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Fall 2020

# The Literacies of Adolescents With International Experiences

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THE LITERACIES OF ADOLESCENTS WITH INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENCES

by

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Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

For the Degree of the Doctor of Philosophy in

Teaching and Learning

College of Education

University of South Carolina

2020

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# DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to my parents, who instilled in me curiosity and have perennially enabled and humored my pursuits of knowledge and experiences.

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This dissertation would not be possible without the welcomed wisdom of my advisor, committee, and other admired professors and scholars. Their faith in me and feedback have been instrumental to this process.

Thank you also to my family for their support, particularly those with wanderlust and love literature, my fellow graduate students for their camaraderie, my colleagues who talked me through tough times and helped in many other ways as well, my friends who provided comfort and laughter during difficult moments, and to my seven willing and wonderful participants.

The utmost thanks and acknowledgment, however, goes to my husband, without whose unwavering patience and contributions I could not have finished this work. So that I could focus on graduate school, he took on the proverbial second shift. He cleaned, did the laundry, paid the bills, did his best making meals, and after our daughter was born changed diapers, gave baths, read stories, went on walks with her, took her to the zoo and park, did the bedtime routine, woke her up, got her dressed, and enacted countless other helpful tasks so that I could attend classes after work, read and write on the weekends, debrief over dinner or brunch with friends, and occasionally catch up on sleep by spending a day (or weekend) in bed. Never once did he complain.

Thank you lastly to my daughter, whom I must acknowledge is the true center of my world and provided motivation and much-needed joy throughout this process. After daycare closed due to the pandemic, she spent almost every day beside me while I

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worked.  She played, watched probably too much Disney+ and PBS Kids, sometimes

clung to my back as I worked, sometimes pretended to type on her toy laptop, sometimes

scribbled notes on scraps of paper at my feet.  Sometimes she grabbed my hand off the

keyboard and begged, "Get up, mommy. GET UP!"  The process occasionally went more

slowly than my impatient, goal-focused self would have liked, but I would not trade her

distractions for anything.  Getting pages written so I could play with her was the greatest

motivator in this process. Making the world a better place was also among the goals of

this paper because she will be living in this world.

# ABSTRACT

This dissertation reports the findings of a study on how international experiences impact adolescents. Data were gathered from interviews with and writing samples from seven participants with varying international experiences. A critical perspective and existing research in New Literacy Studies (NLS), on study abroad programs, and on transnationalism framed the study and predicted much of what was found about the literacies of adolescents with international experiences. However, five new findings emerged as significant about adolescents' utilitarian, oral, geolingual, critical, and cosmopolitan literacies uniquely impacted by travel. From these findings, new insights emerged about the importance of embracing multiple forms of travel as beneficial, of emphasizing the positive and advantageous impact of travel on literacies, and of recognizing the increasing frequency with which adolescents have international experiences. The findings and insights respond to calls to improve adolescents' literacies and global competencies and have implications for innovative teachers, researchers, and stakeholders invested in empowering adolescents.

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# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

This paper presents the results of a study about the impact of international experiences on literacies. The data showed that travel impacted adolescents' literacies positively, especially in the ways their international experiences globally situated their literacies to make them utilitarian, multilingual, geolinguistic, critical and cosmopolitan. These findings were based on a qualitative study of seven adolescents, whose international experiences varied widely but whose literacies were similar.   The findings imply that travel may scaffold and enrich adolescents' literacies.

The impetus to understand the literacies of adolescents with international experiences stemmed from three problems observed in contemporary education. First were deficit perspectives of adolescents literacies and global competencies. This problem caused me to wonder if travel and literacies could work together in a way beneficial to both. More specifically, I wondered: How do international experiences impact the literacies of adolescents with international experiences?  In the process of researching what prior literature had already found on this topic, I realized three more problems existed. One was the limited breadth and scope of existing research.  Another were inequities in access to travel abroad.  The last was how travel was perceived.  In this introduction, I delve more deeply into the four problems which spurred this research, how the research question was formulated and definitions of its key terms, and what the remainder of the paper contains.

**Statement of Problems**

**Literacies & Global Education Deficits**

  This study stemmed mainly from the status of literacies and global education as two major concerns in contemporary education. Local, national, and international efforts to increase or improve literacies (Bowers, 2018; International Association of Literacy, 2008; US Department of Education, 2018; UNESCO, 2019b) alongside initiatives to globalize education and curricula (District of Columbia Public Schools, n.d.; Global Illinois, n.d.; Resnik, 2012; SC Education Oversight Committee, 2015; US Department of State, n.d.-b) abound to testify that literacies and global education are something many stakeholders care about.

*Literacies Initiatives*

  Locally, literacies initiatives often manifest whenever states, districts, or individual schools implement various literacy programs, purchase computer software programs, design reward systems for students' reading habits, or attempt any number of other measures to improve students' literacies. South Carolina provides a good example of a statewide initiative. This state spent four years and $214 million dollars trying to increase children's reading skills via Read to Succeed legislation, (Bowers, 2018), which clearly suggests that literacy is of primary concern in this state.

  Nationwide, the US Department of Education has an entire set of initiatives "to develop and improve literacy skills for children and students from birth through 12th grade in high-need local educational agencies and schools" (US Department of Education, 2018). The plethora of national standardized tests (e.g. SAT, ACT, et al.), which include some measures of literacies, attests to a national importance placed on literacies as well.

Worldwide, no shortage of international agencies exist to promote literacies (International Association of Literacy, 2008; International Language Association, 2012), and a perusal of the UNESCO website uncovers global literacies initiatives as well. UNESCO lists among its stated sustainability goals, for instance, advancing literacies as an integral part of lifelong learning (UNESCO, 2019b), and many countries or organizations have implemented widespread literacies campaigns over the years, such as the Cuba's Yo Sí Puedo program (Boughton and Durnan, 2014). There are even literacies tests used for international comparison (Ortiz-Ospina and Beltekian, 2018, June 8).

Unfairly, oftentimes these literacies initiatives, especially in relation to adolescents in US public schools, have been framed by deficit narratives, which position their reading and writing as areas in need of improvement (Mcabe and Newhouse, 2014). States, nations, and the world compare literacies rates and scores on standardized tests and claim that literacies need improvement among certain groups (Ortiz-Ospina and Beltekian, 2018, June 8; UNESCO, 2016), though what is even meant by literacies remains the subject of debate (Cambridge Assessment, 2013; Frankel, Becker, Rowe, and Pearson, 2016; International Association of Literacy, 2008; International Language Association, 2012; Keefe and Copeland, 2011; Moje, Overby, Tysvaer, and Morris, 2008).

### *Global Education Issues*

The existence of local, national, and international efforts to globalize education suggests adolescents' lack of global competencies is perceived as a problem in US education that needs to be solved in order to make US students more competitive in a global market. In order for our students to be successful in an increasingly interconnected world, they must acquire certain global competencies.

On a local level, district and statewide initiatives have resulted in pro-travel and pro-globalization language in standards and curricular documents  purporting, as does South Carolina (SC) for instance, a desire to produce high school graduates with "world class knowledge," "world class skills" and "global perspectives" (SC Education Oversight Committee, 2015).  Other states have created Global Scholars certificate programs (Global Illinois, n.d.), expanded adoption of International Baccalaureate programs (Resnik, 2012), and in some cases created fully-funded short-term abroad experiences for all (District of Columbia Public Schools, n.d.)

At the national level, institutions of higher learning encourage students to study abroad at higher rates than ever and have massive campus offices and initiatives devoted to doing so (US Department of State, n.d.-b), and education organizations exist to report upon matriculation data according to various demographics such as race, gender, and state where attending college (NAFSA: Association of International Educators, n.d.).  Additionally, there are grant-funded programs for adolescents and even professionals, such as the recently-created Teachers for Global Classrooms Fulbright (US Department of State, n.d.-a). For-profit teen travel providers are a booming industry as well, as a simple Google search will show, and numerous non-profit organizations exist to promote youth and adult travel opportunities (AFS-USA, 2020; Forum on Education Abroad, 2020).

Even internationally, data collected by governments, non-government organizations, and other entities reflect interest in travel.  Data have been reported on the global flow of tertiary-level students (UNESCO, 2019a; UNESCO, 2017), on inbound and outbound travel rates (Bureau of Transportation Statistics, n.d.), on international travel and global teen travel (World Tourism Organization, 2016, 2019), and on other international

mobility statistics and taxonomies (Prazeres, 2013; Twombly, Salisbury, Tumanut, and Klute, 2012; Shields, 2013; Zúñiga and Hamann, 2009). These data point to global concerns about who travels and why with an implication that equity in access by country of departure, country of destination, and other factors is important.

