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# An Exploration of How Occupational Therapy Students' and Practitioners' Experiences Studying Abroad Affect Fieldwork and Practice

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Running head: AN EXPLORATION OF HOW OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY STUDENTS' AND PRACTITIONERS'  
EXPERIENCES STUDYING ABROAD AFFECT FIELDWORK AND PRACTICE

An Exploration of How Occupational Therapy Students' and Practitioners' Experiences Studying  
Abroad Affect Fieldwork and Practice

By

Ashley M. Cox

This thesis is submitted in fulfillment of the requirements for the Elizabethtown College Honors  
Program.

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The purpose of this study was to gain perspective on occupational therapy students and licensed occupational therapists' perception of how their study abroad experiences affect their skills, specifically in regards to cultural awareness and competency. Completed research related to this topic in occupational therapy consisted of expanding cultural constructs and perspectives, understanding strategies that practitioners utilize when engaging different cultures, and practitioners' meaning of their lived experiences working in other countries. One's own perception of culture can change through experience and immersion into a new culture. The need for preparing occupational therapy students to attend to culture and cultural awareness in client-centered practice is evidenced through a review of literature (Murden, Norman, Ross, Sturdivant, Kedia, & Shad, 2008). There is also a need to evaluate the long-term impact of international experience on the individual (Johns, 2010; Mu, Coppard, Bracciano, Doll, & Matthews, 2010).

The primary research question of this study was how studying abroad affects occupational therapy students' and licensed occupational therapists' perceived skillset in fieldwork and practice. Secondary questions include, what does it mean to have cultural awareness or cultural competence? How do you think this experience has affected your awareness and commitment to cultural competence? How have these new perspectives of cultural competency and awareness affect client-centered practice? The goal is to gain valuable insight into these perspectives. Limits of the research would include the results of the study being biased from the perspectives of educated occupational therapy Elizabethtown College students and graduates and that these perspectives are culturally bound to the participants. Another limit may be that each study abroad experience is unique; this study looks specifically at occupational therapy students' and occupational therapists' study abroad experiences and its perceivable applications.

## **Review of Literature**

### **Terms Used in Review of Literature**

\*Reference Appendix O for terms relating to culture.

When *the researcher* is used in this document, it refers to the writer of this proposal.

Humbert, T. K., Burket, A., Deveney, R. & Kennedy, K. (2011b) described the items listed below which are used throughout this literature review:

- *Connectedness* is the “process of forming relationships with others while engaging in cross-cultural experiences and bonding at some emotional level” (p. 3).
- *Cultural Awareness* is “recognition and understanding of a different culture, comparing these insights with one’s own culture and then responding to those differences” (p. 5).
- *Complexity* is the “recognition that cross-cultural experiences are dynamic, multi-faceted and intricate” (p. 7).

Dillard, Andonian, Flores, Lai, MacRae, & Shakir defined *cultural competence* as “an awareness of, sensitivity to and knowledge of the meaning of culture” (as cited Murden, et al., 2008, p. 192).

### **Importance of Attending to Culture in Practice**

American Occupational Therapy Association (2014) incorporated elements of culture into the *Occupational Therapy Practice Framework (3<sup>rd</sup> Edition)*. Specifically, when OTs refer to context and environment in formation of the occupational therapy profile, one of the contexts is cultural. Cultural contexts include, “customs, beliefs, activity patterns, behavioral standards,

and expectations accepted by society of which a client is a member. The cultural context influences the client's identity and activity choices" (AOTA, 2014, p. S9). The Accreditation Council for Occupational Therapy Education (ACOTE®, 2011) formed a *Standards and Interpretive Guide* for various levels of educational programs. Education incorporating elements of culture are integrated into the standards for these programs. Terms relating to culture in this document include "sociocultural" and "cultural." Sociocultural means combining social and cultural factors. Here is list of areas in the Standards and Interpretive Guide where the terms "cultural" and "sociocultural" are placed under the educational standards for "*Accreditation Standards for a Master's-Degree-Level Educational Program for the Occupational Therapist:*"

- "Demonstrate knowledge and appreciation of the role of sociocultural, socioeconomic, and diversity factors and lifestyle choices in contemporary society. Course content must include, but is not limited to, introductory psychology, abnormal psychology, and introductory sociology or introductory anthropology" (p. 18).
- "Express support for the quality of life, well-being, and occupation of the individual, group, or population to promote physical and mental health and prevention of injury and disease considering the context (e.g., cultural, personal, temporal, virtual) and environment" (p. 20).
- "The process of screening, evaluation, and referral as related to occupational performance and participation must be culturally relevant and based on theoretical perspectives, models of practice, frames of reference, and available evidence. In addition, this process must consider the continuum of need from individuals to populations. The program must facilitate development of the performance criteria listed below" (p. 21).

- “Select appropriate assessment tools on the basis of client needs, contextual factors, and psychometric properties of tests. These must be culturally relevant, based on available evidence, and incorporate use of occupation in the assessment process” (p. 21).
- “Evaluate client(s)’ occupational performance in activities of daily living (ADLs), instrumental activities of daily living (IADLs), education, work, play, rest, sleep, leisure, and social participation. Evaluation of occupational performance using standardized and nonstandardized assessment tools includes [...]
  - o Context (e.g., cultural, personal, temporal, virtual) and environment (e.g., physical, social)” (p.22).
- “Consider factors that might bias assessment results, such as culture, disability status, and situational variables related to the individual and context” (p. 22)
- “The process of formulation and implementation of the therapeutic intervention plan to facilitate occupational performance and participation must be culturally relevant; reflective of current occupational therapy practice; based on available evidence; and based on theoretical perspectives, models of practice, and frames of reference. The program must facilitate development of the performance criteria listed below” (p. 23).
- “Use evaluation findings based on appropriate theoretical approaches, models of practice, and frames of reference to develop occupation-based intervention plans and strategies (including goals and methods to achieve them) on the basis of the stated needs of the client as well as data gathered during the evaluation process in collaboration with the client and others. Intervention plans and strategies must be

- culturally relevant, reflective of current occupational therapy practice, and based on available evidence [...]
- Context (e.g., cultural, personal, temporal, virtual) and environment (e.g., physical, social)” (p. 23).
  - “Grade and adapt the environment, tools, materials, occupations, and interventions to reflect the changing needs of the client, the sociocultural context, and technological advances” (p. 26).

Cultural-based practice is important in the process of occupational therapy services. This element of practice is further emphasized in AOTA’s *Standards of Practice for Occupational Therapy* (2010):

- “An occupational therapy practitioner respects the client’s sociocultural background and provides client-centered and family-centered occupational therapy services” (p. S108).

There is an identified need for occupational therapy education and services to be socioculturally- and culturally-client-centered.

### **Value of Studying Abroad**

Various educational institutions today have goals and mission statements which include knowledge from other cultures as an element of a liberal arts education. Hopkins (1999) articulated “Study-abroad programs take many forms, but all share the characteristic that, by their very nature, they provide students with a healthy dose of experiential learning. Immersing oneself in another culture provides new opportunities for learning-by-doing, virtually twenty-four hours a day [...]. When students go abroad, they inevitably find themselves looking inward

as well as outward, reconciling their views of themselves and their cultural assumptions with the new cultural context. Such self- and other examination forms an entirely different sense of experiential learning of the most intimate sort, and often leads to dramatic self-development” (p. 36). Opportunities for self-development such as this may lead an individual to re-evaluate their values, beliefs, and culture. For this reason, the researcher believes Hopkins’ research develops an avenue for one to see the importance of study abroad programs and the ability to self-reflect on one’s own culture in a different cultural context.

Tarrant, Rubin, & Stoner (2014) articulate that in order to create more robust evidence of the value of studying abroad, specifically in regards to globalization, researchers need to design research which clearly states if international, study abroad experiences promote “higher order outcomes (such as global citizenship)” (p. 143). Tarrant, et al. goes on further to state the three dimensions of “global citizenship” described in study abroad literature: “(a) social responsibility (concern for others, for society at large, and for the environment), (b) global awareness (understanding and appreciation of one’s self in the world and of world issues), and (c) civic engagement (active engagement with local, regional, national, and global community issues)” (p. 143). After further research and testing, Tarrant, et al. found that “it is the combination of location [...] and academic focus [...] that appears to yield the greatest increases in global citizenship scores (across multiple dimensions of global citizenship). This point is worth highlighting for programs that seek to promote other goals such as cultural sensitivity” (p. 153). Specifically relating to occupational therapy and the need for culturally-relevant education, the combination of study abroad and specific learning outcomes (building cultural-awareness) may be worth further researching.



## **Culture and Occupational Therapy Curriculum**

Murden, et al. (2008) studied OT students' perceptions of their cultural awareness and competency. The results yielded various answers from OT participants of varying educational levels (on entry, on completion of university-based studies, on completion of fieldwork and one year following graduation) who took the *Cultural Awareness and Sensitivity Questionnaire*. Participants at a later stage in their education strongly agreed that cultural factors should be considered in the OT process. Regarding if cultural awareness could be affected by classroom education, "a significant lower percentage of entry-level participants (83%) than participants in later stages in their training (92%) agreed or strongly agreed with the statements that cultural awareness could be affected by classroom education" (p. 197). Participants who were in later stages of education tended to disagree with the statements about adequate exposure to cultural awareness in their programs and in fieldwork. This disagreement is in contrast with the agreement of 100% of entry-level students having thought that there will be adequate exposure to cultural awareness in the program (Murden, 2008). The results indicated that there is a difference between how entry-level students perceived the adequacy of OT education on cultural-awareness versus how the graduates and participants after one year of practice felt about their levels of cultural awareness. Overall, all four levels of participants agreed that: "understanding different cultures is crucial for effective occupational therapy; the curriculum was limited in its inclusion of cultural education and fieldwork increased cultural awareness" (Murden, 2008, p. 201). With this conclusion, an area of further research may be the exploration of how study abroad opportunities that are integrated into the OT education affect the perceived cultural competency skills of occupational therapy students and practicing clinicians.

## **Occupational Therapy, Culture, and Values**

There are norms and values within occupational therapy that may or may not be a hindrance when working with culturally-diverse clients. “The diversity of humanity represented in both occupational therapists and clients of occupational therapy, and in the dynamic of assessing value to objects and phenomena in human spheres of experience, are essentially conditions and processes relating to culture” (Iwama, 2009, p. 183). Kinebanian and Stomph (1992) articulated some problems OTs face when working with different ethnic groups. The main problem was with communication. However, some commonly-held professional norms of OT actually caused dilemmas for the practitioner; the “emphasis on the patient’s independence, and emphasis on purposeful activity (e.g., the doing-it-yourself philosophy), a focus on the patient’s home and work environments, and having to plan treatment in the context of administrative regulations with a focus on reimbursement” (p. 752). In order to address the emphasis on independence, the authors suggested defining the “aim of occupational therapy in terms of interdependence rather than independence” (p. 752). Regarding purposeful activity, the OT should “analyze what is appropriate in the patient’s culture and what *purposeful* means to the patient” (p. 753). Regarding the home and work environments, OTs should observe his or her clients in real-life situations, as it might be the most appropriate way to gather information about how and why the clients perform specific activities (Kinebanian and Stomph, 1992). The authors emphasized ways in which OTs can enable success in clients of different cultural backgrounds while addressing and incorporating culturally-appropriate intervention. Not only is it important to focus on the clients’ cultural background and familiar habits, roles, and routines, but Fitzgerald (2004) also looked at the family involvement and stated, “familial interactions and the roles played by family members are influenced by culture, including perceptions of health,

illness, disability, normality, expectations about roles, and the rights and responsibilities of all the people involved” (p. 495). Therefore, it is important for the OT to not only observe the client, but to observe family interactions and familial roles. These concepts and values are attributable to the client-centered practice of occupational therapy.

Maintaining a focus on culturally-sensitive care is crucial in this holistic practice. Having a frame of reference to view assessment, evaluation, intervention and discharge, occupational therapists may be able to provide this type of care more effectively. Chiang & Carlson (2003) described occupational therapy practice models used by some practitioners when working with clients from culturally diverse backgrounds. The *Model of Human Occupation* (MoHO) and the *Occupational Performance Model* were the models most referenced. MoHO has four environmental ‘layers’ influencing the human system, one of which being culture. Some other factors from the model that may be influenced by culture are valued goals, personal interests, productivity, personal causation (strengths and limitations), and individualism (Chiang & Carlson, 2003). A critique of this model is that it may include cultural biases, such seen in the value on productivity and individualism being Western cultural values (Chiang & Carlson, 2003). Nevertheless, MoHO incorporates culture and recognizes its influence on every day occupation. Chian & Carlson (2003) further discussed the Occupational Performance Model. This model “addresses two key issues for culturally sensitive practice in occupational therapy through its acknowledgement of the mind-body-spirit complex of the individual and of his or her interaction with a cultural environment [...]. The practical strategies for achieving this [cultural] sensitivity need further investigation and elucidation” (p. 561). Even though these models may not fully and adequately address all appropriate cultural areas, they are useful when framing intervention approaches for culturally-diverse client populations.

Iwama, Thomson, & McDonald (2009) described the Kawa model. This is a model that does not value its top goal as autonomy, individualism, or participation (Iwama, et al., 2009). This model arose more from Eastern culture than the previous models mentioned and uses a river metaphor to highlight client perspectives related to occupations. The goal of OT is to enhance life energy/flow by establishing and optimizing harmony within all elements of the stream (Iwama, et al., 2009). This is a model “offered to help comprehend the particular and culturally specific features of a person’s disability experiences” (p. 1134). This model may be a more holistic approach focusing on the client’s life circumstances and contexts, while not pushing for goals of autonomy or individualism (Iwama, et al, 2009).

### **Concepts and Models for Developing Cultural Competence**

Thomas (2015) articulated “cross-cultural experiences are viewed to be an extremely effective approach for participants to increase their cultural competency” (2015). Thomas also described a model that OTs learn when they engage directly in care with clients of a different culture, from outside the familiarity of the OTs’ regular client practice. The Culturally Congruent Care Model consists of four components:

1. Cultural diversity “occurs through exposure to other communities” (2015)
2. Cultural awareness is a “cognitive understanding of the culture” (2015)
3. Cultural sensitivity is a “deeper knowledge that will produce a change in an individual’s perspective and attitude toward people of different backgrounds, which can lead to openness to engage in cross-cultural interactions” (2015)

4. By integrating the prior three components, occupational therapists will become  
“culturally competent clinicians with the capability to adjust clinical behaviors, actions  
and practices to meet the cultural values of each client” (2015)

Thomas described when this model is integrated; it is a transformational process if accompanied with reflection and exchange between therapist and client occur, for this is when “expansion of normal routines, assumptions, conscious and subconscious values and beliefs” occurs. The therapists can reflect on their interactions within the environment and expose their own limitations to enable professional development (2015).

