you first met them?
    e. How important are their languages in your interactions with them?
    f. How important are their cultures in your interactions with them?
    g. What do you usually do with them?
    h. How do you feel when you interact with them in English?
    i. How do you feel when you interact with them in their native languages?

**[Interaction attentiveness]**

    j. What kind of cultural differences have you noticed when you talk with them?

**[Interaction engagement]**

23) What kind of activities do you do in relation to the language/cultures you are currently learning?
    a. Are you part of any student organizations/clubs?
    b. Do you attend any cultural events related to the target language/culture?
    c. Do you attend any international events on or off campus (e.g. Eve of Nations, International Bazaar, Mr & Ms International OU, Nowruz; Turkish Festival; Chinese New Year…)?

**[Respect for cultural differences]**

24) From what you know of the target language/culture, is there anything that shocks you or makes you uncomfortable?

**[Interaction attentiveness]**

25) Has your participation in a study abroad debunked some of the stereotypes or misconceived ideas you had about the target culture?
        a. What were they?
        b. How did you feel when you learned about these misconceived ideas?

26) Regarding other cultures in general, is there anything that shocks you or makes you uncomfortable?

**[Study Abroad impact on Intercultural sensitivity]**

27) How did your participation in a study abroad influence your confidence/curiosity/interest in interacting with people from other cultures?
28) How do your pre-study abroad training and study abroad activities influence your respect of the target culture(s)? How?

**[IS change]**

29) How do you think you have changed when you interact with people from other cultures?

30) Do you have any comments or questions?


Thank you for your time. You might be receive a $20 Starbucks gift card for your participation!
I will send you the transcript and my understanding of your interview for you to check and potentially revise some of the answers. Please check your emails and let me know if you have any questions.

## Appendix C: Interview Protocol for Instructor Participant

**[Perspective Transformation Experiences]**

31) Thinking back over your experience abroad, have you experienced a time when you realized that students' values, beliefs or expectations had changed?

32) Briefly describe that experience

33) Do you know what triggered it? If so, explain. (expand on experiential learning)

34) Please describe how any of the experiences abroad influenced the change.

35) What could have been done differently in your program abroad to have helped this change? What specific activities?

36) Thinking back to when you first realized that students' views or perspective had changed:
   a. When did you first realize this change had happened? Was it while it was happening, mid-change, or once it had entirely happened (retrospective)?
   b. What made you aware that this change had happened?
   c. What did students' being abroad have to do with it?
   d. What did you do about it?
   e. How did/do you feel about the change?

**[Disorienting experience]**

37) During your study abroad sojourn, did you have any disorienting, confusing and/or discomforting experiences? If so, can you tell me about these experiences? Can you tell me about your thoughts and feelings about these experiences?

**[Transformative Learning and Intercultural Sensitivity]**

38) Prior to going abroad, did you expect students to feel disoriented, confused and/or discomforted during their international experience? Do you think that such situations influenced their understanding of interaction engagement/ enjoyment/ attentiveness/ respect for cultural differences? If so, how?

39) During the study abroad sojourn, did you have any opportunity to discuss with students and reflect on disorienting, confusing and/or discomforting experiences? In class/outside of class activities (journaling, discussions with instructors, friends, family…)? If so, how useful did you find these opportunities to reflect?

40) Do you have any comments or questions?

Thank you for your time! I will send you the transcript and my analysis of your interview for you to check and potentially revise some of the answers.

## The UNIVERSITY of OKLAHOMA

**Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects**

**Approval of Initial Submission – Expedited Review – AP01**

**Date:** December 18, 2017  **IRB#:** 8808

**Principal Investigator:** Emmanuelle Sarah Chiocca

**Approval Date:** 12/18/2017
**Expiration Date:** 11/30/2018

**Study Title:** Intercultural Sensitivity and Perspective Transformation in Short-Term Study Abroad

**Expedited Category:** 5, 6, 7

**Collection/Use of PHI: No**

On behalf of the Institutional Review Board (IRB), I have reviewed and granted expedited approval of the above-referenced research study. To view the documents approved for this submission, open this study from the *My Studies* option, go to *Submission History*, go to *Completed Submissions* tab and then click the *Details* icon.

As principal investigator of this research study, you are responsible to:
- Conduct the research study in a manner consistent with the requirements of the IRB and federal regulations 45 CFR 46.
- Obtain informed consent and research privacy authorization using the currently approved, stamped forms and retain all original, signed forms, if applicable.
- Request approval from the IRB prior to implementing any/all modifications.
- Promptly report to the IRB any harm experienced by a participant that is both unanticipated and related per IRB policy.
- Maintain accurate and complete study records for evaluation by the HRPP Quality Improvement Program and, if applicable, inspection by regulatory agencies and/or the study sponsor.
- Promptly submit continuing review documents to the IRB upon notification approximately 60 days prior to the expiration date indicated above.
- Submit a final closure report at the completion of the project.

If you have questions about this notification or using iRIS, contact the IRB @ 405-325-8110 or irb@ou.edu.

Cordially,

Fred Beard, Ph.D.
Vice Chair, Institutional Review Board