**Limited Breadth and Scope of Existing Studies on Travel and Literacies**

The idea that international experiences may impact literacies comes from New Literacies Studies, study abroad research, and research in transnationalism. The problem is that no researchers in these fields have specifically examined the literacies of participants with international experiences broadly defined. NLS is not specifically geared around international experiences although its emphasis on literacies as socially situated can be applied to global contexts. Study abroad research is limited to college undergraduate participants on long- or short-term sojourners for academic reasons, and research on transnationalism, though it reveals critical and cosmopolitan practices, is limited to transnational youth when youth in the US have broader types of travel experiences which may be equally impactful. In short, more adolescents have international experiences than are being researched.

**Inequities in Access to Travel**

If travel abroad impacts literacies in meaningful ways, opportunities to travel abroad should be available as equitably as possible to adolescents. However, prior research pointed to inequities in race, class, and gender among study abroad participants. These and other factors, often beyond a person's control, problematized one's access to international experiences.

Regarding race, the majority of travelers appeared to be White, as suggested by study abroad data (Institute of International Education, 2018). While immigrants, refugees,

and foreign nationals of all races and creeds moving to or visiting the US continued to increase (Radford, 2019, June 17) and certainly constitute a group of people with travel abroad experience, other research substantiated that international tourists tend not to be people of color (Goldoni, 2017; Institute of International Education, 2018; Simon and Ainsworth, 2012; Timm, 2016; World Tourism Organization, 2019). The disparity was most notable in college study abroad research. More than ¾ of participants are White (Institute of International Education, 2018).

Regarding class, research also existed to support that young people who travel abroad tend to be wealthy, as evidenced by potential study abroad participants' reasons for not eventually participating including financial reasons (Goldoni, 2017; Hurst, 2019; Simon and Ainsworth, 2012). Airfare, lodging, transportation, and incidentals can easily exceed thousands of dollars. The cost implies that travelers likely come from wealthier socioeconomic brackets and have disposable income to spend.

Regarding gender, females appear to constitute a majority of sojourners. According to data about college study abroad programs, nearly 70% are female (Institute of International Education, 2018). The lack of gender diversity in study abroad, especially among males but also non-binary and other LGBTQ+ people, is potentially problematic, especially if representative of larger travel trends.

Other inequities include lack of regional diversity in study abroad participants. According to data from NAFSA: Association of International Educators (n.d.), different states have different rates of college students studying abroad. States like Vermont, Rhode Island, and Delaware send high percentages of college students abroad whereas states like Alaska, Hawaii, and New Mexico, and West Virginia send comparably fewer.

**Need to Reevaluate Travel**

The fourth problem that revealed itself in my early pursuits of information about travel and literacies is how travel seemed increasingly portrayed as a luxury or commodity, a form of cultural voyeurism or even an extension of colonization in some ways (Henrdricks, 2020; Hernandez, 2016, November 8). Travel has become valued for superficial reasons rather than deeper, more meaningful reasons. Tabloids and popular culture perpetuate the narrative that travel is a luxury, and the commodification of culture through tourism and its voyeuristic and exploitative potential have also emerged as problematic. Travel is the newest status symbol (Kickham, 2018, October 30), or perhaps always has been. One must pay to play. Travelers go to foreign countries and take pictures and take away experiences, often with little consideration of the effect of their travel has on the destination or environment and minimally aware about the truly transforming nature of their travel. If inequities in who has access to travel and its benefits is to be remedied, a reconceptualization of travel must occur. Rather than view travel abroad as a commodity to brag about on social media, which internalizes a view that travel is not important for people who are not rich, people must view travel as a resource more equitably available to all should they desire it. The idea of travel as a privilege, as something beneficial that those with financial resources have the easiest and most frequent access, felt categorically problematic, especially compared to places like Europe, which has no-cost public universities and the low-cost Erasmus Programme, a student-exchange program (European Commission, 2020; Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2019). In sum, if one is to argue that travel positively impacts literacies, adolescent travel must be reconceptualized as an opportunity with affordances for literacy not just an opportunity for a vacation.

**Summary of Fourfold Problems**

To review, four problems necessitated the need for a study on the literacies of adolescents with international experiences. The alleged problem of literacies deficits and lack of global competencies among adolescents in the US warranted research to find new, innovative yet effective strategies for literacies instruction, of which travel may be one means. The problem of current work in NLS, study abroad, and transnationalism research, which is limited to specific populations and defines international experiences too narrowly, warranted a broader look at literacies among adolescents with a wider range of travel abroad. The process of researching and studying the literacies of adolescents with international experiences revealed inequities in access which warrant careful consideration. Finally, the problematic and increasingly more pervasive view of travel as a luxury or privilege obscures travel's truly revelatory and impactful potentials and warrants a reconceptualization of travel's benefits to include its intertwinement with literacies.

**Research Question**

As of yet, no one has examined literacies in the precise way or with the specific population as I intend to study. Some research has come close but not quite. I have therefore rationalized this study as preliminary and rendered it best be designed as descriptive—that is, the primary purpose of this study is to describe the impact of travel on literacies. Ergo, I formulated a single research question: How do international experiences impact adolescent literacies? The answer to this question will yield new ideas about the impact that international experiences have on adolescents' literacies and could provide invaluable information for high school ELA teachers, researchers in Language and Literacy and study abroad research, and stakeholders with vested interest literacies or travel abroad.

Potentially, findings could be used to craft solutions to problems related to adolescents' literacies and global competencies, to the lack of research on travel abroad and adolescents, to inequities in travel opportunities, and to the value attributed to international experiences.

**Definition of Terms**

In order to understand fully what was asked by the research question, one must interpret key words in the question in certain ways. The researcher and readers must be on the same page, especially when words can have many meanings. For this dissertation, important terms to define include *literacies*, *adolescents*, *international experiences*, and *impact*.

Here, I provide clarity on what is meant by *literacies,* defining the term in accordance with New Literacy Studies (NLS) and social practices frameworks. I prefer its pluralization and use the term to denote not only skills but also modalities, languages, domains, and practices (Christenbury, Bomer, and Smagorinsky, 2014; Hinchman and Appleman, 2017; Juzwik, VanDerHeide, Macaluso, Smith, Perez, Caughlan, Macaluso, and McKenzie, 2017). Skills refers to phonetics, spelling, fluency, comprehension, and other objectively measurable or "standardized" aspects of reading, writing, et al. (Appleman and Hinchman, 2017; Austrew, 2019, August 21; Juzwik et al. 2017), although NLS scholars eschew the reduction of literacies to "autonomous" skills (Street, 2003). Modalities refer to the ways in which literacies are experienced as adolescents gather and convey information in a variety of print- and non-print modes (Appleman and Hinchman, 2017; Mills, 2010; Nagle and Stook, 2016; Pyo, 2016). Languages refer to any systems of communication and can be associated with a particular country, culture, or group of people (Oxford University Press, 2020). Domains refers to areas, or disciplines, in which one can be particularly knowledgeable, as in cultural literacy,

financial literacy, computer literacy, and innumerable others (Fitzgerald and Shanahan, 2000; Christenbury, Bomer, and Smagorinsky, 2014).  Practices refer to beliefs about literacies and what people actually *do* with literacies in ways that are socially and culturally significant (Barton and Hamilton, 2000; Gee, 1990, 2010; Scribner and Cole, 1981; Street, 1984, 2003).  When I use the term literacies, I am referring to one or some combination of skills, modes, languages, domains, and/or practices; when appropriate or necessary, I specify which.

The term *adolescents* refers to people in a period of transition, an in-betweenness during which a child is in the process of becoming an adult (Oxford University Press, 2020).  During this time, a person is neither child nor adult but truly amidst a formative phase.  They "occupy the liminal space" and represent "hybrid zones of possibility" (Skerrett and Bomer, 2013, p. 317).  The adolescent recognizes a difference between who she was and who she can be and spends these years navigating a space between past and future.  Typically understood as the years between the onset of puberty and the establishment of social independence, the most commonly used chronologic definitions have ranged between 10-18 but are as broad as 9-26 (Curtis, 2015).  In this study each adolescent was a student in high school between the ages 15 and 18.