Another model developed through research can be attributed to Muñoz (2007). The author conceptualized culturally responsive care as “the interaction of five interdependent components which comprise processes of providing care and one contextual component that illuminates environmental factors influencing the provision of culturally responsive caring” (p. 266). Generating cultural knowledge, engaging culturally diverse others, applying cultural skills, exploring multiculturalism, and building cultural awareness, all within a diversity context, develops cultural competency. Muñoz emphasized greater research needs to be performed with this model if “it is to have any lasting value and significance for the profession” (p. 277). He also emphasized that research focused on the clients’ perspectives needs to be further explored (Muñoz, 2007).

Another way of looking at cultural competence, Wittman (2002) described it occurring on a continuum where an individual moves through these stages (p. 454):

1. *Cultural destructiveness* is “characterized by the purposeful destruction of a culture as exemplified when persons of color are denied access to their natural healers or are purposely put at risk in medical or social experiments” (p. 454).
2. *Cultural incapacity* is “characterized by individuals or organizations who do not intentionally seek to be culturally destructive but lack the capacity to help minority clients or communities” (p. 454).
3. *Cultural blindness* is “typified by the belief that color or culture makes no difference and that all people are the same; cultural strengths are ignored, and assimilation is encouraged” (p. 454).
4. *Cultural precompetence* is “exemplified by the realization of agency or individual weakness in serving minorities and relative to a specific population” (p. 454).
5. *Cultural competence* is “acceptance and respect for difference, continuing self-assessment regarding culture, attention to the dynamics of difference, and a continuous expansion of cultural knowledge and resource occur” (p. 454).
6. *Cultural proficiency* is “characterized by holding culture in high esteem and promoting competency in others [...] and is achieved through research, new approaches to care, public education, and the personal and professional development of all staff members regarding cultural competence” (p. 454).

Cultural destructiveness is characterized by “purposeful destruction of a culture as exemplified when persons of color are denied access to their natural healers or are purposely put at risk in medical or social experiments” (p. 454). This continuum ranges to cultural proficiency, which is characterized by “holding culture in high esteem and promoting competency in others” (p. 454). Wittman’s continuum is a range where one can evaluate their level of competence based on

characteristics of each stage. He also emphasized that critical thinking is crucial in attaining cultural competency. In order to “‘acknowledge,’ ‘recognize,’ ‘understand,’ and ‘appreciate’ information, an occupational therapist must have the critical thinking skills to perform these cognitive tasks [...]. Occupational therapy educators must address the cognitive skills required to be a good critical thinker in order to facilitate the development of prerequisite abilities for cultural competence” (Wittman, 2002, p. 455). The need for OT students and practitioners to evaluate their cultural competency is indeed critical in providing holistic, client-centered care.

Sperry (2012) added to the meaning of cultural competence when he described it consisting of four components; cultural knowledge, cultural sensitivity, cultural awareness, and cultural action (reference Appendix O). He defined cultural competence as “the capacity and capability to recognize, respect, and respond with appropriate action to the needs and concerns of individuals from different ethnicities, social classes, genders, generations or religions” (p. 48). He articulated that everyone has some level of cultural competence, but it varies on from very high to very low. He asked, “How can cultural competence be developed and how can it be increased?” He answered it with this formula: “Respect and tolerance + mutuality and a willingness to learn from one another + full-scale cultural sensitivity = cultural competence” (p. 52).

Occupational therapy students and practitioners can evaluate their strengths and their weak area within this equation, thus gaining insight into their level of cultural competence.

Fitzgerald, Williamson, & Mullavey-O’Byrne (1998) gathered both occupational therapy students’ definitions of culture and occupational therapists’ definitions of culture. After gathering the data and reviewing definitions, the authors concluded that the students and therapists saw ‘culture’ in terms of “observable manifestations” rather than seeing ‘culture’ as an “abstract

concept with concrete consequences” (p. 61). The authors articulated that “this minimalist understanding of culture keeps therapists from understanding that they too are cultural beings and culture influences their behavior as much as it influences the behavior of others. It keeps them from exploring the cultural influences on their behavior [...] as therapists” (p. 61). Not only is it invaluable to emphasize the importance of culturally-sensitive care, but therapists must also look at themselves and see how they perceive culture to be and how cultural tendencies and biases influence practice. Learning and looking at OT frameworks may assist therapists to participate in culturally-sensitive care.

### **Values and Challenges of International Cross-Cultural Work of OT Practitioners**

Humbert, et al. (2011b) studied the perspectives of practitioners who worked outside of their home culture and community in order to be immersed in international work. The OT practitioners who participated in this study had work experience ranging from 6 to 37 years and completed short-term and ongoing international work assignments. After data collection, three themes emerged, including *connectedness*, *cultural awareness* and *complexity* (p. 3). The OT practitioners agreed that through the building of rapport with clients and within the OT process, one can utilize *connectedness*. Some OTs could not speak the native language in their host country; this inability to communicate was a challenge. They noted that the use of non-verbal techniques in order to form connections is an important strategy if language is a barrier when communicating with the client (p. 5). At some points in time, the OT practitioners “spoke about challenging or confronting cultural beliefs. It is unclear if and how this idea fits into the proposed models of culturally responsive care or how the participants understood their positions of challenge” (p. 9).



Regarding complexity, Humbert, et al. articulated,

“results suggest that there is much complexity within these experiences. Based on the participants' responses, there were diverse ways that practitioners judged and assessed their effectiveness in that complexity. We do not know from this study how the participants actually came to understand the complexity and how their own cultural beliefs shaped that understanding or influenced their responses to the situations” (p. 9)

As stated above, international experiences are complex when practicing in another country. Further research is needed to understand how clinical reasoning and skill acquisition for international work are developed and utilized within practice.

Another study conducted by Humbert, Brown del Pozo, Kibby, and Montemurro (2011a), explored the decision making process used by occupational therapists practicing and living abroad when confronted with cultural tension. The results of this study show that there are multiple challenges and perceptions that impact practice, such as environmental barriers and ethical beliefs and practices. Through analysis, themes emerged as decision making responses: embrace, accept, challenge, and collaboration (reference Appendix O) (2011a). From these studies there are meaningful insights to appreciate from occupational therapists that have practiced abroad, such as skills and how this expanded knowledge impacted their practice.

### **Value and Challenges of International Educational/Study Opportunities of OT Students**

Even with standards are set in place by AOTA, not all students attend to culture by the end of their education. Chiang and Carlson (2003) stated that occupational therapy students reported they felt they had not received enough academic material and practice of cultural awareness in their undergraduate years. The pulling of students and teaching staff from diverse

cultural backgrounds needs to occur in occupational therapy programs. Also, there is an importance and need of 'learning to work inter-culturally' for occupational therapy students. (p. 564). After reviewing this literature, the researcher uncovered a need for students to gain a greater cultural awareness for practice by either facilitating learning through culturally diverse programs, interaction with clients from culturally diverse backgrounds in fieldwork placements, or attending to international studies.

Humbert, Burket, Deveney, & Kennedy (2012) stated that based off of reviewed literature, there is "limited research on how students perceive and understand their international, cross-cultural experiences." (p. 225). There are challenges to cross-cultural experiences because "culture is considered dynamic, constantly developing and changing as a person encounters new experiences and interacts with new people" (p. 226). There is also an emphasis on OT practitioners and students being "educated on how to engage with and provide intervention to people of different cultures" (p. 226). The recognition of culture is a valued and an essential part of OT practice. However, "the extent to which this is actually implemented within curricula is questioned and what actually constitutes cultural competency in entry level practitioners is varied" (p. 226). Nine female participants were involved in the study of the perspectives of OT students regarding international, cross-cultural educational fieldwork and service experiences. Similar to Humbert, et al.'s study of OT practitioners and cross-cultural work, the themes of *connectedness*, *cultural awareness*, and *complexity* emerged from the data analysis of the nine female participants.

Humbert, et al. (2012) articulated,

“Collectively, the students expressed the sentiment that during the cross-cultural experience you realise how much you don’t know (about oneself, the world, life and occupational therapy) but then you figure something out or you build a relationship and then you start to feel more comfortable in your new role [...]. You are influencing how others perceive and understand you as an American and at times changing the stereotypes of what it means to be American. You are in the position of providing and offering another perspective” (p. 232).

The students gained a greater awareness of the new culture, their home culture, and themselves while feeling as though they were able to give back to their host community. Challenges come with change, however, and students “demonstrated a struggle with held beliefs and conflicting social justice issues [...]. In addition, students acknowledged the complexity in attending to and maintaining multiple roles simultaneously within the cross-cultural context” (p. 233).

Simonelis, Njelesani, Novak, Kuzma, & Cameron (2011) also explored the challenges occupational therapy students have during international fieldwork placements. Even though students articulated gaining valuable skills, they expressed frustration and feelings of isolation with limited support. The students eased this challenge by using peer feedback and discussion (Simonelis, et al., 2011). The challenges these OT students faced during international experiences need further study into how it impacted their work performance and levels of stress. Further research development can explore how one understands these complex, international experiences and what impact these experiences have in the facilitation of clinical reasoning skills and performance with students. Additionally, Mu, Coppard, Bracciano, Doll, & Matthews (2010)

described skills students exhibited who practiced internationally during fieldwork placements.

The impact of cultural immersion and learning in these fieldwork settings was evidenced through the students' cultural competency, clinical reasoning, and international leadership skills (Mu, et al., 2010). These studies show international work and placements can affect the students cultural competence. Humbert, Berriker, & Cline (n.d.) described graduate physical therapy students' perspective after working in Haiti. Individually, students "developed patience, respect for different cultural beliefs, creative thinking, in treatment sessions when faced with limited resources or challenges, increased confidence, and an understanding of the value of collaborating with other professionals" (p. 10). Similarly, Naude (2011) articulated "the collaborative nature of service-learning and interactive reflection enhances a universal orientation to life" (p. 490). These studies emphasize that service learning can enable students to gain invaluable skills that might not otherwise be learned in familiar, traditional settings.

Johns (2010) emphasized the importance of debriefing after cultural immersion in order to "assimilate [the students'] cultural learning" (p. 347). Some themes brought about by students in the debriefing sessions relate to poverty and integration back into familiar culture, frustration with time management, and development of awareness of materialism in the U.S. and how it shapes behavior norms. Overall, students expressed a change in perspective of their own world-view (Johns, 2010). Thus, cross-cultural study and placements can allow one to become aware of differences in behaviors and then relate them back to how their own familiar cultural behaviors are developed. This awareness of one's own cultural norms can be an agent of change for greater cultural awareness.

## **Gap in Research**

Studying abroad encourages self-reflection and reflection on cultural assumptions. One value of studying abroad lies in the experiential learning (Hopkins, 1999). Occupational therapists and students emphasize that an understanding of cultural differences is needed for effective therapy. However, there is disconnection between how entry-level students perceive the adequacy of their cultural awareness education versus how first-year practitioners perceive their ability to practice with cultural competency (Murden, et al., 2008). With the OT profession emphasizing holistic, client-centered care, practitioners should feel adequately prepared to practice with cultural competency. Mu, et al. (2010) emphasized that students have gained valuable skills during international fieldwork placements (2010). Regarding occupational therapy practitioners, the literature supports perspectives on the value and challenges of international work as it relates to cultural awareness (Humbert, et al., 2011a; Humbert, et al., 2011b). Additionally, there is an evident need for further development of culture education within the OT curriculum (Chiang and Carlson, 2003; Murden, et al., 2008). Having more intense and longer (more than a couple weeks) exposure to another culture, OT students may gain a greater sense of self and cultural awareness.

After review of the literature, the researcher concludes there is a lack of research concentrated on if studying abroad allows for students to develop and enhance cultural competency skills. Research can focus on if cultural competency skills are developed, how participants form and utilized these skills in another culture, and how they can translate into OT practice. Further research on practicing occupational therapists' perspectives of how study abroad has impacted their cultural awareness and competency can allow for more robust evidence on the value of studying abroad in relation to culturally-client-centered OT practice.

The research question of this current study focuses on the perspective of OT students and practicing clinicians who have studied abroad and how this experience has shaped their meaning of cultural awareness and competency.

### **Methodology**

Approval was granted by Elizabethtown College Internal Review Board (IRB) for the study. Approval was granted before any recruitment of participants and informed consent was obtained from participants prior to interviews being conducted. Confidentiality and security of the interviews and transcripts were followed according to the methods outlined in the IRB.

Potential participants were identified through the occupational therapy office as they have the knowledge of which current students and post-graduate students have studied abroad and have the current email addresses of alumni. Emails were sent to all prospective participants, followed by a consent form if they agree to participate. Screenings were conducted with all potential participants who expressed interest in this study. The screening considered demographic information, status as a student or practitioner, interest in cultural competence and the expression of having a meaningful study abroad experience. Initial interviews (1-2 hours long each) were conducted via phone with the participant and primary researcher. Questions asked are open ended, as the interview questions attached are a guide. All interviews were transcribed verbatim.

#### **Initial Interview Questions**

1. Can you describe your study abroad experience?
2. What are some significant and positive experiences from being and living in a different culture?

3. What does it mean to have cultural awareness or cultural competence?
4. How do you think this experience has affected your awareness and commitment to cultural competence?
5. How has studying abroad impacted your knowledge and skills relating to occupational therapy?

Interviews were analyzed by both the principal investigator and the faculty advisor through constant comparative analysis. Interviews were coded independently by the researcher and faculty advisor to establish trustworthiness. Final analysis of interviews were completed and results concluded by establishing themes among and between interviews. Member checking of the final themes were completed to ensure further reliability of the data results.

## **Results**

Four themes were established in relation to the participants' time abroad: *Adjusting*, *Continuum of Connect & Disconnect*, *Awareness of Differences Continuum* and *Forming New Perspectives*. Four other themes were established in relation to occupational therapy fieldwork and practice: *Connecting to Others*, *Multiple Perspectives of Understanding a Person*, *Honoring People's Experiences*, and *Self-Reflection/Awareness*.

### **Adjusting**

The participants talked about the many ways they have adjusted to living in an unfamiliar place with the local people and other study abroad students. Participant 5 explained how she adjusted to a planned excursion.

It is funny because we agreed to do this eco—we got to pick what we did—it was like this eco adventure where we go kayaking. So here, if you sign up for kayaking, the

expectation here is that you will have a nice kayak, a tour guide, and kayaks for everyone. We get there and the water was like super super shallow. There was like one kayak, no life vests, no helmets, and the kayaks were beaten up really badly and you couldn't actually kayak because it was like this little stream that went out into the ocean then it was really rough in the ocean. So that was like another cultural thing—and it is funny because if this happened in the beginning [of the study abroad experience] I would have been like, 'I paid for this! What is this?' Like now, I'm like 'oh this is on the beach, like this is just the way things are.' So you just kind of got accustomed to that. Like when we ate we stayed at these beautiful resort—not a resort, that's the wrong term—like these little huts with lots of beds in them, and it was in the jungle, and when we had breakfast it was out of their own kitchen, like you saw the women who owned the property cooking and we sat there and the ocean was right behind us. So it was not like--- nothing like that would happen here [in the US]. It is so different! And it was just like—it was our last excursion and we just all went with it and we just ate the food and whatever it was we tried it. The kayaks didn't work out so we went climbing and it was just like—that is why I am talking about the slow-pace. It is not necessarily that it is fast like 'go go go' but it's just like go with the flow. Like huh, it's not what we thought.