Some scholars have used the term *international experiences* to include any experience where people have contact with others in different countries than one's own such as through the internet (Bradshaw, 2018; Dolby and Rahman, 2008), but in this study the term denotes having ever lived in or traveled to a country different than the place where one currently resides.  Rather than "international," some have preferred "transnational," "migrant," or "sojourning," to mean having traveled to more than one country or frequently

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traveling between countries, but some of these terms such can have negative connotations (Prazeres, 2013; Zúñiga and Hamann, 2009). International experiences is more neutral and inclusive of a range of mostly positive experiences. Other terms for international experiences used in this paper are *travel abroad experiences* or *abroad experiences* or sometimes just *travel abroad* or *travel*. For people with these experiences I use *traveler* or *sojourner*. The ways in which an adolescent could have international experiences are broad. Through tourism, study abroad, living abroad, refugee circumstances, visiting family abroad, living in a border town, taking a mission trip, going through a youth travel program with a for-profit company, military, Peace Corps, and more, an adolescent or young adult could be said to have international experience. The commonality is that he or she has traveled to more than one country, with country defined by geopolitical borders. Defining international experiences as physical border-crossing speaks to the unique benefit of physical travel rather than vicarious travel or other forms of transnationalism purported by some scholars. Transnational adolescents with physical border crossing experiences have added benefits for their literacies compared to their peers whose transnational experiences are not literally border-crossing. Such was the assertion of one scholar, Skerrett (2018), preeminent and prolific in the areas of transnationalism, transnational youth, and their literacies (Skerrett, 2010, 2012, 2015, 2016, 2018, 2020; Skerrett and Bomer, 2013). In one paper, Skerrett (2018) suggested that physical border-crossing may truly be more beneficial than non-literal transnationalism. Her analysis provided evidence about how physical geographies bear dimensions of place, time, materiality, cultural literacy, ideologies, and other features that are most deeply experienced through physical sojourning and so contribute to literacy learning in unique ways.

The last term to define is *impact*. The research question asks about the impact of international experiences on literacies and uses the word as a verb. I am wondering how travel shapes, transforms, interacts with, and maybe even affects or is affected by literacies.

**Preview of Chapters**

Having herein Chapter 1 now described the problems necessitating my research, the motives behind my research question, and the meaning of its key terms, I next preview the contents of this paper at large.

In Chapter 2, I establish how I framed the issue of travel and literacies and what prior research anticipated I would find in my study. More specifically, I elucidate how critical theory guided me through the research process as the main theoretical framework shaping my motivations for this study, why I was drawn to research in NLS, study abroad, and transnationalism as sources of information about literacies, what literacies I was wont to observe among participants, and how a social justice stance permeated this project.

I provide in Chapter 3 a detailed account of the methodologies used to learn about the impact of international experiences of adolescents. These included qualitative methods, case study and interview study designs, local site selection representative of regional demographics, selection of participants through maximum variation sampling, and data collection through questionnaires, interviews, and writing samples. Data were transcribed, coded, and analyzed according to specific and reproducible protocols. Methods for maintaining ethics and trustworthiness are detailed in this chapter, including the positionalities which influenced my methodological choices and which help the audience understand that this dissertation is filtered through the subjective experiences of a single, unique researcher.

The findings of this study occupy three chapters. In Chapter 4, I present my findings about participants with close attention paid to the nature of his or her international experiences and other traits that make him or her unique. In Chapter 5, I provide a thick description of their literacies. I enumerate and elucidate several traits which manifested across participants, attempt to address how travel may have impacted that trait, and emphasize how these observations are supported by yet extend prior literature. In Chapter 6, I reflect upon four new insights about the complimentary connection between travel and literacies the data beheld, and unravel the nature of travel's impact on literacies.

In Chapter 7, I reveal the implications this study has for teachers, for education researchers, and for other stakeholders. Interestingly, especially for teachers, lessons learned from adolescents with international experiences have much broader relevance because more adolescents have international experiences than teachers realize and because many are best practices in literacies instruction in general.

In Chapter 8, I conclude by summarizing the study and its key findings, new insights, and implications. At the end of this chapter, I question myself and recalibrate the study's significance in the present era, whose burgeoning social justice and environmental activism have affected my outlook. I ultimately conclude, however, that travel impacts the literacies of adolescents with international experiences because travel promotes critical and cosmopolitan views. Therefore, education stakeholders must work together to increase opportunities for adolescents to acquire or leverage international experiences. I also propose that most travel, including local travel, may have similar benefits.

CHAPTER 2

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK & LITERATURE REVIEW

The purpose of a theoretical framework "is to figure out for yourself where you stand philosophically and politically on doing research…. We never enter into the research with a 'blank slate'; rather, we carry with us guiding theories…even if not fully conscious of them" (Glesne, 2016, pp. 19, 34). In sooth, as I investigated the impact of international experiences on the literacies of adolescents, critical perspectives was the main framework "guiding" this inquiry although findings and theories from New Literacies Studies, study abroad research, and transnationalism research also informed this study and are reviewed herein.

**Critical Perspectives**

The most appropriate introduction to critical perspectives, which derive from critical theory and critical pedagogy, is Paulo Freire. Essentially, Freire (1968/2018) wanted to help oppressed groups realize and liberate themselves from their oppression, and he believed education—specifically literacy—was an important means to those ends. I could not agree more.

Today, critical theory has evolved to embrace any theory aimed to critique and change society to make it a better place to live. In contrast to traditional theory oriented only to understanding or explaining society as is, critical theory digs beneath the surface of social life to uncover the assumptions that keep humankind from a full and true understanding of how the world works (Crossman, 2014). In order for a theory or perspective to be considered critical, it must explain what is wrong with a current social

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reality, identify the agents to change it, and provide both clear norms for criticism and achievable practical goals for social transformation (Crossman, 2014).  My study had these among its aims.

Slattery (2006), in his textbook on postmodern curriculum theory, explains critical theory as "political scholarship" (p. 227), citing as preeminent in the field Michael Apple who, in the 1980s and from a Neo-Marxist argumentation tradition, sought to understand the relationship between education and economic structure and the linkages between knowledge and power.  Slattery (2006) urged those with a critical theory viewpoint to understand and deconstruct the political practices that deny equality and justice to certain populations while privileging others.  "Critical theory," he wrote, "while certainly not unified system of thought, contains some general assumptions: all thought and power relations are inexorably linked; these power relations form oppressive social arrangements; facts and values are inseparable; and...oppression is based in the reproduction of privileged knowledge codes and practice" (pp. 228-229).   Having a utopian, egalitarian educational vision that provides hope for teachers is central to critical theory, says Slattery: "Hope must replace despair as the central practice for students and teachers, regardless of race, class, religion, gender, sexuality, language, ability, ethnicity or age" (p. 231).  Ultimately, critical theory is about recognizing the factors that imprison progress and emancipating oneself from those confines because one is hopeful that betterment is actually attainable.  This study liberates teachers from rigid definitions of literacies, seeks equity in access to a public good, and provides advice to likeminded agents of change.

In the past, researchers have used critical perspectives, including critical race theory (CRT), to frame work on international experiences.  CRT has the potential to inform

research on the international experiences of high school students because it could illuminate systemic functions of white privilege, inclusive of and beyond the cost barrier, which disproportionately exclude minorities.  The statistic is that most students who study abroad are white females (Institute of International Education, 2018), and research on the underrepresentation of African Americans and other minorities in study abroad programs represents one direction in the CRT vein. The very fact that the research exists about the lack of and/or need to improve participation rates of African Americans and other minorities in study abroad (Acquaye and Crewe, 2012; Chang, 2017; Dinani, 2018; Evans, 2009; Hardrick and Hunter, 2017; Long, 2000; Lu, Reddick, Dean, and Pecero, 2015; Moore, 2005; Ramanathan and Beverly, 199; Sweeney, 2013; Waldron-Moore, 2011; Yakimowski, Russo, and Clark-Adedoyin, 2003) is effectively CRT even if the moniker is not explicitly used.  Goldoni (2017), for one, does employ CRT explicitly to discuss undergraduate Albert's cultural and linguistic immersion while abroad in Spain, including how racial microaggressions and social dynamics such as race, ethnicity, gender, and class affected his opportunities.

Critical perspectives provide an excellent frame for this study also because of its pre-existing connections to critical literacies. Luke (2018), in an introduction to theories and practices of critical literacy, defined critical literacy as "the assumption that reading and writing are about social power" and how education should "go beyond individual skill acquisition to engage students in the analysis and reconstruction of social fields" (p. 450). Luke writes that the aim of critical literacy in the classroom "focuses on teaching and learning how texts work, understanding and re-mediating what texts attempt to do in the world and to people, and moving students toward active position-taking with texts to

critique and reconstruct it" (p. 453). Lam, Warriner, Paveda, and Gonzales (2012)

similarly wrote of critical literacy that it is recognizing "reading and writing as forms of

capital production and exchange through which people are variously able to attain

particular positions within and across diverse social fields" (p. 192).