\*Please reference Appendix A for more quotations supporting this theme.

Reading through the stories told by the participants, the researcher identified how the participants described what adjustment meant for them during the study abroad experience. Some participants expressed an awareness of change in mindset during the adjustment process, like participant 5. Along with the physical adjustment of finding the way around campus, some



participants expressed that the pace of culture as another adjustment. Participant 5 describes the excursion even further.

And it was just like—it was our last excursion and we just all went with it and we just ate the food and whatever it was we tried it. The kayaks didn't work out so we went climbing and it was just like—that is why I am talking about the slow-pace [in Mexico].

Adjustment exists not only when you arrive in a different culture, but when you go back to your home environment as well. Participant 5 describes how she felt coming back to her home in the US.

So the biggest adjustment is that their culture is so laid back—and here it is fast paced—and even in school—I mean you study abroad, your grades don't count but I took it seriously, and I still got good grades--- but to come back and it was like, back to OT school, back to seriousness, you got to get stuff done, your grades matter, life matters—I struggled. Because I was like, walking to school every day, getting a pouch of juice on my way to school, like shopping in the market—and now it's like real life hits you. It's hard. Our own culture is hard to adjust to.

### **Life Adaptations.**

A subtheme to *Adjusting* included *Life Adaptations*, meaning that the participants experienced adaptation as a mechanism to change and mold to the environment they lived in while studying abroad. Overall, there are various ways a person can adjust to the culture they reside in for a study abroad experience. Whether adaptation is related to communication, occupational (day-to-day) adaptation, and/or lifestyle changes, the participants expressed diverse

and unique ways in which they needed to adapt. Participant 4 describes her experience with social participation and communication.

[The host] family spoke Spanish, which was awesome, because ‘mama chica’ really wanted to just speak Spanish in the household. So that was a really great immersion experience, because we were forced to – as heavily as they have been sometimes to use the language—the native language there, which was a goal of my own, to get speaking actively in that language.

Below is a table conceptualizing the participants’ adjustment to occupational performance areas (AOTA, 2014).

Table I

*Life Adaptations While Studying Abroad*

	Self-Care	Communication Management	Driving and Community Mobility	Financial Management	Health management and maintenance	Shopping
Participant 1		X	X		X	X
Participant 2			X	X		X
Participant 3			X			X
Participant 4				X		
Participant 5			X	X		
Participant 6	X		X	X	X	

Table II

*Life Adaptations While Studying Abroad*

	Leisure	Religious and Spiritual Activities and Expression	Social Participation	Education
Participant 1	X		X	X
Participant 2	X		X	X
Participant 3			X	X
Participant 4			X	X
Participant 5	X		X	X
Participant 6	X	X	X	X

\*Please reference Appendix B for the participants' quotes supporting these areas of adjustments.

**Continuum of Awareness of Differences**

Along with adjusting to culture, participants expressed an awareness of differences in a new culture. This awareness is conceptualized in a continuum ranging from *Noticing Differences* to *Questioning/Unease* to *Occupational Injustice*. The first theme of *Noticing Differences* tends to be superficial and the awareness goes deeper thereafter.

**Noticing Differences.**

For this study, 'Noticing Differences' pertains to the participants articulating subtle variances within the environment, academics, lifestyle, history, roommate personalities or habits of their international placement in comparison to their home life in the US. Participant 6 expressed and

awareness of how Australia's culture is different and similar to what she is used to experiencing back in her hometown:

Australia's culture is pretty similar to what I am used to except to living in a city was more of a culture shock for me. Um I live in NJ and it is kind of a crowded feeling, but, just to be completely free and relying on public transportation ..., being by yourself in the city and figuring things out. Like we, in our free time from college, we would like go to the park, sit in the park, like go to the beach – take a bus and go to the beach- or, it was just very free and I don't know if it was just my experience or if it was Australia and their way of life.

\*Please reference Appendix C for other supporting quotations.

### **Questioning/Unease.**

For the subtheme *Questioning/Unease*, awareness increases and deepens as the person gains insight into the particular cultural differences and a particular reaction to those differences is noted and articulated. Participant 5 articulated this awareness after a night out on the town:

We went to this club one night and this was the first time we went without Mexican friends, and we walk through and we did not pay ..., we just walked right through and we realized everyone behind us was paying. So this was the first time like, oh my gosh! Holy cow, we just walked in and we are not supposed to be able to do that—so it kind of made me realize, well first of all we assumed we could. And second of all, they just let us do it. So just trying to then be respectful ..., we would go to restaurants and such, we would try to speak Spanish because, well there were like eight of us girls and we were really close and we spoke English because we were all from here [US], so we tried to like then be

more cultural in the sense of we would speak Spanish when we went out—when people would try to speak Spanish we would be like, oh we want to speak Spanish—so like trying to blend in more and maybe like not be so loud in a restaurant or just kind of like demand a presence is kind of what we did. And then when we came home—oh it didn't bother me—but it made me really realize how much attention we got because here we just blended right in and no one cares at all. The only moment when it really stuck out to me was when we were in the airport and we were laughing and we looked around and no one was looking and not caring—like holy cow, I'm used to having attention on me, this is weird.

\*Please reference Appendix D for another supporting quotation.

### **Occupational Injustice.**

*Occupational Injustice* refers to the differences that the participants experienced rooted deeper within themselves than they initially realized, bringing up more significant issues within culture than solely adjusting or noticing differences within it. Participant 3 gained an awareness of privilege that she has over other people. She expressed trying to handle and work through these differences:

It was almost like there was stuff that was so far outside of my –how do I say this—so I felt like at that time I felt I was new at like occupational profiles and things like that, so I felt like I was getting a lot of good information but I didn't really understand how it fit in. I guess I thought of it more on an academic level—like I was hearing all this intense stuff and I just didn't know on an academic level, and a personal level, what to do with it. Like the issues were just so much more complex than I kind of thought, like, 'Oh you're a

woman from the village. What are your issues?’ and it was kind of like a lot of systemic stuff. And in terms of doing a specific task, it was really hard to conceptualize everything that was going on and like the things that really impact a women’s life, living in rural India. So yeah ... There is a difference between knowing stuff on an academic level and then experiencing it firsthand and being like, ‘Oh my god, like wow, this is what gender inequality is. I am experiencing this firsthand.’ And it just kind of makes the issues a lot more real and personal to you, like just knowing – like caste is an issue, dowry is an issue—like ‘oh my god, no, this is really impacting someone I know personally.’ ... I definitely went through a spectrum of emotions. Like there was some stuff, in terms of gender inequality that affected me and I kind of got pissed and kind of like rebellious—that was my way of dealing with it. But it was bad too, because I realized that I can be rebellious and be pissed because I’m a white woman—but a lot of woman can’t do that, like they can’t even be rebellious or like step a foot inside – so yes it was a lot to grapple with. I think by the end I felt very hopeful, thinking that there is going to be progress but thinking things aren’t going to change and knowing women that are doing great things and trying to impact their whole community. But yes, it was hard though. Like there was one instance that I had two really good friends in the village and one was of the lower caste—and I guess it can be like, ‘oh caste is a social structure of society and if you are in a lower one people look down upon you’ but I never actually saw that. But one experience with my two really good friends—one was a lower caste, the other a higher caste, and they both live in the village—I was with my friend of a higher caste and we were hanging out and then I ran into the other friend of the lower caste, ... and the friend of the higher caste invited me in for tea and I went inside, and then my friend just stood

in the doorway, and I was like, 'what are you doing? Come in, you know him, your friend.' But because of her social standing, she was unable to enter the house. That was like a major social no-no. They weren't really able to be friends or associate—and it was that moment when I couldn't really understand, because you guys are friends, in the same circle so just come and join us. Then I realized and it was like, 'oh my god' that is an example of how the greater system, the greater society impacts more of the personal.

\*Please reference Appendix E for more supporting quotations.

The participants' noticed how their native culture they left for an abroad experience differs from the culture they resided in for a couple months. The depth of differences ranges from just noticing it exists to noticing inequality that reaches a personal level in the participant's life story.

### **Connect/Disconnect Continuum**

Participants expressed ways in which they connected with people but also ways in which there was a struggle to connect. This expression is conceptualized in a continuum with subthemes that begins with connections made that are *Inherent*, *Spontaneous*, *Open/Curious*, and then arise from *Self-reflection/Conflict*.

#### **Inherent.**

This form of trying to connect seemed to be more innate, as the participants were in living arrangements with the people they tried connecting to in their experience. The inherent connection focused primarily on roommates and host families.

Participant 4 stated:

So I went to Costa Rica for 3 months and I stayed with a host family that was also hosting 3 other girls and they had daughters of their own. Two girls were in high school and were going to a local private school in San Jose. Other girls studying abroad--- one was from the Midwest and then Katlyn was from Georgia. Another girl was from Spain. She was from England, but she had done high school in Spain, so she was the only one to come to the house that was in our host family that was fluent in Spanish. [The host] family spoke Spanish, which was awesome, because 'mama chica' really wanted to just speak Spanish in the household. So that was a really great immersion experience, because we were forced to – as heavily as they have been sometimes to use the language—the native language there, which was a goal of my own, to get speaking actively in that language. Well what was wonderful was that my friend, the one who was from England and Spain, she was there to interpret things if they were a little bit cloudy—so we were lucky having someone from both sides. Otherwise, I do not know if I would have made the same connection with the host family.

Similarly, participant 5 articulated living with a host family, learning the language and making connections. Participant 5 also expressed her feelings when she had to leave her experience abroad and those people and connections behind.

\*Please reference Appendix F for more supporting quotations.



### **Spontaneous.**

Some connections occur a bit more spontaneously. Participant 5 expressed a spontaneous interaction with her host family, as well as an awareness of fascination from one of the daughters:

There was my host mom and then her son who was probably in his 30s or 40s living—and in his mind he was taking care of his mom and in her mind she was taking care of him—and then there were two girls who were like from the country, I still don't know if they are related or not—so they worked during the day so they could go to school at night—because their school they could go in the day or at night--- so the one girl went to school. The one girl I think was maybe too old for school, but they were there to get money for their family. Then about two months in I realized there was a little old man who lived in a closet in my house and he never came out in the day, only at night, and I don't know ... they never spoke of him, I don't know who it was, he just lived in this little tiny ... I never asked about it—because you know, they take care of their elders, so I don't know if it was her uncle, her dad, but you know, I would go late at night and they would always have peanut butter, so I had banana and peanut butter and he would just be like 'hola bonita' and then he would go back—that was the only interaction I ever had. ... The girl who was younger was fascinated by me. She was asking me a million questions ... She thought I knew Justin Bieber. Like no, I do not know him. So like their perspective on America is what they see on tv and in movies. And on every movie and every tv show, people live in really really nice houses and have really really nice cars, like even if they are an average family they do, unless they are poor—in American standards of poor. So in their minds I am this super rich, white college girl who has tons of money and knows

Justin Bieber. Like LA is their idea. I'm like, 'no, I like near Hershey, PA. I would say Philadelphia, just as a reference point. And I live in the country—and what the country means to us is completely different than what the country means to them, so to have a concept of where I lived was just impossible.

Participant 5 not only articulated an experience that arose spontaneously, but also expressed a curiosity about the connections within the host family and how they treated her as a foreign student residing in their house. She expressed her feelings of uncertainty about some experiences. This curiosity continues with the next participants' connections arising out of their openness and curiosity to new experiences.

\*Please reference Appendix G for more supporting quotations.

### **Openness/curiosity.**

Some participants articulated a curiosity about studying abroad and being open to making connections with international and local students. Participant 3 explained how she gained a deep connection and furthered her understanding of her experiences:

I dated a guy who I met on a hiking trip there. And that was like a lot of cultural stuff to work through. Yeah, so I think that, I guess in terms of like—well having a relationship with someone from a different culture really teaches you a lot and gives you really good insight into ... the society you are in. It felt a little different than the other people, because if you study abroad, if you want to, you can isolate yourself. Like you tend to do touristy things and do x, y & z... but it is really the relationships with people that teach you stuff about that culture, you know, to become more competent and understanding of other people. ... I felt like because we [her and her boyfriend] had such a deep

connection, like a mutual kind-of relationship that I was able to ask really difficult questions and were able to really—it just helped me understand, like in a safe space, like I could really spread myself and say what I think and hear, or no, well this is not necessarily what I think and us being both open to that and trying to understand. I think that's where I grew a lot and learned a lot and I kind realized that my way of thinking things--- it's not that there is a right or wrong way of thinking about things. But that my lens isn't the only lens—and I think that that was really the first major time in my life that I saw things through a different lens and really understood why—or I understood that lens more.

Participant 3 expressed disconnections with an individual, her boyfriend, so disconnect begins to emerge in this theme. However, there is an embedded openness for new experiences.

\*Please reference Appendix H for more supporting quotations.

### **Self-reflection/Conflict.**

Some disconnect was explored in the participants' experiences. Disconnect entails unequal relationships, a desire to connect with another person that is not reciprocated or confusion within the relationship. Participants described specific stories where disconnection stood out to them. Some participants brought up these disconnections multiple times throughout the interview process. Examples of disconnection occurred within host families, local people in regards to their way of thinking about international students, and fellow students or other people from the same culture.

Participant 2 describes a detailed experience of cooking with another American student:

You know, she is from a different culture than me even though we are both part of America and she would criticize my cooking and cleaning, which is weird. She kind of hyper-focused on like everything that I did. And I am like, I have never had this before, this is kind of disappointing---I'm studying abroad and I'm running into problems before that I have never had before---I've never really had to fight with people. And the one example that I can think in my head of a proper example was, we did try to have family dinners together at first in the small studying abroad group, and she bought a chicken with another girl. We had chicken that night, and it was like a roasted chicken. So at the very end we had a chicken carcass, and you know we are reminiscing at the end. You know, saying, 'oh my mom used to pop this in and boil it for chicken soup.' And we are like, 'oh why don't we do that?' and so the next day she is taking a quiz online and the one girl is like 'oh are we going to eat? I don't have to go to rugby practice and I kind of have to eat now, if we aren't going to do the chicken carcass thing.' And I'm like 'oh we were planning on doing it now, so why don't we just come down and help you cook it.' And the mean girl was taking a quiz online, and we told her 'Me and this other girl are going to take care of the chicken, and we are going to cook dinner.' And she's like 'what?' and we are like 'oh, yes we got this, keep taking the test.' Then she comes out later and is like 'YOU RUINED IT.' And we are like 'what?' she says 'you have to let it sit in the water even longer!' and I am like, 'I am not going to fight with you over this chicken carcass.' I can tell tensions are getting higher and you can just go and keep taking your test. She's like 'ohhhh, fine.' And I turn to the girl that plays rugby and am like, 'this is just a total bust and I am not eating with them again.' And she comes back to

the room and is like, 'you ruined it!' and I just said, 'I am not fighting over a chicken carcass.' So honestly, that was my worst experience, so if that is my worst experience, I had a pretty good time.

Participant 2 expressed her feelings about experiencing this problem while articulating her ability to deal with this experience.

\*Please reference Appendix I for supporting quotes.

### **Forming New Perspectives**

Participants explained how they have become aware and formed new perspectives about themselves, the culture, or the people while they have been abroad. Participant 6 not only expressed a general new perspective of viewing people, but also how communication can be important:

It was definitely helpful to live with people who were not the same culture as me because that definitely helps now with viewing other people, with patience and more curiosity and no judgment I would say. And I think like even learning other languages, like I would try to learn a couple words here and there and it was really special to that person. So just knowing the importance of trying to learn something about someone different—that has stuck with me.

Changes can come through positive experiences as well as times of struggle. One participant articulated skills she learned from experiencing stressful times. Participant 1 describes how she feels now in stressful situations.

And yes, I think that as I go through stressful times here [the US], I definitely think back to the coping skills I've learned, of like, you know trusting the system a lot, like just working through it and seeing the end point. So I use a lot of those coping skills I learned while abroad here, so I definitely reflect back on that.

Another participant described a personal change that occurred through taking classes abroad and how this change affected her back in in the USA.

Yeah, so when I was there [Australia], I had taken a creative expression class and it was like drawing and making things from clay and like that kind of thing. And that instilled in me a lot of peace and quiet and observation, and I think that has helped me a lot because I tend to be a busy body, but that has helped me to just be quiet in my mind and kind of go with the flow. I think being in Australia has helped me be more 'go with the flow.'

\*Please reference Appendix J for more supporting quotations.

## **Occupational Therapy Fieldwork and Practice**

### **Connecting to Others**

As a result of the intentional study abroad experiences, the participants were also asked to share their perspectives about cultural sensitivity/responsiveness as it relates to the practice of occupational therapy. The participants described different ways of building relationships and communicating to their clients and the clients' family.

Participant 6 stated:

We have a language interpreter service, so that has helped—so they understand like I'm not going to use a family member. I understand the importance of not putting that pressure on them to translate things. And then as far as other families—because one of my flat mates who was from India- I feel like I am already best friends with their family or the culture because I know someone in—even though I don't know them—but I just feel easily connected with the people that I met from that country, if that makes sense.

\*Please reference Appendix K for more supporting quotations.

### **Multiple Perspectives of Understanding the Person**

Participants also expressed an understanding of and appreciation for different perspectives of clients and coworkers. Through communication and respect, the participants expressed the ability to connect to clients and families and see and understand new perspectives.

Participant 3 stated:

I do try to use what people—try to learn—for example one of my clients is adopted but her parents are Portuguese. So you know, I try to talk about their culture and how that impacts her life and her interests. It's not like 'tell me part of your culture so it can be part of our treatment', but you know, listening and learning. A lot of times you find that stuff really interesting and it is part of people's identity. So I think, Oh, how can I use this? ... It's like observing my clinical reasoning.

Participant 6 discussed using communication as a tool to connect and the ability to understand family roles and how that may be incorporated into the care of the client.

I would say being aware of differences. Maybe not verbally adjusting them [the client], ... just out of respect, not needing to say, 'I know you are this and this-' but just asking what is important to them and what the goal is for them. So it's more of a curiosity than a mental piece—that would be culturally competent. Understanding that you don't speak to the family member to translate. You get a professional translator or use the language line. Understanding different roles each family member plays and the importance of the child in their life. If it is their first born son, that could be very different than their fifth kid—so just maybe understanding the roles in each culture. Understanding the role of medicine and health—a lot of times families may not chose medication for their kids, and understanding that they might prefer ... alternative medicine.”

\*Please reference Appendix L for more quotations.

### **Honoring People's Experiences.**

During therapy, the practitioner can evaluate and consider the client's history and context—family, social, environmental—and respect those experiences to enhance the therapeutic process. These participants honor their clients' histories and past experiences.

Participant 5 stated:

It's just keeping an open mind. Even in general as a therapist—keeping an open mind about everything. I had a guy one time say, 'before I tell you anything you cannot judge me. I live in a caboose.' And he did. So we helped him figure out how he was going to go back to his caboose because that is where he was going to go. So like every—and I think, if you can tie the two together—having experience studying abroad and going to a different culture and a totally different environment, if you are not open-minded to



different experiences, 'like this is totally different than I am used to,' then you will just be miserable for 5 months. So forcing yourself to be in that relationship 100% relates to being a therapist. Like, you have to – even if you might know your schedule you will not know what your day will be like, and you never know what a client is going through. And you have been there before where you are in a new place and feel uncomfortable—like relating those two experiences to each other.

Participant 2 also expressed the need to honor personal experiences:

Among patients, yes, there are cultural differences. We had a holistic counselor and she had grief groups and one day I sat in. She wanted to start off the group with a saying from Buddhism, and an old lady sat down and said, 'why would you read something from Buddhism if we are all Christians here?' – How does she know that? And the counselor had to politely say that she needs to be open-minded if you want to be here. We are not praying and this is not a religious service, you know. So you are going to see different than you're used to. The lady cannot assume that just because everyone in the room is white that they are Christian. And that facility was located in central NJ, and it is a very differs area. We had people who were immigrants and still had a pretty heavy accent from India, Puerto Rico, Dominican Republic. I think we had people from Asia. We had someone from Ireland, Germany—just all over, it is very diverse. So, they also have cultural differences. For one example there is this man from India- ... the country where yoga came from, Namaste came from—every Friday I would run a meditation group and he would show up, look me in the eye and said, 'you are a student, I am a master of meditation. There is nothing you can teach me.' He would constantly belittle me and tell me pretty much that I could not—he pretty much told me I was stupid. I am pretty sure he

used that word once. He really believes he is good at this, so I actually made him run a group one day. I ran half the group and he ran half of it—because you know you can't let them run the whole thing. So I asked him beforehand, sat him down, 'Sir. Since you are the master of meditation and I am not, there is a lot you can teach me. Would you care to run half of the meditation group?' He was honored and thrilled. I don't know if he did a good job or not, you know, because he was there for psychosis, so I have no idea if what he was speaking was even in the meditation realm, but he respected me a lot after that. He was so thankful that I let him do that. ... sometimes you have to work around things, but he respected me a lot after that. He no longer belittled me or spoke out in groups. I no longer had to cut him off in group or kick him out of groups. At the very end he was like, 'I am glad you let me do this, you are a good student' and I am like, 'Oh thank you sir.' I did learn from that guy.

\*Please reference Appendix M for further supporting quotations.

### **Self-Reflection & Awareness**

As participants described gaining new perspectives while studying abroad, some participants also articulated a process of self-reflection related to practice, within their practice environment, or on life itself. Participant 1 and 6 discussed how study abroad affected their life story.

Participant 1 stated:

I specifically chose a place that I thought was going to put me out of my comfort zone—and it did. And part of me wishes I went to another place that even challenged me more, because they did speak the same language and all of that, but I think that everyone should do it because you learn a lot about yourself--- and that whole therapeutic-use-of-self,

knowing yourself is really important. Like I don't even think I know a lot about myself, but I definitely learned more about myself [through study abroad]. I think that in the future I will be able to treat better, and it is hard to do that when you are just sitting in your room, studying. Yes, so I think everyone should have the opportunity to study abroad, and it should be encouraged, not just for OTs, but for all health related fields—just everyone. I'm like, 'YOU should study abroad!' Because you do learn a lot.

Participant 6 shared:

I don't know if it is my personality or if it-- had I not gone to Australia I think I would have tried, but having known people from other cultures, it is easier for me. But I do think that, as an OT, speaking to people who are from different families than you, even from different cultures, people are entrusting you with their lives and you know everything about them and they know nothing about you, so there is an uneven trust. So it is very important to be patient with them and listen and ask questions, to respect them if they say 'oh we cannot come today because we are doing this' or understanding they can't eat this type of food. Or when we ask about different sensory needs, like, you know, the people who are Jewish, they don't cut their hair—like the boys who are young. ... in the sensory world, to not cut your hair, it shows that they are sensitive to their head being touched. So it is just understanding that it may not be [a sensory issue], it might just be their culture. Same thing as wearing bare feet. So you just have to dig a little deeper, and being aware of that because I have seen [how] other people live.

\*Please reference Appendix N for more supporting quotations from participants.

## Discussion

Four themes relating to study abroad experience were established: *Adjusting, Continuum of Connect & Disconnect, Continuum of Awareness of Differences*, and *Forming New Perspectives*. Four themes describing OT practice and fieldwork experience were also identified: *Connecting to Others, Multiple Perspectives of Understanding the Person, Honoring People's Experiences*, and *Self-Reflection & Awareness*. Collectively, the themes suggest a process of self-identity and self-reflection that relate to the individuals' experiences abroad and practicing OT. All participants expressed formation of new perspectives. Some participants spoke about their experiences in detail and how they have come to realize something from their international experience. Other participants articulate an awareness, perspective, or skill that does not necessarily relate to their international experience but is meaningful to their life story. For example, Participant 3 articulated:

I work in a residential program with kids—some severe mental health stuff going on, 10-18 yrs, and ... I want to pull out my hair every other second ... It's definitely the patience part of it, like trying to understand like yourself and your reactions and kind of like monitoring how that is coming off to people ... You always want to be client-centered and your client's advocate and trying to understand them—you know, it's really important and is like the main thing that we do.

Some participants' stories within the subthemes describing OT practice and fieldwork did not articulate a connection between their study abroad experience and OT practice or fieldwork. However, these stories helped shape the participants' view of life experiences as a therapist and

created areas of discussion between the participant and researcher. As one example, Participant two stated:

Now that I am older, I understand more about life, like cars, payments, debt, and rent. I understand that a lot more now that I didn't think about when I was 18. So I now realize that I cannot just run off to a different country and expect everything to just fall into place. You have to be more patient, you have to seek out opportunities sometimes.

### **Life Adaptation**

The Life Adaptation charts identify the areas of occupational adjustment that were needed for the study abroad experience, as per participants' own disclosure. Driving and community mobility, financial management, education, social participation, leisure, and shopping were the occupational adaptations described most frequently by the participants. While there were differences in the types of occupational adaptations needed for study abroad, all of the participants spoke at length about these adaptations and were foremost in their descriptions of their experiences. The researcher cannot determine if these adaptations were a primary focus of discussion because the participants are occupational therapy students and practitioners-- and as OTs we focus on these occupations or because their experiences were significant enough to facilitate these in-depth discussions. The researcher could not find further studies and information specifically on the need and extent for occupational adaptation in the study abroad experience; however, the participants' ability and need to adjust to different cultural norms and expectations, including the physical and social contexts that needed to be engaged was well articulated in this study.

### **Cultural Awareness and the Implication for Occupational Therapy Practice**

One important aspect to highlight from the results of the study to is that participants with the most experience in the delivery of OT services seemed to be able to articulate specifically how their awareness grew in regards to occupational therapy, cultural sensitivity, and their study abroad experience. The OT practitioners and the Masters of Occupational Therapy Student (MOTS) were able to articulate elaborate stories relating to particular clients and/or cultural sensitivity. The senior OT student did not specifically articulate having cultural awareness or competency; however, she stated adjustment and openness:

Working with other people- learning those skills I think has been very helpful because, you know you meet so many different people abroad and you have to deal with so many different personalities. ... Just like the different places [abroad], people have such different personalities and different levels of willingness to meet new people and openness. ... You think it is really similar to different rooms you walk into at a fieldwork site.

Surez-Balcazar, et al. (2009) stated, "Older therapists with more practice experience might have had more exposure to a variety of opportunities to learn from multicultural populations and might have seen a wider variety of clients in practice" (p. 502). This ability may be related to the fact that the OT practitioners and MOTS had more time and opportunities to engage practice with a diverse clientele.

### **Elaboration on the Themes Related to International Experiences and Culture**

Humbert, et al. (2012) describes the international experiences of nine occupational therapy students. Themes of *connectedness*, *cultural awareness* and *complexity* identified in that study also relate to the findings in this study. *Connectedness* refers to the “process of forming relationships with others while engaging in cross-cultural experiences and bonding at some emotional level” (p. 229). The importance of building relationships, the use of nonverbal and verbal communication, and the shared experiences abroad in maintaining longer relationships were emphasized (Humbert, et al., 2012). However, this current study brings light on a broader spectrum of relationships and elucidates a continuum of connection and disconnection involving subthemes that begin with connections made that are *Inherent*, *Spontaneous*, *Open/Curious*, and then disconnection that arises from *Self-reflection/Conflict*. Participants in Humbert, et al. (2012) articulated forming relationships through engagement in occupations and other activities. Some articulated forming spontaneous connections (Humbert, et al., 2012). A commonality of spontaneity is described in both research studies. However, the current study expands the theme into a continuum, describing how participants' experiences with connection can be formed within it. Disconnection is articulated in the subtheme *Self-reflection/conflict*, which is not described in Humbert, et al.'s research.

*Cultural awareness* was also identified as an important component in international practice and experiences. “The students demonstrated cultural awareness by first acknowledging the intensity of and contrast in the environments in which they engaged in as far different than their own” (Humbert et al., 2012, p. 231). This relates to the theme in the study of *Continuum of Awareness of Differences*. Some participants in this study articulated noticing subtle differences between themselves and others within the study abroad experience. Others questioned why some

of these differences occur, and then explicitly articulated these observations as aspects of social and occupational injustice. In contrast, Humbert, et al. (2012) stated, “students generally process these differences within larger social and occupational justice issues” (p. 231); however, it is not clear from that study as to how this process actually occurred and if the students could articulate the particular injustices being observed. It is questioned if the length of time and the intensity of the study abroad experience might contribute to a more elaborate and complex way of processing cultural difference. Participants from Humbert, et al. (2012) and the current study formed new perspectives through international experiences, fostering a general openness and a broader world view. The current study, however, articulates a continuum of this awareness of differences within culture, pulled from participants’ rich and detailed stories. One characteristic of this continuum that stood out to the researcher is the occupational injustice stories that come from the participants’ experiences. The specific stories that support this end of the continuum came from participant 3 and 5 who both studied in countries (India and Mexico, respectively) where seeing and working with Caucasians is not as common as the US. Participant 3 discussed inequalities based on the color of her skin and her gender, while Participant 5 only discussed being treated differently due to her skin color. The researcher cannot determine exactly why Participant 3 and 5 brought up instances of occupational injustice while the other participants did not discuss inequality issues. However, possibly being in another country where the participants’ ethnicity is not as commonly seen on a day-to-day basis compared to the US, there may be more frequent opportunities to witness or feel a difference in treatment compared to the local people.