Critical perspectives also piqued an interest in critical cosmopolitanism, which has

arisen in the intersection of research on travel and literacies as well. Critical cosmopolitanism

provides "a lens for ethical consideration of dispositions, understandings, and interactions

in situated human encounters and engagements" that result in "just, equitable, and

affirming relations with global (and local) others…through attending to the workings of

status, privilege, and power between people and groups of people" (Hawkins, 2018, p.

65-66). According to Hawkins (2018), critical cosmopolitanism can result from

international experiences because travel provides sites for transmodalities and

transnational encounters. Put briefly, having a critical perspective in general lead me to

realize that research in critical cosmopolitanism by Hawkins (2018) and others (Byker,

2013; Byker and Marcquardt, 2016; Compton-Lilly and Hawkins, 2020; Djurdjevic and

Girona, 2016; Hawkins, 2014; Oikonomidoy, 2016; Rushek, 2019) was revelatory and

relevant to my study.

In summation, using a critical perspective as the theoretical framework for this

study accounts for (a) my motives for embarking upon this study, what I viewed as the

liberating potentials of research in general, and the emphasis I place on social justice issues

related to access to travel that I bring up throughout the paper, (b) the overlap critical

perspectives share with prior research in NLS, study abroad, and transnationalism, (c) the

types of literacies and literacies practices I was drawn to in participants' data and wont to

observe, (d) how many of their literacies and literacy practices employed critical perspectives  as well, and (e) how travel in general and in all forms, whether literacies are involved or not, can work to open minds.

## NLS, Study Abroad, and Transnationalism

Critical perspectives lend themselves to work in NLS, study abroad research, and research on transnationalism.  Critical perspectives are intertwined with the idea of literacies as socially significant because literacies would not have the potential to empower or liberate people without being situated first in the societies in which they live.  Critical perspectives are also inherent to the attention paid to ways that travel can function to disrupt prejudices and stereotypes, an underlying premise of study abroad research, which also provides some indications that one outcome might be literacies. Lastly, critical perspectives support asset approaches and counternarratives like those told in the research on transnational youth.  In other words, in addition to framing my approach to the purposes of research, critical perspectives also meshed with other "guiding" (Glesne, 2016, p. 34) ideas about adolescent literacies gleaned from NLS, study abroad, and transnationalism research.

Additionally, research in NLS, study abroad, and transnationalism framed how I viewed the impact international experiences may have on literacies in general.  Without NLS, I could not have had the perspective towards literacies necessary to describe adolescents' literacies as socially significant skills, modes, domains, and practices. Without literature to validate that international experiences have academic, linguistic, and other literacies-adjacent benefits, I could not suggest that literacies could be an outcome let alone advocate for increased access to abroad experiences in high school settings. Without showing that other researchers have studied literacies specifically in international and

transnational contexts, I could not rationalized my attempts to do so either, as the connection might seem too far-fetched.

Taken together, the research in NLS, study abroad, and transnationalism, with the added bonus of having tie-ins with critical perspectives, predicted much of what I observed about the literacies of adolescents. Said another way, prior research suggested that the literacies of adolescents with international experiences might include a limited number of traits. Ultimately, the findings of my study add new literacies and new insights about existing literacy practices to the list of ways travel impacts literacies. It is important to know the foundation upon which the new ideas in this study were built.

**Overview of NLS**

From the perspective of a full-time high school ELA teacher and a lifelong lover of reading and writing, literacies have always seemed about more than reading and writing in the sense of knowing an alphabet, pronouncing words and sentences, and comprehending a printed text. Even though many ELA teachers, including myself, love vocabulary and grammar and the nuances of language, they should care more about how and why adolescents need to be literate than on isolated skills. Especially in the year 2020, when most people around the world have the ability to read and write, at least on a basic skill level (UNESCO, 2017), and just as many are able to communicate beyond text--though art, performance, visual media, speaking, music, body language, emojis, and even GIFs and memes, to hypothetically name a few--it seems far less important to think about literacies as monomodal and skill-based because most people have the basic skills. Teachers should care more about what people can do with literacies. Teachers should be teaching students that the reason we want them to be so literate is because they can use literacies in ways to better theirs and others' lives. These

socially significant aspects, not the skills, are what literacies in high school ELA classrooms should be all about because they are what students want and need in the real world. Such inclinations align strongly with NLS.

Gee (1990) was instrumental to solidifying NLS. In an attempt to name what he saw as an emerging new field of study, Gee (1990, 2010, 2012) observed across disciplines--from linguistics, history, anthropology, rhetoric and composition studies, cultural psychology, education, and other areas--that scholars were converging on a "coherent and new shared view about literacy":

NLS saw literacy as something people did not just inside their heads but inside society. It argued that literacy was not primarily a mental phenomenon, but, rather, a sociocultural one. Literacy was a social and cultural achievement—it was about ways of participating in social and cultural groups—not just a mental achievement. Thus, literacy needed to be understood and studied in its full range of contexts—not just cognitive—but social, cultural, historical, and institutional, as well. (Gee, 2010, p. 166)

Building on Gee's earlier work, Street (2003) agreed that NLS represented "a new tradition in considering the nature of literacy, focusing not so much on acquisition of skills, as in dominant approaches, but rather on what it means to think of literacy as a social practice" (p. 77). Street (2003) rejected "autonomous" views of literacy (p.77), which took literacy out of its social contexts to see it as discrete skills. He also suggested how distinguishing between "literacy events" and "literacy practices" can help scholars more easily conceptualize how literacies manifest in social contexts (Street, 2003, p. 78; Street, 2005, p. 419).

Quite importantly, NLS underpinned much of the research and theory at the intersection of literacies and international experiences (Brandt and Clinton, 2002; Choo,

2018; de la Piedra and Guerra, 2012; Pahl and Rowsell, 2006; Rothoni, 2017; Skerrett, 2018; Stewart, 2014; and Warriner, 2009). Other scholars of literacies and international experiences have used frameworks by different names but were likely influenced by NLS implicitly, as was the assertion of Lam and Warriner (2012). They pointed out in their review of literature on transnationalism and literacy how much of this scholarship evolved from or has been influenced by NLS whether acknowledged by scholars or not. Many scholars of literacies and international contexts "build on the tradition" of NLS, and their studies are "complementary" to NLS whether or not they use the term (Lam and Warriner, 2012, p. 192). NLS's influence on prior research connecting adolescents' literacies to international experiences provided credence to my study. Choo (2018) encapsulated the application of NLS to literacy in the global age when writing, "The notion of literacy must account not merely for social processes but also for global processes" (p. 7). The existence of NLS in research on transnationalism and literacies validated my choice to view literacies with an NLS lens.

Above all, NLS offered a literacies-centered framework. Other frameworks used to examine the literacies of adolescents with international experiences seemed to place the international experiences first and then examine adolescents' literacies within these contexts. They applied principles of globalization, internationalism, or transnationalism to literacies, it seemed, rather than letting theories of literacies guide their inquiry. My thinking about the literacies of adolescents with international experiences took a different approach. Rather than frame the former by the latter, I began to think about literacies first. I wanted a literacies theory to guide my inquiry.

NLS was also especially ripe for secondary ELA curriculum. High school ELA classrooms are sites where socially situated literacies can and do occur (Juzwik et al.,

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2017).  A strong potential emerged for my study to have relevance for actual classroom teachers' instruction in literacies if examined through an NLS lens.  Teachers are aware that literacy instruction at school must become more hospitable to adolescent students' out-of-school literacy practices and "speak to the questions [students]…have about the world as they contemplate their place within it" (Ippolito, Steele, and Samson, 2008, p. 2).  Yet, all too often, despite high school classrooms being sites ripe to transcend autonomous models of literacy, there is often scant time in the school day for students to share "new literacies" texts and practices because they are preoccupied with being prepared for standardized tests (Vasudevan, 2006, p. 252).  Teachers must be deliberate in their efforts to employ NLS pedagogies, and if they are, the effect on students' literacies is primed for success.

Street (2005) was especially encouraging about the role NLS can have in reshaping ELA curricula.  He enumerated five features about literacies well-established by the literature for how NLS theory can manifest into practice. One, literacy is highly complex. Two, curricula and assessments reduce literacy to mechanistic skills which fail to do justice to its complexity.  Three, schools need curricula and assessments that are as rich and complex as adolescents' actual literacy practices. Four, schools need pedagogical models that capture the complexity of these practices.  Five, schools need to treat learners' prior background as assets for identity and epistemology.  "The next stage of work," wrote Street (2005), "is to move beyond simply theoretical critiques...to develop positive proposals for interventions... based upon these principles" (p. 420).  Street's optimism about the potential for NLS to transition from theory to practice heartened a teacher like I who so genuinely strives for the findings of her research to have real implications for real teachers and students.