Humbert, et al. (2012) also described the theme of *Complexity* as, “the idea that cross-cultural experiences are dynamic, multi-facet and intricate. The students primarily exhibited the theme of *complexity* in relation to their roles and the challenges they face within those [student]



roles” (p. 231). The current study’s theme of *Forming New Perspectives* does exhibit a complexity within their overall explanation of stories and experiences abroad. However, not all of the participants’ narratives in this study relate to their student roles. Some participants described new mindsets or an elaboration on what cultural competence actually means for them. Participant 2 articulated this elaboration.

Whenever we talk about culture, it’s my personal belief that every single person has a different culture because culture can be the family culture, religious culture, regional culture, the national culture, the ethnic culture -- there’s a lot of different cultures out there. So I am going to have a different raising than my neighbors, because of different parents, different religion. I even know a difference from where I live in NJ. But I think ... that was really made aware to me when I was in Ireland.

The participants described how they adjusted to living within the day-to-day occurrences and what new perspectives were formed from this adjustment. Some of the adjustments were specifically and directly related to the role of a student; many of the other adaptations were not. New perspectives were formed through the study abroad experience and it is suggested from the results of this study that new perspectives were shaped from the varied life experiences encountered through study abroad.

### **Intercultural Competence Framework/Model**

After further review of the literature, the researcher has discovered connections between the established themes of this study to the *Intercultural Competence Framework/Model* formed through the research of D.K. Deardorff (2010). Deardorff describes this framework being comprised of *Attitudes, Knowledge, Skills, Internal Outcomes, and External Outcomes*.

*Attitudes* consist of, “Respect, openness, curiosity and discovery. Openness and curiosity imply a willingness to risk and to move beyond one’s comfort zone. In communicating respect to others, it is important to demonstrate that others are valued” (2010). Even though this is not a detailed explanation, the researcher may relate the *Attitudes* part of the *Intercultural Competence Framework* to themes of *Continuum of Connect & Disconnect*. In both research, there is an expression of openness/curiosity. This continuum emphasizes different ways people connect with one another, either through verbal communication, having an openness and curiosity with making friends, or connecting through leisure activities. One participant articulated respecting boundaries in regards to talking about religion with one of her roommates. Through these experiences, the participants were able to self-reflect and handle times when they could not connect with individuals. They discovered ways in which to connect and how to handle disconnection. These attitudes and characteristics of personal experience in the *Continuum of Connect & Disconnect* seem to be relatable to the respect, openness, curiosity, and discovery articulated within the *Attitudes* theme in the *Intercultural Competence Framework*.

The next theme of *Knowledge* in Deardoff’s model discusses, “cultural self-awareness (meaning the ways in which one’s culture has influenced one’s identity and worldview), culture-specific knowledge, deep cultural knowledge including understanding other world views and sociolinguistic awareness” (2010). This awareness may be relatable to the themes of this study including *Forming New Perspectives, Self-Reflection & Awareness* and *Continuum of Awareness of Differences*. These themes describe a formation of new perspectives/insights of differences between and within culture, as well as gaining and understanding of what and why these differences exist.

Within the *Continuum of Awareness of Differences*, the participants articulated ways in which they saw differences within their study abroad experience and the new culture in which they were immersed. Within *Forming New Perspectives, Self-Reflection & Awareness* themes, the participants also articulated forming new ideas and perspectives about themselves, culture, and/or the people (clients and families) with whom they work. This awareness is a reflection of their time living in a new place for a few months and within the roles and responsibilities as an OT practitioner. Some of this awareness further impacted the participants' professional identity and encouraged connection between client and therapist. These characteristics seem to be comparable to the cultural self-awareness and culture-specific knowledge described in Deardoff's (2010) model of *Intercultural Competence*.

In Deardoff's model, *Internal Outcomes* ideally consists of,

“flexibility, adaptability, an ethnorelative perspective and empathy. These are the aspects that occur within the individual as a result of the acquired attitudes, knowledge and skills necessary for intercultural competence. At this point, individuals are able to see from the others' perspectives and to respond to them according to the way in which the other person desires to be treated” (2010).

This highlighted area of the *Intercultural Competence Model* may relate to the themes described by the participants in the current study, occupational therapy practitioners and students as study abroad impacted practice and fieldwork. *Internal Outcomes* becomes visible through *External Outcomes* where, “Attitudes, knowledge and skills, as well as the internal outcomes, are demonstrated through the behavior and communication of the individual” (2010). This aspect of intercultural competence may be relatable to the themes from the current study related to

*Connecting to Others, Multiple Perspectives of Understanding the Person, and Honoring*

*People's Experiences.* These themes focus on understanding and responding and coordinating treatment from the client's perspective, environment and needs. The participants articulated actions or mechanisms to connect, understand, and honor the client and their experience. Some participants explicitly articulated their experience abroad and how it has influenced their view of practice, within their practice environment, or on their life experience. Participant 3 articulated how her experience impacted her skills as an OT and how she fits her international experience in her life story.

Every experience builds upon one another, and I would not be here without that experience. So to be honest, the time that I went to India—before that was like a very building, emotional, unstable time, and I really needed going to India to figure out what I wanted to do ... what was next on my path. Like I had a lot of uncertainty about the field,... like where I was going. ... That whole experience really confirmed a lot of things and ... set the emotions to do the things I am doing. So I think that, India as a whole really helped me become more self-aware and just ... gave me space to ... understand myself—like who I am and what I want, and off of that, I sought out more and more experiences. And I don't think it's just India that like helped me with my clinical reasoning or helped me develop the skills, but it was an initial jumping point—if that makes sense.

The participant articulated how her personal experience, including internal and external experiences, enabled her to establish where she wanted to go in life and setting her in motion to do so. This experience and themes of *Connecting to Others, Multiple Perspectives of Understanding the Person, and Honoring People's Experiences* establish a possible association

that exemplifies *Internal Outcomes* becoming visible through *External Outcomes* (Deardoff, 2010). The overall perceived similarity between the *Intercultural Competence Model* and the researcher's discovery of themes in this study is important to note as study abroad may also influence and impact OT fieldwork and practice.

### **Implications for Practice**

Suarez-Balcazar, et al. (2009) conducted research on 477 occupational therapists that were part of the American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA) and looked at their perceived level of cultural competence by utilizing the *Cross Cultural Adaptability Inventory* (CCAI). Some therapists reported no prior cultural competence training. However, of those who reported training, they described taking a required class on cultural competence or an elective course, covering the topic in various courses in occupational therapy school, learning about it in fieldwork or taking continuing education classes (2009, p. 501). The results indicated that "78.4% of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed that being culturally competent is one of the most important skills in their practice, and 82.5% agreed or strongly agreed that they felt equipped to address the specific needs of individuals from different groups" (2009, p. 501). Murden, et al. (2008) also supports the need for occupational therapists to understand different cultures to enhance client-centered care.

### **Future Research**

Having the ability to study abroad may be helpful in developing students' cultural awareness and sensitivity and then may ultimately impact culturally responsive occupational therapy practice; however, further research is needed. The question may be asked, does study abroad facilitate greater levels of cultural competency in students compared to those who have limited

international experiences? Additionally, if studying abroad is not an option for students to develop cultural awareness and sensitivity, what are other mechanisms available to enhance such learning and practice? To further this inquiry, research may be conducted to investigate self-reflection and awareness of culture as students engage in varying learning experiences directly and indirectly related to developing cultural awareness and sensitivity. Additionally, research may be conducted with practitioners who have traveled and worked abroad and assess their ability to relate those experiences to their practice, particularly to the themes of this study: *Connecting to Others, Multiple Perspectives of Understanding the Person, and Honoring People's Experiences.*

### **Limitations of the Study**

Limitations of this study include that the participants were all Occupational Therapy Elizabethtown College students or alumni and articulated having an interest in sharing their study abroad experience. The established themes were reviewed by both the primary researcher and secondary researcher; however, they were not triangulated further and reviewed with the participants. The participants' experiences were limited to specific countries: Ireland, Australia, Costa Rica, Mexico and India.

### **Conclusion**

The preliminary study allowed the researcher to discover how the participants made meaning of their study abroad experiences through the participants' stories. The study explored how the participants felt about studying abroad and its significance in their life and their perceived understanding of the study abroad experience to the application of occupational therapy practice. Overall, studying abroad has an impact on the personal-level of the individual

both in occupational adaptation and forming new perspectives. Based on the results of the study, getting out of one's comfort zone and living in an unfamiliar place can generate a process of adaptation, of forming new perspectives, encouraging self-reflection and enhancing the awareness of differences within cultures.

With the established themes of *Connecting with Others*, *Multiple Perspectives of Understanding the Person*, and *Honoring People's Experiences*, the researcher suggests that these themes may relate to engaging occupational therapy practice with cultural-sensitivity, client-centered care and may be associated with study abroad. The results suggest that occupational therapists should be attentive to the cultural differences and needs of their clients, thus practicing holistically and client-centered. Studying abroad may be a catalyst to furthering the implementation and success of culturally-competent care. Further exploration of the connection between study abroad and culturally responsive occupational care is needed. Studying abroad may be a catalyst to furthering the implementation and success of culturally-competent care.

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*Appendix A*

Below are other quotes relating to the theme of *Adjusting*.

<p>Participant 1</p>	<p>“Overall it was a really nice experience; a lot of things went wrong for us. We got lost so much. Some people had problems with airplanes. We got lost when we were there when we landed in Limerick. They [the taxi service] dropped us off at the wrong apartment on this huge campus and we were not where we needed to be. We all needed some sleep. Those first couple of days no one was there on campus so we had to fend for ourselves. But it was a good experience-- you work through them and you learn from them.”</p>
<p>Participant 5</p>	<p>“So the biggest adjustment is that their culture is so laid back and here [US] it is fast paced ... I mean you study abroad, your grades don't count but I took it seriously and I still got good grades, but to come back and it was back to OT school, back to seriousness, you got to get stuff done. Your grades matter, life matters—I struggled. Because I was walking to school every day, getting a pouch of juice on my way to school, shopping in the market—and now ... real life hits you. It's hard. Our own culture is hard to adjust to.”</p>
<p>Participant 6</p>	<p>“But as far as the culture shock, I did spend a weekend in more of their wilderness habitat and that was really cool because we worked outside ... gardening and things that you would do on a farm, kind of to volunteer. But then eating different foods and being adjusted to going a little hungry thinking, ‘oh I wish I could have this but, kind of just learning to eat different foods.’ ... They had a lot of sandwiches, but some I wasn't used to. They had a lot of bread and the meats were different.”</p>

<p>Participant 2</p>	<p>“Yes, it’s very interesting because you go around abroad and not everyone is a fan of the United States and you can’t say America because for some reason if you say ‘I’m from America’ it makes you sound more ‘hotty-totty’ than if you said ‘I’m from the United States.’ So there are certain things that you learn.”</p>
<p>Participant 4</p>	<p>“So I studied [Spanish] all through high school. So reading it, writing it, I felt very comfortable with it, but that was the very passive way of learning it. So then actively with the speaking and listening and really understanding and communicating-- that was trickier. I had taken one course at Etown, so I had a background with it but nothing near being close to fluent or comfortable. So I would say I had an idea of what to say, how to say it, but I knew I had a lot to learn. You know, it took about the 3 months for me to finally feel comfortable—and then I was like, ‘oh, now it’s time to go.’”</p>
<p>Participant 1</p>	<p>“I had this one professor who taught a class ... [and] I remember not being able to understand and I would sit in the front and not take notes, I would record it also. Our classes were very difficult. ... I know a lot of people's experiences abroad [and] their classes were relatively easy; ours were very difficult. They had high academic standards, and you only needed a passing grade but it was still so hard. So I would record it and listen to it again, trying to get certain parts, because I couldn’t take notes and listen because most of the time I didn't know what she was saying. So then towards the end I developed a better ear for it and was able to better understand it, but it did take me like a good month of trying to understand it and develop the vocabulary with the slang they were talking about because ... if you were talking to any adult, they would talk to you very properly, so I didn't really get that. But anyone our age had tons of slang, and then stuff that that was very mutual. People were very proud</p>

	<p>of the towns they come from and they would have so many different words for the same meaning. And that was definitely difficult with communication, but people were very open to asking.”</p>
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*Appendix B*

Life Adaptations topic and related participant quotes.

<p><b>Communication Management</b></p> <p>“Sending, receiving, and interpreting information using a variety of systems and equipment,</p> <p>including writing tools, telephones (cell phones or smartphones), keyboards, audiovisual recorders, computers or tablets, communication boards, call lights, emergency systems,</p> <p>Braille writers, telecommunication devices for deaf people, augmentative communication systems, and personal digital assistants” (AOTA, 2014, p. S19).</p>	<p>Participant 1</p>	<p>“I think one of the biggest things was my phone [and] not being as connected. It was really stressful because when I wanted to communicate with my family [and] I wasn’t able to do it as soon as I needed to. I had to wait until I was in wifi or somewhere where I could communicate.”</p>
<p><b>Driving and Community Mobility and Shopping</b></p> <p>“Preparing shopping lists (grocery and other); selecting, purchasing, and transporting items; selecting method of payment; and completing money transactions; included are Internet shopping and related use of electronic devices such as computers, cell phones, and tablets” (AOTA, 2014, p. S20).</p>	<p>Participant 1</p>	<p>“Another challenge we had was grocery shopping because we had to go into the city and we had to take the bus. The bus stops would not stop right in front of the grocery store ... We would have to walk like a good 10 minutes to the grocery store. All the groceries we had we had to be able to carry. Then the bus on the way back would come every 45 minutes, so if you got it [groceries] and you like just came out, you had to wait 45 minutes.”</p>

<p><b>Driving and Community Mobility</b></p> <p>“Planning and moving around in the community and using public or private transportation, such as driving, walking, bicycling, or accessing and riding in buses, taxi cabs, or other transportation systems” (AOTA, 2014, p. S19).</p>	<p>Participant 2</p>	<p>“I didn’t have a car, and the transport system is actually really good in Ireland, as it is in Europe, but of course there is a lot of places you can’t get to because it is packed. But the buses are perfect because it took you to all the places you wanted to see and then bring you back by the end of the day. Take a train back to Demuth, walk home, it was great.”</p>
<p>Driving and Community Mobility</p>	<p>Participant 3</p>	<p>“The grocery store ... was in a walkable distance so we had to walk there ... It was just so crowded and so loud and there was just this really creepy older man following us for a long time and it was just like really sketching me out and I was just almost in tears, like ‘oh my god like I don’t know how I am going to do this walk by myself to get groceries. I don’t know how I am going to survive.’”</p>
<p>Driving and Community Mobility</p>	<p>Participant 5</p>	<p>“And then just coming from here in Lancaster county and the farmlands to living in a busy city where you take a bus and taxis— you shouldn’t always assume people don’t speak English... one time a taxi driver was laughing at us and we were like ‘oops.’ So I don’t know, it was totally different and I loved it, and it was harder to come back and get used to busy life than it was to adjust to life there, but I had</p>



		more culture shock when I came back here [US].”
Driving and Community Mobility	Participant 6	“People would walk everywhere more versus driving. A lot of people who lived in the city didn’t have a car and that’s probably the same here in Philadelphia, more walking and taking the bus or taxis are common. They are just definitely green in Australia.”
Shopping	Participant 3	“The first thing she wanted to show us where the grocery store was, so it was in a walkable distance so we had to walk there. Like oh my god, I—like it was just so crowded and so loud.”
Shopping and <b>Financial Management</b>  “Using fiscal resources, including alternate methods of financial transaction, and planning and using finances with long-term and short-term goals” (AOTA, 2014, p. S19).	Participant 2	“And honestly it [grocery shopping] did not cost me too much money. Because BCA gave us a stipend every day for meals, and I was very careful with my spending. I bought meals once a week, grocery shopped once a week, so I actually used some of that money for traveling.”
Financial Management and Self-care	Participant 6	“I was really cheap when I lived in Australia because I didn’t have a lot of money. I never painted my nails or styled my hair with a blow dry, So then it was like I could do those things again. But it was mainly just because I wanted to spend money on food and other things.”
Financial Management	Participant 4	“I originally wanted to do the four month. I signed up and got

		my plane tickets and everything, but then I didn't make as much money that summer to kind of carry me over, so I had to change everything around. It was so frustrating and stressful. But you know what, three months is better than no months!"
Financial Management	Participant 5	"Yes, so I was always interested, but then when I found out that I had to [pay] out of pocket – well that's not going to happen. So I was then able to get loans to pay for the room and board, and I worked my butt off that summer and saved money to go. It was awesome that I got to go, because I just thought I would never get to go, and then I did."
<p><b>Health Management and Maintenance</b></p> <p>"Developing, managing, and maintaining routines for health and wellness promotion, such as physical fitness, nutrition, decreased health risk behaviors, and medication routines" (AOTA, 2014, p. S19).</p>	Participant 1	"So I waited it out and I was getting sicker, so I had to go to a doctor. I ended up going to like a foot clinic in the city and ... she [the caregiver] sprayed this pink stuff on my toe and then said like come back next week. I didn't pay her; she didn't know my name, like there was nothing like that. Then I came back the next week and ... she bandaged it, she was able to remove the infected nail. Then I paid her out of pocket \$40, but she never took a history or anything. And honestly she was a blessing because she was able to take care of it and I didn't want to go to the hospital."

Health Management and Maintenance	Participant 6	<p>“And I had actually gone to the doctors when I was there because there was a dust storm. Like one day we woke up and everything was orange outside, and I didn’t know that we were not supposed to go outside. So I had to go to class I thought, and it was just dust in the air and stuff and just blowing around like rain, and it lasted all day. So anyway I was wearing contacts and after that had happened my eyes had hurt and I realized I had scratched my eye.”</p>
Education	Participant 1	<p>“I know a lot of people's experiences abroad-- their classes were relatively easy [and] ours were very difficult ... So I would record it [the lecture] and listen to it again, trying to get certain parts, because I couldn’t take notes and listen because most of the time I didn't know what she was saying. So then towards the end I developed a better ear for it and was able to better understand it, but it did take me like a good month, of like trying to understand it and developing the vocabulary with the slang they were talking about.”</p>
<p><b>Education</b></p> <p>“Activities needed for learning and participating in the</p>	Participant 2	<p>“I took classes like Celtic myths and sagas. Actually I took a couple classes about their</p>

<p>educational environment”                  (AOTA, 2014, p. S20).</p>		<p>history and there sagas because I just thought it was so cool.”</p>
<p>Education</p>	<p>Participant 3</p>	<p>“So a lot of my classes were—I took a community health class [and] international social development. The biggest thing I did was a student internship there, which was two days out of the five where I spent all day, an hour outside the city in a rural village working for the women in need foundation ... When I think about my study abroad in terms of academically and everything that was happening, that was a pretty crucial experience for me.”</p>
<p>Education</p>	<p>Participant 4</p>	<p>“I took history courses and [a] sustainable environment class. That was wonderful because I got to see different perspectives of what the country was. In both those classes, we went on trips ... I valued the trips I went on with my class because with the history course we toured around a couple different cities with the professor giving us background information. She was from England ... [and] she had lived in Costa Rica for 10 years already so she felt like a native but not really at the same time. She introduced us to a family that she had met. From that I felt like I was getting good advice and we were able to look at what the culture was really like in Costa Rica.”</p>

Education	Participant 5	"So I had classes every single day of the week. It was a couple classes a day. I pretty much took every class you could take at the school—like history, literature, pronunciation, the basic Spanish class they offered. I took everything I could because that was how I got the major."
Education	Participant 6	"I had taken an aboriginal class and they had a lot of history ... It was a really sensitive subject because the aboriginals had recently been apologized to for the way they were treated."
<p><b>Leisure Participation</b></p> <p>"Planning and participating in appropriate leisure activities; maintaining a balance of leisure activities with other occupations; and obtaining, using, and maintaining equipment and supplies as appropriate" (AOTA, 2014, p. S21).</p>	Participant 1	"I travel every weekend. We went all around Ireland ... That was important to me, traveling around Ireland."
Leisure Participation	Participant 2	"And I was there for a semester and I decided that I wanted to travel every weekend. I joined a couple clubs and I loved it. I joined a fencing club, an archery club, and a hiking club called the Rovers."
Leisure Participation	Participant 5	"And it was just like—it was our last excursion and we just all went with it and we just ate the food and whatever it was we tried it. The kayaks didn't work out so we went climbing and it

		was just like—that is why I am talking about the slow-pace.”
Leisure Participation	Participant 6	“In our free time from college, we would like go to the park, sit in the park, go to the beach ... it was just very free.”
Social Participation	Participant 1	“It was very interesting because we were there four days before all the students. We met the other abroad student and he spoke no English, not even a wink of it. We tried to communicate and he tried English so hard but it was really difficult to communicate with him. By the end it got better but it was a lot of ‘hi’ and ‘bye’. And then the one Irish student, he was the other guy we lived with. He was very, like, he would make these elaborate meals and then if you came into the kitchen while he was in there, he would leave and then would come back once you left. He was very intimidated ... It was his personality. But by the end we got him to warm up to us a little bit.”
Social Participation	Participant 2	“Yes, so I studied abroad at the University of Maynooth. It is spelled “Mae-Nuth” but they pronounce it “Ma-nute”, with their interesting accent over there. It’s a lot different from the movies. It’s not as attractive, I can tell you that. They didn’t pronounce their ... “t” as “th”. I “tink” and “tea”. The first thing I

		bought over there was thirty-three dollars and thirty-three cents and they told me it was “tirty-three tiry-three” and I was like ‘WHAT are you talking about?’”
Social Participation	Participant 3	“I wanted to make like all these occupational profiles about women in the village [in order] to process my skills and try to understand them though an OT lens, because obviously that is a unique lens. So that was really challenging, but really awesome because like none of the women spoke English, so I did all my interviews through my boss. Then when the other student came, I did it through him but it was really interesting because, you know, like a lot of those typical OT words we use aren’t really translatable. So I had to really think about the way I was wording things ... even now through interviews I am like, ‘Oh tell me about your typical day.’ Things like this I had to adapt and figure it out, like how can I get them to understand what I am asking through multiple chains of language. So I had to explain it well enough for my boss, who does not really know English, like through them—I was getting some really wacky answers.”
Social Participation	Participant 4	“[The host] family spoke Spanish, which was awesome,

		because 'mama chica' really wanted to just speak Spanish in the household. So that was a really great immersion experience, because we were forced to – as heavily as they have been sometimes to use the language—the native language there, which was a goal of my own, to get speaking actively in that language.”
Social Participation	Participant 5	“Everyone’s family was different. ... I feel like honestly all of my other friends, their mom’s adopted them like daughters almost, as where my host mom was a little colder- like she was really caring and stuff, but she wasn’t like that with me.”
Social Participation	Participant 6	“And one of my flat mates and I actually did go to a church together because she and I were the same religion, so we were like, ‘hey lets go find something!’ and she and I can talk about it now, and share it together.”



*Appendix C*

Quotes relating to the subtheme of *Noticing Differences* within the *Continuum of Awareness of Differences*.

Participant 3	“It [grocery store] was just so crowded and so loud and there was just this really creepy older man following us for a long time and it was just like really sketching me out and I was just almost in tears, like ‘oh my god like I don’t know how I am going to do this walk by myself to get groceries. I don’t know how I am going to survive.’ And then, of course now thinking of it, that is like the least stressful thing, like I adjusted naturally and we were like, this is the norm—going to get hit on and cat-called, and that is just something that happens. So actually what I did—I usually brush it off, but I learned a couple swear words and would like swear back at them. It would really shock them, like a white girl speaking their language.”
Participant 4	“Yes, the cultural competency part was tricky—because the classes I had taken in high school and even what we were doing in Etown, it was very broad. The Latin-American culture in general wasn’t specific to the countries or even the cities within the countries, and that was something I learned when I went there. Even the dialect was so different from where the city was—just like in the US. Like people in New England sound differently than people from the South. So that was definitely different. You could tell, some people consider Costa Rica as a third world—I didn’t go into thinking that because I knew how large the tourist industry was—but then I learned how it was considered a second world or developing-third world because there were the

	<p>city areas in the greater San Jose area where it was similar. [There are] a lot of similarities between our lifestyle and theirs. But then you just go over the mountain range and it was so completely different. So that cultural competency, I definitely had to be aware of my manners and ... watch what other people would do before I would do something, whether it was [to] initiate conversation or even have a request to use the restroom.”</p>
<p>Participant 6</p>	<p>“Another thing is soon after I left, there was some attack in Sydney, which they were not usually targeted. So in their minds, they were peaceful people and I think that they are, but I guess being in a city is a little bit more at risk. But I could walk at night by myself in the dark and feel okay ... there weren’t really homeless people, even in the city. Like people just took care of each other or themselves a little bit differently.”</p>
<p>Participant 2</p>	<p>“It was very interesting ... seeing how their history shapes their culture and how people view things. I think they are more relaxed than us about certain things. Yes, mostly that! They are more relaxed. It was a catholic nation for a while, but it is very relaxed like on relationships between boys and girls. I think they are relaxed because they were really strict at one point—and the now adults are like, ‘yeah now we are not going to be like sticklers, as our parents were.’”</p>
<p>Participant 2</p>	<p>“Literally the girl from the Netherlands, she was very quiet and she told me that in her culture, it is typical for college kids to go away and there are a lot of depression problems as they tend to stick to their room. The girl from Brazil, she was really funny because she always cooked for everyone else from Brazil. She would have them over in our apartment and no matter what she touched it smelled beautiful.”</p>

<p>Participant 1</p>	<p>“That school was very much a suitcase school, so the campus on the weekend was dead. So it was kind of nice to have that space ... No one from the school stayed on the weekends. We asked them and they said it was just not what they do. A lot of people are local and then they like come. So the thought of them to school more than 2 hours away was like unfathomable to them because they had to go home every weekend. So like when we explained like, you know, you go to school—I was saying when I go to school I’m there and I don’t come home until Christmas, they are like ‘how do you do that?’ Um, but then again, to get from one side of the coast to the other, it’s only like 4 hours.”</p>
<p>Participant 1</p>	<p>“So we were out—this is like my second day—we were with our guide who was like our coordinator while we were there and we got coffee, and he got an Irish coffee, so it has whiskey in it—it was 8 o’clock in the morning! And I’m like, ‘Oh my gosh!’ I mean it was a little thing but it was big to me. And then we went out to lunch and he got another beer and all of that and it’s definitely a big part of their culture. When we would be out with people, and they would be able to point us out as Americans because we weren’t drinking.”</p>
<p>Participant 1</p>	<p>“So that was very stressful, grocery shopping—so we did not go a lot ... We did not experience anything convenient while we were abroad. Not like it had to be, but here [US], everything is so easy to get and it was just so difficult and we did not expect it at all. You know, I went to a very well-developed country and all of that, but nothing was convenient, ever. There were weird hours for stores—they would close very early—so if you wanted anything to go to the grocery store after 5:00pm, you couldn’t because it would be closed.”</p>

*Appendix D*

Quotes relating to the subtheme *Questioning/Unease* within the *Continuum of Awareness of Differences*.

Participant 1	“We had a lot of issues, but yeah, I just I think I came back and really questioned why we have everything so close because it doesn’t need to be that way. But I also, as soon as I came back, I felt more stressed I think, because ...I live outside of a city so there is a lot of commotion and stress and it is all about doing this and this and this. It was right around the holidays when I came home, so I really just felt like I guess like spoiled and questioning why it was like that, but I also really appreciated it. So I have mixed feelings. I kind of didn’t like how much I relied on it but it was nice when I needed it to have.”
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*Appendix E*

Quotes relating to the subtheme *Occupational Injustice* within the *Continuum of Awareness of Differences*.

<p>Participant 5</p>	<p>“A lot of my cultural experience just had to do with language and when you are in a culture to where everyone looks more similar – like here [US] we all look different, I mean everyone here has brown hair, green eyes, dark skin, light skin, blond hair—everyone there generally looks similar, so to come down and be an American and me white, we got attention wherever we went, and that was totally different for me and I didn’t realize how much that affected the way I thought of myself down there until I came home and we were in the airport and no one cared that we were six American girls in an airport—so it is different because down there they are still like, from way back when, there is still this ranking of the whiter your skin is, the lighter your skin is the more important you are. And it is so different than here [US] because we try to not have that and everyone is equal. I mean it doesn’t always play out that way, but that is kind of how our culture tries to be because we are this mixing bowl of all these different things.”</p>
<p>Participant 3</p>	<p>“So it is like really interesting because almost like I felt like I was like a third gender because of my color, like I felt like I definitely treated a lot worse than men [...]. Yeah, like it is different. Like one blaring example, which was a really interesting adjustment was that at the college there is a curfew for both men and women. The curfew for women is 6pm—you have to be inside the dorm, and they lock the doors. You are unable to leave. They lock it from like the outside and there are like shards of glass protecting the dorm. But the curfew for the guys is like 10pm. So to me, that is blatant inequality. The whole reason for them is</p>

	<p>like, 'oh well they're not safe. Women cannot be out after dark.' But yeah, no kidding it's going to be unsafe if one woman is outside and there are no other women outside, but the interesting thing is that they gave us white females a different curfew than the Indian women. So it was like a different treatment. But they gave us a curfew of like 9:30pm or something. So, yeah it was definitely weird and I almost kind of felt bad. I had friends in the dorms, and I didn't have to worry about that. It just kind of shows you how there is something about me that is different than them that I get this extra privilege."</p>
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*Appendix F*

Quotes relating to the subtheme *Inherent* within the *Continuum of Connect & Disconnect*

Participant 5	“I went to Mexico for ... five months because I had to go to language school for a month before we went there. And when I was there I went to a school for foreign students. I lived with a host family. At the school everyone was [from] around the world, so a lot of times the only language we could speak in common was Spanish. So it was not just a cultural—Mexican culture—I mean there were Canadian students, not too different from us. There were Chinese students, French students, German students, so just all of us learning Mexican culture together and making friends together and just having a different background in language and culture ourselves—but I have a really good experience myself and there were a lot of people who hung out around the school and Mexican people our age wanting to learn English. So we would help them with English and they helped us with Spanish.”
Participant 5	“But one transition that was hard was that I got really close to those people because no time in your life do you spend that much time with people—like we went to school together, we hung out in the evenings together and weekends together, like every single day for five months. And so, it was hard to say goodbye.”