**Overview of Study Abroad Research**

The search for studies on literacies and international experiences also yielded research on the benefits of study abroad. While none of these studies specifically examined literacies as an outcome, this research did reveal several literacies-adjacent outcomes of study abroad. Among the benefits were academic, linguistic, sociocultural, and personality outcomes, each adjacent to or requiring literacies in some capacity but not directly measured.

Shortcomings in study abroad research position this study as one which could contribute greatly to the field. Current study abroad research is largely limited mostly to studies of college undergraduates when adolescents may be a demographic more primed to reap the benefits of travel and warrant attention. Study abroad research is also largely limited to quantitative studies based on comparisons of data collected pre- and post-sojourn. Study abroad research presumes and promotes a false narrative that studying abroad is the best or only method of gaining access to the benefits of travel. Lastly, no existing work in study abroad research examines the impact of travel on literacies beyond foreign language acquisition.

Study abroad research is most helpful in pointing to inequities in access. The research has found a number of factors affecting who participates in study abroad programs. If study abroad, and by extension any travel abroad, has benefits as abundant as the study abroad literature suggests, one would want to know whether certain groups are benefitting from said travel at higher rates than others so that these inequities can be remedied. Said another way, if international experiences impact literacies positively, and literacies are something educators and stakeholders want adolescents to increase, providing international experiences to teens who otherwise could not afford to travel abroad would seem like an equitable step to take.

Such a train of thought circles back to critical perspectives as the theoretical framework for this study. A critical view of the benefits of international experiences in study abroad contexts revealed that despite the many outcomes of abroad experiences attested to in the literature, not all populations are benefitting from these experiences. The research exposed disparities, primarily in race and gender. Study abroad participants are mostly White (77%) and female (65%) (Institute of International Education, 2018).

Several studies have illuminated the factors mediating who does or does not study abroad and why, and these factors have included a litany: socioeconomic status, lack of information or involvement in campus activities, attitudes towards intercultural experiences and interactions, gender differences and higher matriculation of females in major which lend themselves to international travel, interest in one's familial heritage, having a knack for travel or not, length of sojourn and destination country, developing one's social network, perceiving a second chance at academic success if going abroad, the perception that international travel experience appeals to employers, desire to improve foreign language or cultural awareness, desire to have interesting life experiences, desire for strategic escape from what they perceive as problems in the home country, desire for personal growth, and desire to improve personality traits such as extraversion (Banov, Kammerer, and Salciute, 2017; Daly and Barker, 2005; Harrell, Sterner, Alter, and Lonie, 2017; Niehoff, Petersdotter, and Freund, 2017; Prazeres, 2013; Trower and Lehmann, 2017; Twombly, Salisbury, Tumanut, and Klute, 2012). A unique set of factors exist among ethnic/racial minorities, such as perceptions about who should study abroad, lack of study abroad role models or family support, and fears of

discrimination abroad, particularly among Black and LGBTQ+ sojourners (Goldoni,

2017; Salisbury, Paulsen, and Pascarella, 2011; Simon and Ainsworth, 2012; Timm, 2016).

Some research has aimed at increasing diversity among participants, especially the

rates that African Americans study abroad (Sweeney, 2016; Timm, 2016) because this

demographic participates in study abroad programs at very low rates. Other research

adamantly opposed deficit perspectives about who matriculates abroad programs (Perkins,

2020) with a preference for promoting counternarratives about the positive experiences

African Americans and other non-Whites have had studying abroad rather than dwelling on

their underrepresentation (Chang, 2017; Evans, 2009; Lu, Reddick, Dean, and Pecero,

2015; Richardson, Brakle, and St.Vil, 2014).

Counternarratives also existed to promote the idea that funding abroad experiences,

especially for non-White, low-income youth and young adults, may be effective for a

multitude of reasons (Clark, Clark, Lee, Qu, Schwartz, and Burke, 2014; DCPS Global

Education, 2016; Yakimowski, Russo, and Clark-Adedoyin, 2003). One public school

district in the US actually acquired funding to provide short-term abroad experiences for

low-SES middle and high school students (DCPS Global Education, 2016), which I find

remarkable and inspiring, something I hope others around the nation emulate.

Counternarratives about successful experiences for marginalized groups recenters and

showcases them as unique and important beneficiaries of travel when given opportunities.

One factor found by study abroad researchers not to affect outcomes of abroad

experiences is the amount of time one spends abroad. One might assume that the more one

travels or the longer one travels, the more greatly impacted by travel one becomes, but such

is not the case. Studies showed that the length of the experience abroad is actually negligible.

A short or long sojourn could be equally effective. The growing body of research on the benefits and effectiveness of short-term sojourns included Rahikainen and Hakkarainen (2013), Ingraham and Peterson (2004), Landon, Tarrant, Rubin, and Stoner (2017), Reynolds-Case (2013), Ritz (2011), Serrano, Llanes, and Tragant (2016), Smith and Mitry (2008), Strange and Gibson (2017), Tam (2016), and Walters, Charles and Bingham (2017).

**Overview of Transnationalism Research**

In continuing the search for existing literature at the intersection of literacies and travel abroad, the fields of Comparative and International Education, Curriculum and Instruction, and Language and Literacy yielded some useful and somewhat relevant results. Although the first two did contain some important findings, work in Comparative and International Education tended to focus on such topics as flows of language across the globe, literacy initiatives and movements to increase literacy rates of populations, work on the globalization of curricula à la International Baccalaureate programs, and the use of global measures like the PISA exam to compare literacies among nations (Dolby and Rahman, 2009; Hayhoe, 1998; Hoffman, 2012; Pizmony-Levy et al., 2014; Resnik, 2012; Sahlberg, 2016; Schleicher and Zoido, 2016); work in Curriculum and Instruction bespoke the larger trend of "globalizing" curricula which is supported by national and state standards, but rarely contained suggestions about literal travel as a means to literacies, and except in rare cases such as the DCPS program were limited to virtual and vicarious international experiences, multicultural initiatives, and/or the reading of world literature or discussion of global issues (Asia Society, 2018; Banks and Banks, 1995; Bernstein, 2013; Castagno, 2009; DiAngelo and Sensoy, 2010; DCPS Global Education, 2016; Dolby and Rahman, 2009; Kalman and Woods, 2019; Kerschner, 2002; Ladson-Billings, 2014; National

Governors Association Center for Best Practices, Council of Chief State School Officers, 2010; Paris, 2012; Paris and Alim, 2014; Qureshi, 2006; South Carolina Department of Education, 2015, pp. 11, 80-106; Wolansky, 1992/2016),  Thus, the field of Language and Literacy contained the most important research to review for my study.

This research clearly established a connection between literacies and international experiences.  In sooth, many scholars have examined literacies among adolescents who were immigrant, multilingual, second generation, or representative of other "transnational" populations. I was most drawn to the research in transnationalism. Scholars in this field often utilized NLS theories, for one. For another, what researchers have found about the literacies of transnational youth predicted and mirrored much of my findings.  In the next few paragraphs, I define transnationalism, transnational youth, and transnational literacies, provide a history of the trans- turn in Language and Literacy, and summarize the findings from a few key studies.

Transnationalism is "a pattern of migration in which transmigrants sustain...ties to their countries of origin while residing in host countries to which they do not necessarily adapt," a phenomenon which "connotes back-and-forth movements" (Alexander, 2016, p. 351).   People and things, including practices, can be transnational.

The term "transnational" has most often been applied to people.  Zúñiga and Hamann (2009), based on work on the school experiences of sojourners between Mexico and the U.S.,  were instrumental in creating a taxonomy of transnational youth, so-called because "they have moved internationally, but they do not conform to the common assumption that immigrant students face only the challenge of integrating themselves to their new host country" (p. 329).  Zúñiga and Hamann (2009) distinguished transnational from other labels, like migrant, immigrant, binational, mainland-educated, and don't-fit

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students, which have pejorative or euphemistic connotations, in preference for terms like sojourner because it encapsulates a broader range of students who, because of the impermanence of their sojourn, occupy this back-and-forth place that affects their identity. Others concur that transnational students are those who "frequently and purposefully cross the geopolitical borders...for work, education, family connections, and civic participation" (Skerrett and Bomer, 2013, p. 313).   Transnational people, to summarize, included anyone who moves across or has moved between between nations.

The concept of transnational literacies relies on assuming "things status" of literacies, as did Brandt and Clinton (2002). Literacies are like entities that can be taken places or can help people go between places.  People can do things with literacies, and literacies can do things with people.  Within the notion of literacies as a thing, researchers have distinguished between literacy "events" and "practices" (Street, 2003).  These apply thingness to literacies and too could be transnational. Events and practices are transnational things that move across or between borders or that provide a means for adolescents to move between places even if no physical movement occurs.

Undeniably, there exists a "transnational character of literacy" (Lam and Warriner, 2012, p. 191).  Literacies connect people across transnational social fields and allow people to construct and maintain social relationships across borders.  Whether things or texts or modes or skills or events or practices,  literacies move transnationally through families and communities, through youth and in educational contexts, and through broadcast and digital communications (Lam and Warriner, 2012).  Anything that develops "across geographic borders" (Lam and Warriner, 2012, p. 192), including literacies, can be considered transnational.

Jiminez (2003) was among the earliest to advocate for the inclusion of research on transnationalism in literacy studies:

> The nature of students' transnational lives opens up new ground for researchers and their investigations at an international level…. Research questions can focus on what influence this reality might have on curriculum selection, instructional methods, and linguistic modes of instruction…. Research questions might examine those literacies that are necessary for students to negotiate their lives. (pp. 122-124).

Since Jiminez's call for further studies, others' research on transnationalism has indeed proliferated.

Research in transnationalism has been strongly influenced by NLS. According to Lam and Warriner (2012), scholars like Barton, Hamilton, & Ivanic (2000), Bloome, Carter, Christian, Otto, & Shuart-Faris (2005), Gee (2007), Hull & Schultz (2001), and Street (2005), who worked in the NLS tradition and argued for the need to examine literacy as ideological constructions produced within social and institutional settings rather than as a universal or neutral set of skills related primarily to individual cognition, set the stage for transnationalism research. Next, scholars such Baynham & Prinsloo, (2009), Brandt & Clinton (2002), Cope & Kalantzis (2009), Mills (2010), Pahl and Rowsell (2006), and Warriner (2009) emerged as the new generation interested in investigating literacy practices within intersecting local and global contexts and in relation to changing technologies of communication.

Research in transnationalism has also been influenced by Bourdieu (Lam and Warriner, 2012). Recently, transnationalism researchers like Albright and Luke (2008), Carrington and Luke (1997), Collins (2000), Compton-Lilly (2007), Grenfell (2011), and Hanks

(2005) have taken interest in Bourdieu's sociological theory as a conceptual template for considering how literacy functions as a form of cultural capital with different values across differing social fields locally and globally. One of the central ideas of Bourdieu's work is that human activities are meaningful only within structured social spaces termed *fields*, and some transnational scholars define a transnational social field within which reading and writing are forms of capital production and exchange (Lam and Warriner, 2012).

Interest in transnationalism reflects a larger 'trans-' turn in language and literacy studies pointing to the current era of globalization (Hawkins, 2018). Scholars have studied not only transnationalism but also, as Hawkins (2018) indexes, transmodalities, translocality, transliteracies, translation, translanguaging, translingual practice, transdisciplinary meshing, transglobal communication, and more. Brandt and Clinton (2002), for instance, noted the "transcontextualized and transcontextualizing potentials of literacy" (p. 338). Kerr and Vesudevan (2018) also extended the concepts underlying transnationalism to describe "transculturalism," particularly in the context of cosmopolitanism, or what Kuipers (2011) called a "transnational cultural field." The prefix 'trans-' literally means "across," and in an increasingly global world, it is no wonder scholars in Language and Literacy have been studying how people and literacies move across the world and across cultures.

In this paragraph, a review of selected work in transnationalism is provided to illustrate the research's breadth and scope. The largest subgenre of transnationalism research has investigated transnational youth's use of online literacies for foreign language acquisition and identity navigation. Black (2005), for example, found a connection between foreign language acquisition among ELL transnational youth who interacted in online

fanfiction sites. Lam and Rosario-Ramos (2009) found, based on interviews with adolescents of diverse national origins that digital media have become major tools and avenues for transnational young people to maintain and develop relations with people, media, and events across geopolitical boundaries. Dressler and Dressler (2016) similarly found that the transnational teen in their study used Facebook posts to position herself and navigate her identity as bilingual. Kim (2018) found the transnational youth in her study drew upon her entire semiotic repertoire in digital spaces to materialize relationships and identities across her local and transnational social fields. Other researchers have investigated transnational youth's perceptions of schooling (Hamann, Zúñiga, and García, 2010), how the transnational context itself provides a site for transnational literacies (Hsin, 2017), how transnational immigrant students use different language and literacy practices to represent themselves with a meta-narrative about their transnational experiences (Sánchez, 2007), how the welcoming of translanguaging and transnational literacies in classrooms is not only necessary but desirable educational practice (Hornberger and Link, 2012), or how trasnational literacies are present invisible in the school and classroom, surfacing when recruited for narrow curricular and academic purposes (Taira, 2019). Particularly contributive to research on transnationalism has been the work of Allison Skerrett (2012, 2016, 2018, 2020), whose analysis of transnational youth's experiences as "borderzones" has been highly influential to my study.

### What Prior Research Predicted

Prior research in NLS, study abroad, and transnationalism helped to predict what I might expect to find about the impact of international experiences on adolescents' literacies. While my data eventually yielded findings beyond what prior research found,

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that my data conferred with prior literature grounded my new observations. What follows

is an enumeration of what prior research predicted.

**Plural and Multimodal Literacies**

Prior literature, especially in NLS, suggested that adolescents with international

experiences would display plural literacy practices, multiple literacies, and multimodalities.

NLS research pluralized literacies, which allowed for broader definitions and understandings

of literacies, and as the reader of this paper has observed, I use the term "literacies" instead of

"literacy" not unlike a growing faction of NLS researchers. Christenbury, Bomer, and

Smagorinsky (2014) described the plural turn thusly: "The notion of literacy with a big 'L'

and single 'y' began to give way to the plural form, literacies" (p. 16). Other scholars,

including Juzwik et al. (2017), have also defined literacies "in the plural" (p. 130). "This

definition," they explained, "and the tradition of New Literacies scholarship from which it

emerges, serves to highlight the pluralism, the myriad literate practices in individual and

collective life" (Juzwik et al., 2017, pp. 130-131).

Many others have echoed the sentiment of NLS's pluralization of literacies. Ideas

about "multiliteracies," "multimodal literacies," "multiple modalities," "multimodalities,"

and/or "multilingual repertoires" (Blommaert, 2010; Cope and Kalantzis, 2009; Mills,

2010; Pyo, 2016; New London Group, 1996; Smith and Shen, 2017; Vasudevan, 2014)

evoked NLS by implying plurality. Literacies are multiplicitous. They have multiple

modes, meaning ways for absorbing or conveying knowledge. The prefix "multi" is nearly

synonymous with plural; both imply many. There are many literacies one can have.

The trend to label literacies by putting the word "literacy" after subject descriptors--e.g.,

digital literacy, global literacy, critical literacy, cosmopolitan literacy, financial literacy,

music literacy, new literacy, et al.--also implied plurality by acknowledging literacies as existing in multiple areas. "In particular," noted Christenbury, Bomer, and Smagorinsky (2014), "terms such as multiple literacies, situated literacies, [and] digital literacies… became commonplace and part of a burgeoning research literature that focused on reconceptualizing literacies in adolescents' lives" (p. 16). Literacies in this sense are like domains in which one can be literate, which is to say skilled and knowledgeable. One can be literate in many domains.

Blommaert's (2010) ideas about literary repertoires, which recognized literacies as "super-diverse" and "complex" (p. 102), pointed too to plurality. Literacies, or repertoires, encompass "specific semiotic resources, some of which belong to a conventionally defined 'language.' The resources are concrete accents, language varieties, registers, genres, modalities such as writing--ways of using languages in particularly communicative settings and spheres of life" (Blommaert, 2010, p. 102). Other scholars who discussed literacies as repertoires were Stewart (2014) and Wang (2017).

Even Derrida's ideas that "everything is a text" which can be "read" (Smith, 1998, May 30) strongly evoked a plural view of literacies. Derrida's assertion in critical discourse analysis that texts cannot be the objects of definitive meanings but rather subject to infinite interpretation "translates into a classroom focus on multiple possible readings of texts, on what ideas, themes, characterizations, and possible readers are silent or marginalised" (Luke, 2000, p. 452). If everything can be viewed metaphorically as a text, literacies then encompasses virtually all meaning-making processes.