*Appendix G*

Quotes relating to the subtheme *Spontaneity* within the *Continuum of Connect & Disconnect*.

<p>Participant 6</p>	<p>"I went to ... a temple with him [roommate] and I remember being like, 'please take me with you, I really want to go.' And he never really goes, so it was no big deal, so we went and that was cool. We learned about that. He also had a birthday while we were there, and to us we bought him presents and made him a cake, and he was like, 'no it is my birthday and I get you presents.' So that was really weird too to think 'oh! Okay!' So to him that is something different that I learned, like how you celebrate birthdays and appreciate other people versus them celebrating you."</p>
<p>Participant 6</p>	<p>"She [roommate] doesn't really talk about that [expressing how she handles things] too—and I think that is also a part of her culture, that they wouldn't show insecurities easily, but she ... would eat – like to me it was fine but for her—she would eat and then was like breaking out and was just really internalizing everything and was always on the phone or skyping with someone. But then like I learned she liked coffee shops and I loved to do that, and then we would just go to the coffee shop. And that was a way of breaking her out."</p>



*Appendix H*

Quotes relating to the subtheme *Openness/Curiosity* within the *Continuum of Connect & Disconnect*.

<p>Participant 4</p>	<p>"I also was the only one from Etown, so I went there not knowing anyone ... I'm not going to hide in a shell, I have to go out and meet people who are local or people who are other students, so there wasn't really time to allow myself to experience culture shock, if that makes sense."</p>
<p>Participant 2</p>	<p>"There [are] different ways to studying abroad. You could either be the person who travels every weekend, so you don't really get engrained into the culture, but you see a lot of cool things. In that way you tend to have a harder time adjusting while there, but you have an easier time adjusting when you get home. Or you become more involved in the culture, and then ... you actually get into the traditions of the culture and you meet people – it's a lot harder than you think. And then, it is a lot easier to adjust while you are there, but it is harder to adjust at home. I was there for a semester and I decided that I wanted to travel every weekend. I joined a couple clubs and I loved it. I joined a fencing club, an archery club, and a hiking club called the Rovers, but everything they did was on the weekend and so I wasn't able to do anything with them. If I went to Ireland longer, I would have chosen that route. Since I was only there for 100 days, and I had so many weekends, I just wanted to travel and I wanted to have no regrets after I left."</p>
<p>Participant 1</p>	<p>"A lot of the people that studied abroad stuck to themselves, but we really didn't want to do that because part of the reason we were going there was to experience that. I think part of that was because we would be there on the weekend when other people weren't, and we would travel as groups like in our abroad groups. So we got really</p>

	<p>close to those people, but I think ... that was really important to us. We really made an effort to make other friends, and they were welcoming too.”</p>
<p>Participant 6</p>	<p>“There was a girl from France who was Muslim and she was practicing Ramadan, and I was like, ‘I would like to do that with you for one day, because I can try it with you for one day.’ And she was like, ‘absolutely.’ So I kind of invited myself in. But then depending their comfort with it, they were totally fine with ‘yeah please, do this.’ And I guess I am kind of outgoing, so it was easy for me to kind of bridge that gap.”</p>
<p>Participant 6</p>	<p>“Oh there was one time—I am trying to figure out how it happened—but the boy from India, I guess we were talking about religion, and he would say, ‘oh you are trying to convert us.’ But we weren’t. But in his mind I was not safe, or talking about religion in that way was not safe, or I don’t know. ... He and I were really open with talking to each other... so it wasn’t that we had a bad relationship, it was just that he was maybe insecure. I am not sure, but it was one thing that we had different religion. And one of my flat mates and I actually did go to a church together because she and I were the same religion, so we were like, ‘hey lets go find something!’ and she and I can talk about it now, and share it together. I guess it is hard though, when we are showing that we are practicing it, and maybe that can make other people feel uncomfortable, but we would never practice it in our apartment. It would be like going to church ... So maybe respecting our boundaries in the living environment.”</p>
<p>Participant 3</p>	<p>“Yeah, so basically we took about the first half of the month touring different ... places where we could do the internship and I really really fell in love with the Women in Need Foundation so I kind of decided I wanted to go there ... I thought it was this big program where this woman took in all</p>

	<p>these children within the begging community and kind of like took them in and gave them an education, and like a prospect of a better life. So that was really cool and what really pulled me in originally. But interestingly enough I did nothing with that population and ended up working with a totally different population which I really loved. So basically when I first started working the internship we toured all around different villages in the area and my boss was kind of like, 'yeah do whatever you like, do what you want.' And I was like, 'what? You're supposed to tell me what to do.' And she was like, 'yeah. Do whatever you want.' So I kind of decided there was one village in particular that I felt really connected with so I started spending a lot of time there. So the thing I really wanted to do through the internship was to really find a way to bridge OT—what I was really learning about OT in school—to like real life. So my—what I really wanted to do—I was like so adamant about it—I wanted to make like all these occupational profiles about women in the village to like process my skills and try to understand them though an OT lens, because obviously that is a unique lens. So that was really challenging, but really awesome because like none of the women spoke English, so I did all my interviews through my boss—but then when the other student came I did it through him—but it was really interesting because, you know, like a lot of those typical OT words we use aren't really translatable. So I had to really think about the way I was wording things, even like stuff—even now through interviews I am like, 'Oh tell me about your typical day.' Things like this I had to adapt and figure it out, like how can I get them to understand what I am asking through multiple chains of language."</p>
<p>Participant 3</p>	<p>"If it was shorter I do not think it would have been as good of quality of an experience. I don't think it was really until mid to late September when I</p>

	<p>really felt like I was getting there. So it was like definitely near the end, or the middle of the end. But it's almost like that wasn't enough time. For me I really wanted to be embedded and really a part of that place and in the village and in the community I was working with, I feel like they were just barely starting to trust me. And I felt like, and that is what I think is kind of like has like a lot of my future ideas and plans and dreams is that like, I realize that experience is so valuable, but it mostly impacted me [and] it didn't impact other people as much—that sounds bad, I mean I know it did, but in terms of my targeted population and like I was really trying to work with the women, I do not think I was successful with that because in order to do that as an outsider, you really need to build trust and trust takes a long time. I felt like that was not enough time to build trust. I think it was just barely starting to get there.”</p>
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Appendix I

Quotes relating to the subtheme *Self-Reflection/Conflict* within the *Continuum of Connect & Disconnect*.

<p>Participant 5</p>	<p>“I feel like honestly all of my other friends, their mom’s adopted them like daughters almost, as where my host mom was a little colder- like she was really caring and stuff, but she wasn’t like that with me. Sometimes on Sundays they would just disappear and they would never invite me to go to stuff. [...] Yeah, she was really sad when I left and I cried and she cried, but it was more like she’s here, I am here to take care of her too, but I feel like some of the other people were really close. Like they would, if they could, take them on vacation and like were just really close with their host family. Like if I went back—if I would have ever went back—she might not remember me anymore. I would maybe be stopping to say hi, but I wouldn’t feel like, ‘oh my gosh I have to say hi!’ like the people I really got along with though, was her granddaughters-- I loved them.”</p>
<p>Participant 4</p>	<p>“So it seems like any other abroad programs, students studying abroad internationally got involved with the local students. But with my school, the program [and] how we saw it was— what they [local student] told us and what you really got to see was that--- ‘oh, you’re only here for two or three months, so we are going to do our own thing.’ So I didn’t make as many local friends or connections as I thought I was going to. It’s apparently something different because I know if I had, there would have been more opportunities to kind of like get that more immersed experience, you know, more families and people in general, practicing Spanish.”</p>
<p>Participant 1</p>	<p>“I think one of the biggest things was my phone [and] not being as connected. It was really stressful because when I wanted to communicate with my family [and] I wasn’t able to do it as soon</p>

	<p>as I needed to. I had to wait until I was in wifi or somewhere where I could communicate. So that was frustrating, but when I came back, I don't know I guess I felt like spoiled if that makes any sense. Like I didn't need it, I learned to live without it and I think it made me a better planner and definitely more flexible."</p>
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*Appendix J*

Quotes relating to the theme *Forming New Perspectives*.

<p>Participant 2</p>	<p>“Things I learned from the Irish-- it’s okay to reach out and talk to strangers and be friendly to strangers and they won’t think you are weird. I am from the NY area, and it is weird to do that—but not in Ireland. They also have a very agreeable culture in general.”</p>
<p>Participant 5</p>	<p>“Studying abroad helps you kind of to break away and grow on your own outside of the people you are closest too. And it kind of helped—as cheesy as it is—it really helps you find yourself in a totally different way, and look at your life experiences and yourself and how you can handle situations. So I guess that will always influence—I think I changed a lot after studying abroad. I don’t know if I could say specifically how, but I just know I did.”</p>
<p>Participant 1</p>	<p>“When we go grocery shopping, it seems like a simple thing but we would anticipate all bad things. My bag broke and all the groceries fell and I had to think, ‘what if my bag breaks—I have a new bag-- or the bus is late? What if it rains?’ Because once when we were waiting and we had to wait 45 minutes and it poured. I think of more outcomes I guess because I am generally more positive person like, ‘oh it’s going to be fine, we are going to be great!’ But I do find myself saying, ‘okay well what if it’s not. What are the other outcomes I can have?’”</p>
<p>Participant 6</p>	<p>“When I was there [Australia], I had taken a creative expression class and it was like drawing and making things from clay and like that kind of thing. And that instilled in me a lot of peace and quiet and observation, and I think that has helped me a lot because I tend to be a busy body, but that has helped me to just be quiet in my mind and kind of go with the flow. I think being in Australia has helped me be more ‘go with the flow.’ And it</p>

	<p>definitely didn't come right away because when I got home, I was really anxious. So it was reestablishing that once I had settled back in. But I kind of remember being back from that spring semester my junior year was my least favorite, most bad, like it was just very hard. I can very clearly remember, like I feel like I wasn't really connected with the people at Etown anymore-- I miss this and I miss that. So you kind of just have to be happy with where you are. It was a weird transition just being at Etown. Cause it was so small, compared to just being able to do anything and other people not having people to do things with, it was fine."</p>
<p>Participant 1</p>	<p>"Then when we were able to get to Rome, like the plane got delayed and all of that, and like with the busing, like it was so wonderful to be there even though it was so stressful. So like I really try to keep it positive. I don't think it has tarnished my experience at all, I think it definitely improved it because it was required to work through those challenges, and they say you grow so much, but I think there is only so much growth you can have looking at pretty places—obviously that is beautiful and inspirational, but the growth is truly getting there and the struggle it is getting there."</p>
<p>Participant 1</p>	<p>"So I just try to change my mindset there and it definitely got better—because it is such a big part of their culture, but when I came back and I tried to picture those habits here, it was very difficult because if you saw someone drinking all day long you would say they have a problem. So I tried to see it in a different way, and you know, just like not judge as quickly [or] jump to 'it's a problem.' Because for them, they are fully functioning. It is not affecting their lives—like not making it a problem if it's not one. Because it sincerely was not a problem."</p>



<p>Participant 4</p>	<p>"I always knew I could see myself working with kids. I just wanted to get myself out there. Like if there has been volunteer opportunities or what not in any type of setting, I would have. Whoever I met out in the community who was willing to engage in a conversation or activity was kind of like, 'what's up?' and it just happened to be kids who are more intrigued, who are in our groups. So I don't think my awareness grew intentionally, but kind of like afterwards, where you were reflecting and going back over and are like 'wow, I know so much more now.'"</p>
<p>Participant 2</p>	<p>"And Americans, they don't have the best representation. Well abroad some people ... some people are impartial, you know are like whatever. And some people really don't like America. And I didn't realize how many people didn't like America. You know it was very obvious that they joke around, you know that English speakers don't learn other languages. You know, all the Germans know English because they were taught it since Kindergarten [...]. Um, you know we joked around like, "oh the Spanish are always late. You know, the Germans tend to be very strict." One German girl was like, "oh, those Americans are like so patriotic." And she had the most disgusted look on her face and I was like, "oh I thought that was a good thing." Like to her being patriotic was bad."</p>
<p>Participant 2</p>	<p>"Yes, so whenever we talk about culture, it's my personal belief that every single person has a different culture because culture can be the family culture, religious culture, regional culture, the national culture, the ethnic culture -- there's a lot of different cultures out there. So I am going to have a different raising than my neighbors, because of different parents, different religion. Like I even know a difference from where I live in NJ. But I think that, I mentioned this before, that was really made aware to me when I was in Ireland. Because when I first came to college, you</p>

	<p>did see everyone else's different cultures , and you had to have a lot of compromising with your roommates and all that, but I didn't realize it as much as when I went there because it was a completely a different experience and an acute experience—you weren't there for very long. And I think studying abroad in a different country does bring out a certain level of stress. When we got there we had to get our visa—we didn't have to get it before, but while we were there—so we had to make sure we had all of the right stuff. You know, you worry about the credit cards and the money exchange and finding your way around. Everything there was made for people who already know how to use it. So I think maybe I feel disappointed in Americans is because I am thinking maybe there is a certain amount of stress—stress made them act in certain ways. The Irish weren't stressed because they are in their home.”</p>
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*Appendix K*

Quotes related to the theme *Connecting with Others*.

Participant 3	“So in terms of doing my job, to a level you have to be accepted by your coworkers and everything, so they can trust you and you can build a relationship with them and do what you want to do professionally—especially in program development, those connections are really key for me. I have definitely adjusted and have gotten a lot more of a casual type attitude.”
Participant 4	“I am working in the Boston public school system. The Latin-American community is huge here. Huge. And the first school I worked in, I covered maternity leave. [...] the biggest population is from El Salvador, and that was wonderful because the majority of my students, the majority of my clients, are bilingual. And a lot of the preschoolers can only speak Spanish. So I had to, kind of like, start studying again, and refresh myself on the language. They also just like—the cultural awareness—like knowing routines, habits, perspectives, on issues or even traditions.”