As shown, literacies have become an encompassing term that a reduction to mere reading and writing does not quite do justice. The literature has validated that researchers,

to include myself, looking to study adolescents' literacies can make many meaningful observations about their literacies beyond in terms of autonomous skills.

**Socially Situated Literacies**

In part inspired by the idea that language itself is a socially constructed sign system which evolved to fulfill social purposes (Gee, 2012; Vygotsky, 1962, 1978), NLS literature emphasized the socially meaningful nature of literacies (Barton and Hamilton, 2000; Brandt and Clinton, 2002; Gee, 1990, 2010, 2012; Scribner and Cole, 1981; Street, 1984, 1993, 2003, 2005) and predicted that participants in my study would engage with literacies in socially significant ways.

Scribner and Cole (1981) were among the earliest to argue that literacy is "socially developed and patterned" and involves "socially organized practices" (p. 236), with Street (1984) not far behind in describing the "social practices and conceptions of reading and writing" (p. 1). To quote Brandt and Clinton (2002): "Calling literacy a situated social practice has become something of an orthodoxy in literacy research today" (p. 337). Considering how much of what I observed about adolescents' literacies in my study contained social components and were socially significant, this trait of NLS is inseparable from my dissertation.

Harkening to NLS's emphasis on literacies as situated and social, a huge amount of literature in study abroad purported analogous sociocultural outcomes of travel. While not always referred to as social per se, certain sociocultural outcomes do result from studying abroad. However, they are more invariably labeled. Among the verbiage used in scholarship has included global competencies (Asia Society, 2018; Mansilla and Jackson, 2011), intercultural competence (Heinzmann, Künzle, Schallhart, and Müller, 2005), multicultural education (Banks and Banks, 1995; Castagno, 2009), critical multicultural education

(DiAngelo and Sensoy, 2010), transformative learning (Dunn, Dotson, Cross, Kesner, and Lundahl, 2014), attitudes towards other cultures (Carlson and Widaman, 1988), cross-cultural awareness, open-mindedness, et al. (Cisneros-Donahue, Krentler, Reinig, and Sabol, 2012; Hansel and Grove, 1986; Ingraham and Peterson, 2004). Despite variances, these terms encompass and speak to social and cultural outcomes of abroad experiences. On the most primal level, traveling abroad increases knowledge of societies and cultures. Travel makes people globally and interculturally competent with, aware of, open-minded towards, and transformed by societies and cultures. Both literacies and travel each provides social benefits, helps students understand societies better, and situates students within larger societies. Travel and literacies are social processes and practices.

I reviewed several revelatory studies. Hansel and Grove (1986) found that study abroad participants increased in awareness and appreciation of host country and culture, international awareness, understanding of other cultures, and the ability to deal flexibly with and adjust to new people, places, and situations. Ingraham and Peterson (2004) found that the participants in their study who traveled abroad rated themselves highly in intercultural competence, which includes understanding of other cultures, appreciation of human difference, and curiosity about others. Hammer's (2005) work showed that students with foreign exchange program experience had intercultural competence, too, and also less anxiety about interacting with people from different cultures, increased friendships with people from other cultures, and greater intercultural networks. Cisneros-Donahue, Krentler, Reinig, and Sabol's (2012) work, building off Sutton and Rubin (2004), observed growth among study abroad participants in cultural sensitivity, which included tempering one's reactions to people from different language and cultural backgrounds, making interpersonal accommodations, and having

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patience when interacting with others.  Heinzmann, Künzle, Schallhart, and Müller (2015) also made claims about intercultural competence and how staying in an area culturally and linguistically different from one's own has a positive effect on the development of intercultural competence.  Most recently, Tarrant, Rubin, and Stoner (2015) observed that study abroad participants had higher growth in all six subscales on their 40-item Global Perspective Inventory compared to a control group.

Lastly, regarding socially situated literacies, prior research revealed that people with abroad experiences are very engaged with society and clued into what is happening in the world. 90% of study abroad participants surveyed by Hadis (2005) were "in agreement" or "very much in agreement" with the statement that "The experience of studying abroad has deepened my interest in world affairs."  Those who studied abroad were more likely to attend or deliver formal talks or activities concerning important issues, to vote in elections, to organize or sign petitions, to contact or visit public officials, to write letters to the editor, to follow current events, and to enjoy international cuisine and culture (Mulvaney, 2017). Participation in activities with social significance, such as voting and community events, which also are sure to involve literacies, again appeared correlated with travel.

Prior literature predicts that adolescents with international experiences will engage most authentically with literacies that fulfill social functions.  Findings from NLS about social practices theory and findings about sociocultural outcomes of travel in the study abroad research provides the sources for this claim.

**Literacies Beyond the Classroom**

Prior research, especially in NLS and transnationalism, recognized and valued literacies beyond the classroom, especially digital/online literacies.  NLS research

conferred with a larger body of research that, despite popular misconception, adolescents

are highly literate creatures with positive attitudes towards literacies in extracurricular

contexts.   It makes sense that NLS promoted adolescents' literacies as extracurricular

because that is where they are most socially meaningful.  Simply put, research informed by

NLS "has unabashedly valued out-of-school literacies as distinct from those associated

with schools" (Hull and Schultz, 2001, p. 589).

Scholars who explicitly utilized NLS frameworks in work about adolescents' out-of-

school and online literacies have included several key researchers, whose work is

summarized here in chronological order.  First are the findings of Alvermann et al (2012).

They found that adolescents constructed online identities through social networking, online

shopping, remixing music, pursuing a religious calling, and/or participating in activities such

as fandom and gaming. Students enacted literacies--which included completion of school

assignments, engagement with poetry entrepreneurship, use of multimodal tools, critical

thinking, and life skills--while constructing their online identities.  Stewart (2014), who

investigated the out-of-school literacies of four Latinxs adolescents, found they used social

networking literacies, workplace literacies, and entertainment literacies.  They also cited

similar functions for being literate: to be social, to show pride in their Latinx identities, to

practice or improve in a foreign language, or to get support and feel successful. In response to

many schools' resistance to embracing the use of social media in schools, White and

Hungerford-Kresser (2014) embraced NLS tenets to highlight the merits of this medium.

They found that college undergraduates' use of social media actually exemplified the NLS

premise that meaning is created interpretively through individual interactions with texts.  The

use of social media facilitated their leveraging of prior knowledge for reading, scaffolded

their reading, promoted critical discussions about texts, and provided an authentic venue for students to practice codeswitching.  The researchers concluded that social media is hardly an educational distraction but instead, when used appropriately, can serve as an engaging and interactive foray into socially-situated literacies.  In a study of the everyday English literacies of Greek teenagers online, Rothoni (2017) found their literacies were highly entertainment-driven and linked to their social interests. These interests included music, networking, films, computer games, and other forms of global culture. Additionally, having fun, building relationships, and finding information motivated their engagements with literacies. van der Merwe (2017) went a step further to answer why adolescents may be drawn so strongly to online spaces. Not only did he find that participants visited a similar set of sites, he more importantly concluded that the potential for anonymity associated with online profiles, which allowed for exploration of identity, is likely a reason adolescents flocked to and thrived online.  Participants also reported that the internet was an important meeting space, that they preferred to keep friends online rather than the real world, that they have pretended to be someone else before, and that they created idealized versions of themselves using avatars.  Biviano (2019), who studied the online literate lives of Appalachian youth, found that online spaces were important sites for socially situating literacies because cyberspace does not privilege or exclude anyone.  Unlike school literacies, which can often make students feel badly about their primary discourses such as non-standard dialects, online spaces provide acceptance made possible because anyone can participate. Most everyone can find spaces online where their voices are not judged or rejected, which is especially important if those voices are silenced in adolescents' more immediate surroundings. Taken collectively, these researchers built a case for valuing out-of-school literacies when teaching or studying adolescents because those literacies are often socially

situated more meaningfully in their lives.  Indeed, many of the literacies observed among the participants in my study took place outside of school, especially online.

Researchers beyond NLS have affirmed the highly literate lives of adolescents also.  Not only are adolescents are very literate in online spaces (Alverman et al., 2012; Black, 2005; Moje, Overby, Tysvaer, and Morris, 2008; Padgett and Curwood, 2016; van der Merwe, 2017; Yi, 2009), they use literacies in other "affinity spaces" (Gee, 2004, 2018), in "third spaces" (Bhabha, 1994; Moje, Ciechanowski, Kramer, Ellis, Carrillo, and Collazo, 2004; Gutiérrez, 2008; White and Hungerford-Kresser, 2014), in text messages (Zebroff and Kaufman, 2017), and even through the reading and writing of fanfiction (Haddix, Garcia and Price-Dennis, 2017; Lammers and Marsh, 2018).  The literature clearly showed that teens are very involved with literacies even if teachers do not see it at school.  To cite a specific statistic, 86% of a sample larger than 800 adolescents in one urban community reported writing outside of school (Moje, Overby, Tysvaer, and Morris, 2008).