*Appendix L*

Quotes relating to the theme *Multiple Perspectives of Understanding the Person*.

Participant 3	<p>“So right now, actually I work in the residential program ... [and] provide consultation services, so I will travel all over the state and meet with teens, sometimes kids, and their families within their home ... I kind of think of it as giving advice. But I guess it is fancier than that. Like recommendations—I work from afar. I work with their clinicians and their workers and give them – I kind of give them ideas from an OT lens, on how to approach things ... So in terms from a program development stance on both of these programs, there is a huge—I am battling like a huge culture. Like there was kind of a culture within the staff, like to do the bare minimum. And I am kind of like battling like every day to try to fix that, so it is very different, because right now in the house, I feel like the whole culture is really off, that it is almost like the whole house, the whole environment there is my client. My intervention right now is to reestablish routine and rituals with the house. So that—that is something that should already be a part of the program but just really isn’t right now. So, for example, I am making two groups a week, and my group is really focused on having the kids do grocery shopping and planning a meal, and then the second group is cooking a group because that is what staff is supposed to be doing with them anyways. So I am doing it with the kids, but I am trying to transition it so the staff is doing it, so it is kind of like the staff is my client.”</p>
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Quotes relating to the theme *Honoring People's Experiences*.

<p>Participant 1</p>	<p>"I think that whenever you would go to a new country, you would adapt to them and not expect the patient to change for you. You kind of have to meet them where they are and change yourself for them ... You may want them to do something, but if they don't want to do it, you obviously can't force them to do it. You can encourage them—like changing it, like being willing to change."</p>
<p>Participant 2</p>	<p>"That is a different way of doing the ADL than the other patients. Some were ritualistic things of doing ADLs, but it wasn't a culture thing, that was more associated with their psychosis, but it was different. I do think there is a difference in ADLs—bathing, showering, you know—some cultures might believe that you have to shower 3 times a week or wash your hair a certain time or a certain amount of times per week, so there definitely is. I did not directly see it but I can definitely tell you there is a difference in the way they do ADLs depending on culture."</p>
<p>Participant 5</p>	<p>"Well the one big difference between working in a contrived environment, like a therapy gym, like I said is contrived—you have to make stuff up, you have to like, okay, so 'you have to step into the shower here'—'well it is not like my shower at home'— 'well we will practice here.' Where as if you are in there home environment, you can do it right there. It requires different kind of creativity—if I say to someone at their home, I say 'well how do you make your meals.' 'Well I just do it' – 'well can you show me.' So you kind of have to push them more to show you. And then they will leave their walking in the living room and be reaching around and moving around—so you have to be more creative in how to approach what you want to do because you are in their setting and in their comfort and sometimes they do not realize why they are not safe in their environment. And they are in their routine and schedule—'oh my family member does it'—'well do</p>

	<p>you want them to do it or do you want to be able to do it on your own.' So it is a different type of creativity, but I think it is awesome sometimes because you can actually do—like if someone says 'oh I'm nervous to take a shower now' and you are like 'OHH I can help you with that!' Like when they say something so functional, I would like to come the next morning and help you. And no matter intense the situation is, you have to be willing to just go with it and not make the person—imagine how if you felt embarrassed about your house and then you could tell how someone was like 'ewww.' So you are supposed to—you have to clean all your equipment as you go, but if it is really like-for lack of a better word—gross house, I will go out into my car then and scrub it down. But in front of them I will just do my normal stuff. I will wash my wands well—but I don't want them to feel like I felt they were so gross or my house was so gross. I mean I have been in and out of some very interesting situations."</p>
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*Appendix N*

Quotes relating to the theme *Self-Reflection & Awareness*.

Participant 4	“So definitely just having the awareness that we are going to be working with first generation Americans or even children who have moved to America themselves, and they are only eight. So just having that cultural awareness—not necessarily competency—because that’s something that takes a long time for you to really understand another person’s culture. But just being aware that there are differences and that you have to respect those—and at least from my experience now being in a city, is that there is so much diversity that you need to be aware of an open minded and more respectful.”
Participant 1	“I think I am just definitely more open and I am a really stubborn person, and I like to do things my way, and just reiterating that there is more than one right way to do things. There are just so many different paths. And just carrying that through with going to fieldwork—you know, it may not be what you expect at all. And then working with other people, like learning those skills I think has been very helpful because, you know you meet so many different people abroad and you have to deal with so many different personalities. And you know, just like the different places, people has such different personalities, and um different levels of willingness to meet new people and openness and you know, you think it is really similar to different rooms you walk into at a fieldwork site. So definitely openness, willingness to make mistakes and realize that it is not going to be right the first time you do it, but learning along the way. I think I want to meet more people because I enjoyed so much learning like other people’s stories, that, I guess I see this—and this may be because I am going to be a new grad, but like I really get so excited to meet new people and their situations and their stories [...]. I think I just learned that people have come from so many different places. Like I do really enjoy learning and talking to people, but I think I have just gotten a greater

	<p>perspective I guess ... And I think it's made me more eager to do that."</p>
<p>Participant 2</p>	<p>"Now that I am older, I understand more about life, like cars, payments, debt, rent. I understand that a lot more now that I didn't think about when I was 18. So I now realize that I cannot just run off to a different country and expect everything to just fall into place. You have to be more patient, you have to seek out opportunities sometimes. If things don't fall into place, you have to sometimes close that idea for a while and move onto something that is more feasible. And I know that doesn't go with the same, you know, 'reach for the stars, go with your dreams!' I am thinking of it more from a responsible viewpoint."</p>
<p>Participant 2</p>	<p>"But also tie it back to OT—it is good to know all that is out there and also understand that there are things that you will never understand and you won't even know. You will meet a patient on day and you will be doing something that you don't even realize is offending them or they won't realize that something they are doing offends you, and as a therapist you can't really tell them that they are offending you. But if they tell you that you are offending them, you definitely have to change, because you are there to help them. You know, we are supposed to be the professional, the level-headed, calm one and not taking anything personally. So the whole experience affected my view of culture as, I think understanding there are more subtle differences than we originally thought."</p>
<p>Participant 2</p>	<p>"A lot of things that have happened to me in Ireland made me realize the importance of problem resolution, especially if there are problems between coworkers—really it is important to talk it out. Often times as OTs we think about the clients, but we are</p>



	<p>also working with other professionals, you know? And sometimes you do have to defend OT against professionals who know what we are. So that is important.”</p>
Participant 2	<p>“I noticed a lot of us who studied abroad reflect back on our study abroad experience and we talk about that—especially when we talk about culture. We can, you know, because culture is all around us, but we don’t realize it when we are in the place we have always been. But when you are put directly in a different place, it is more obvious. So I noticed that we definitely talk about it more—the ones who studied abroad, when they raised their hand in class, they tend to have study abroad stories, or a lesson learned, ‘oh this happened to me, oh this happened to me, and this is why I don’t like hostels-’ or you know, something simple like that. I just think that studying abroad is just a wonderful experience, just traveling in general. Not everyone is able to do that, and that’s fine, but you can just at least get out of your town, go to a different town, going to a different country. I think you do see things and it makes you not as narrow-minded about somethings. It kind of opens your mind to things. And I noticed some people who have never left this area—I don’t want to say it in a bad way—because being narrow-minded tends to have a bad connotation—but they tend to be more narrow-minded about things. It is possible that some of us will work in an urban setting. I know that scares a lot of people who have never left this setting—like, ‘how do I connect?’ you know, things will be brought up in class and they will be like, ‘I’ve never realized that before.’ And you’re like, ‘really?’ I can’t think of anything off my head, but I’m like I’ve always known that, or this or that. So it just gives you a little more knowledge about some things and how some things are different. I don’t want to say it is a step up, but it might make our transition a little easier into a diverse setting than people who didn’t study abroad. And it’s also</p>

	<p>something else to connect with, with people—like I met the one guy from Ireland and I am like, ‘oh in what part of Ireland did you grow up?’ and then you’re like, ‘Really? I was here.’” And then they will start talking about it so then you’ve already formed a therapeutic relationship with the patient. Or patients who have been to another country where you have never been—it’s like, ‘oh, I would love to go there! This is what I did, but I’d love to go there!’ So it might make the transition a bit easier.”</p>
<p>Participant 3</p>	<p>“I work in a residential program with kids—some severe mental health stuff going on, 10-18 yrs, and ... I want to pull out my hair every other second. Um, so yeah, it’s definitely the patience part of it, like trying to understand like yourself and your reactions and kind of like monitoring how that is coming off to people ... You always want to be client-centered and your client’s advocate and trying to understand them—you know, it’s really important and is like the main thing that we do. I feel like with that in any setting, but definitely right now I have to work hard to fight my own biases, especially with kids that have some really intense behavioral things going on. You know, it’s hard when you are having someone tell you, ‘Screw you, F*** you,’ You know it is hard to not be mad or upset or anything- you know, it’s just taking a step back and thinking like, ... ‘wow, this is where the person is coming from and this is what is going on.’ You know, trying to see kind of see the bigger picture other than yourself.”</p>
<p>Participant 3</p>	<p>“How I see things are like every experience builds upon one another, and I would not be here without that experience. So, to be honest, the time that I went to India—before that was a very building, emotional, unstable time, and I really needed going to India to figure out what I wanted to do, and what was next on my path. I had a lot of uncertainty about the field like where I was going. So that whole experience really confirmed a lot of things and I felt like, in a lot of ways, set the emotions to do the</p>

	<p>things I am doing. So I think that, India as a whole really helped me become more self-aware and just kind, I don't know, just gave me space to kind of like understand myself—who I am and what I want, and off of that, I sought out more and more experiences. And I don't think it's just India that like helped me with my clinical reasoning or helped me develop the skills, but it was an initial jumping point—if that makes sense.”</p>
<p>Participant 3</p>	<p>“India really—like that whole experience really showed me that the work I was doing there is the work I want to be doing in my life, but it just wasn't enough time. So that is why I wanted to do the Peace Corps so bad because you will be embedded into the community for two years—and I feel like you need time like that to make substantial change. ... I don't think I would be signing up for Peace Corps if it wasn't for India. I think it has definitely kick-started a whole international thing ... I feel like it comes back to having that experience of being abroad and given that opportunity to kind of like try things out, like with the internship, and give of like explore the passions of OT and my passions of working with women ... I don't think I would have come to have these dreams and ideas of the future.”</p>
<p>Participant 4</p>	<p>“Having that confidence and knowing—or having had the experiences I have had, immersing myself into the different culture and learning, and continuing to learn, that second language gives me the confidence to take on the professional role.”</p>
<p>Participant 5</p>	<p>“I am a storyteller, I would tell someone, ‘hey, this is what happened to me one time. It happens to all of us.’ 100% it makes it easier to understand if someone is not getting why you are doing something. Because sometimes it [the activity] is hard if you are relating it to therapy because sometimes people don't understand why they are getting therapy. So if someone is not understanding that, plus there is a cultural influence of why they are</p>

	<p>not getting it—but like, just got to give people credit [...]. If somebody has something like Dementia or had a stroke and their cognitive abilities are affected and they had a different language or a different cultural background, it makes the layers more complicated because—do they not understand because of their culture, their language? Or do they not understand because of their injury?”</p>
<p>Participant 5</p>	<p>“I mean just being open minded to what people are going through and trying to understand, but sometimes also reminding the people around you. I always hate when someone doesn’t understand English, or doesn’t understand why you are doing something, and that person thinks it means the other person it stupid or just not getting it and that frustrates me. Or like, when I am trying to speak English to you and I speak louder and slower, it will not help you understand better, it won’t help them understand better because they just don’t understand. Or if you talking to someone and they are a translator—like looking at the person and not the translator. Or if—this is what you have to watch in home health, like if I am there and there is a caregiver and a client, I need to talk to the client and caregiver, but I need to include the client and what is important to the client and the client’s goals. Like the daughter, the wife, whoever –can have an influence on what I am saying and what the goals are, but making sure you are paying attention to that person and what is important to them because that is kind of like the culture--- like their house. Like in this family, at this point in life what the daughter says is what goes for me, but maybe helping them find their confidence and what is important to them. And all the other stuff I have said—I think a lot of it is related to cultural competence.”</p>
<p>Participant 6</p>	<p>“I would say that it [studying abroad] is very helpful and it overlaps a lot for occupational therapy and</p>

	anyone in the health field—to take the opportunity is very worth it for the long run.”
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*Appendix O*

Definitions relating to culture in the Review of Literature.

Suarez-Balcazar, et al. (2009)	<i>Cultural Competence</i>	“Demonstrated when the practitioner understands and appreciates differences in health beliefs and behaviors, recognizes and respects variations that occur within cultural groups, and is able to
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		adjust his or her practice to provide effective interventions for people from various cultures” (p. 499)
Boyt Schell et al., (2014)	<i>Client-Centered</i>	“Approach to service that incorporates respect for and partnership with clients as active participants in the therapy process. This approach emphasizes clients’ knowledge and experience, strengths, capacity for choice, and overall autonomy” (p. 1230)
Sperry, (2012)	<i>Cultural Competence</i>	“Defined as the capacity and capability to recognize, respect and respond with appropriate action to the needs and concerns of individuals from different ethnicities. Social classes, genders, generations or religions. It consists of four components: cultural knowledge, cultural awareness, cultural sensitivity and cultural action. This definition emphasizes capacity, capability, appropriate action, scope and components” (p. 48)
Sperry, (2012)	<i>Capacity</i>	“refers to ability” (p. 48)
Sperry, (2012)	<i>Capability</i>	“the attitude to strive to achieve more than the minimal level of competence” (p. 48)
Sperry, (2012)	<i>Appropriate Actions</i>	“words, attitudes, decisions, policies and other behaviors that are informed by knowledge, awareness and

		sensitivity of a given cultural situation” (p. 48)
Sperry, (2012)	<i>Scope</i>	“refers to all aspects of culture, including socioeconomic status, and religious and generational differences that are often overshadowed by a focus on ethnic differences” (p. 48)
Sperry, (2012)	<i>Cultural sensitivity</i>	“the most critical component of cultural competence because it includes both the capacity for a welcoming attitude and a recognition and appreciation of the likely consequences of cultural actions” (p. 48)
Humbert, et al., (2011a)	<i>Embrace</i>	“the process of taking in the view(s) of the culture and changing personal perceptions and beliefs” (p. 2)
Humbert, et al., (2011a)	<i>Accept</i>	“allowing the cultural tension to exist as it is” (p. 2)
Humbert, et al., (2011a)	<i>Challenge</i>	“an attempt to facilitate a change within the culture”  (p. 2)
Humbert, et al., (2011a)	<i>Collaboration</i>	“compromise between both the practitioner and the client” (p. 2)