Underscoring this point were Smith and Wilhelm (2014).  Seeking to understand boys' underperformance on measures of literacy, Smith and Wilhelm spent several months studying 49 diverse boys expecting to find they hated reading and writing and never did it, but they actually found the exact opposite.  Every single boy in their study engaged enthusiastically in a myriad of literacy practices outside of school.  Although they did not self-identify as literacy lovers, all of the boys detailed engagements with newspapers, magazines, and electronic texts. Some were poets, others rappers, others short story writers. Acknowledging Cushman, Barbier, Mazak, and Petrone (2006), Hull and Schultz (2002), and Mahiri (2004) as forethinkers in extracurricular literacies, Smith and Wilhelm (2014) argued that embracing students' out-of-school literacies has the

capacity to help educators see that students, particularly males, are much more literate than they are typically given credit.

Others have similarly regretted that despite NLS's high regard for out-of-school literacies teachers rarely appreciate them:

> Adolescents' identities are increasingly negotiated in out-of-school, online environments...largely hidden from view at school. Teachers are aware that literacy instruction at school must become more hospitable to adolescent students' out-of-school literacy practices…, yet all too often, there is scant time in the day to share 'new literacies' texts and practices. (Nagle and Stooke, 2016, p. 158)

Per NLS, teachers should strive to recognize and leverage their students' rich literary lives outside of the classroom as conduits for instruction.

Research in transnationalism also supported the extracurricular literacies of adolescents. Transnational adolescents, like many adolescents, have highly literate lives outside of school, thriving most in digital and online spaces. Scholars outside of transnationalism (e.g., Smith and Wilhelm, 2014) have shown that adolescents engaged in many literacies, and so the same being true for transnational teens should come as no surprise. Taira (2019) most recently noted: "Existing scholarship...presents youth as 'skillful and purposeful users of literacy' (Skerrett, 2015, p. 366) who employ knowledge of multiple contexts and cultural spaces to form sophisticated transnational understandings" (p. 75). Taira's (2019) study of transnational newcomer youth in one secondary English classroom showed that transnational adolescents participate in "a range of literacy practices--personal, social, familiar, and cultural--outside of the school day" (p. 82). "Although these students clearly possessed transnational understandings and had lives that

included participation in rich and varied literacies," wrote Taira (2019), "these personal practices were rarely visible in the school and classroom, and only surfaced when strategically sought out by school and teacher to further academic goals" (p. 83). Taira's study proffered that transnational youth engage in many literacies outside of school which regrettably many teachers fail to recognize. Taira's predecessors (Brochin Ceballos, 2012; Hsin, 2017; Sánchez, 2007) have suggested that transnational teens' out-of-school literacies stem from a need to maintain connections with home culture and to maintain biliteracy, especially when not validated at school.

The data on transnational adolescents confirms that they are most active in literacies online. Echoing what NLS and other research already established about adolescent literacies online (Alvermann et al., 2012; Black, 2005; Padgett and Curwood, 2016; van der Merwe, 2017; Yi, 2009), the research on transnational youth showed that their literacies frequently do or could thrive in online spaces (Crosby, 2018; Frankel and Brooks, 2020; Lam and Rosario-Ramos, 2009; Rothoni, 2017; Stewart, 2014; Taira, 2019; Yi, 2009; Wang, 2017).

Lam and Rosario-Ramos's (2009) study of foreign-born high school students living in the US attested to the frequency of online activities, finding that 72% used a variety of online channels to communicate with people across countries. Likewise, Rothoni (2017) observed about the transnational participants, "Indeed, the majority of literacy events presented in this paper took place in front of computer or handheld device screens, surpassing activities involving traditional print media" (p. 95).

More important for scholarship, however, than the fact that adolescents use the internet, were the reasons underscoring why transnational adolescents were so drawn to

online spaces. These reasons were revealed by the literature as manifold. The entertainment-driven aspects, the links between interests and literacies in online spices, or the use of new media and interactive technologies played a role (Rothoni, 2017). How their online literacy practices served them while negotiating their transnational identities played a role (Yi, 2009). Playing a role were the desire to develop relations with people, media, and events across territorial boundaries, to maintain connections with a diaspora, or to diversity one's access to linguistic resources not readily available on one's physical environment (Lam and Rosario-Ramos, 2009). The growing prominence of digitally mediated communications, which has reduced the cost and increased the speed and immediacy of exchanges across geographic boundaries, have played a role (Lam and Rosario-Ramos, 2009). The literature showed that for many reasons, transnational adolescents' literacies thrived online.

Prior research ensconced for me the eminence of extracurricular literacies in adolescents' lives. This research predicted that not only would adolescents with international experiences likely have plural and socially situated literacies, they would also likely be most literate in their extracurricular lives.

**Literacies and Identity**

Prior research suggested that adolescents with international experiences will use literacies to navigate their identities (Alvermann et al., 2012; Haddix, Garcia, and Price-Dennis, 2017; Lammers and Marsh, 2018; Marotta, 2008; Moje, Giroux, and Muehling, 2017; Quinlan and Curtin, 2019; van der Merwe, 2017; Yi, 2009) and that their identities would likely be hybrid, fluid, and intersectional (Compton-Lilly, Papoi, Venegas, Hamman, and Schwabenbauer, 2017; Marotta, 2008; Yon, 2000). Such researchers were

likely influenced by Guzzetti and Camboa (2004), who wrote that people use language to form and represent identities, or more simply, "Literacy work is identity work" (p. 413).

Prior research on adolescent literacies and identity in NLS, to elaborate, predicted that the participants might use literacies to establish their sense of selves, that their literacies might shift or help them shift between social groups or between in-school and out-of-school settings, and that both literacies and identities are intertwined with society and social practice. "The literacies we adopt, enact and reject influence the identities available to us as well as our presently performed identity," added Quinlan and Curtin (2019, p. 458).

Prior research in transnationalism added the idea that adolescents with international experiences might display hybridity, fluidity, and intersectionality in identities which affect their literacies and that they use literacies to traverse (Compton-Lilly et al., 2017; Skerrett and Bomer, 2013; Stornaiuolo, Smith, and Phillips, 2017). Their identities contain multiple aspects of self and move between geographic and metaphorical borders through literacies.

Hybridity, to elucidate, refers to the "dual living realities" that transnational youth inhabit, a classically liminal position characterized by feelings of in-betweenness that permeate….identity and everyday life" (Wang and Collins, 2016, p. 2780). Describing the language practices of one of the transnational youths in their study as "hybrid zones of possibility between cultural practices," Skerrett and Bomer (2013) emphasized the youth's "in-betweenness," which cannot be seen as a threshold between two distinct, permanent worlds but as a hybridity of transformations of multiple worlds (p. 317). The participants in their study lived in literal borderzones between Mexico and the US, but more important, perhaps, were the metaphorical borderzones crossed. They crossed linguistic borders and generated hybrid social languages that involved language brokering rather than code-

switching.  They crossed many other borderzones: secular worlds versus religious commitments, in-school versus outside-school lifeworlds, between living and spiritual worlds, oral and literate modes of language, between pictorial and written media, genre blurrings, borders between personal life and public performance, and the margins between emotional states.  In many ways, the participants in Skerrett and Bomer's study, like all adolescents, straddle many borderzones.  One implication of Skerrett and Bomer's work was that the literacies of all students might be improved by creating opportunities in the classroom for them to navigate their identity borderzones through literacies. The ways that transnational adolescents cross literal borders is analogous to how adolescents navigate hybrid identities.

Fluidity, on the other hand, refers to transnational youth's  comfort with flexibility.  "Globalisation has significantly impacted the increasingly fluid and rapid movement of people, ideas, information, and capital that position the global and the local not as polarities but as mutually informing," so it should come as no surprise that globally mobile transnational youth have identities that are likewise fluid (Bean and Dunkerly-Bean, 2015, p. 47).  A monolithic, homogenized view of transnational adolescents belies "the fluidity of adolescent identity and the literacies embodied within those identities" (Bean and Dunkerly-Bean, 2015, p. 49).

Rather than hybrid or fluid, some scholars have preferred the term "intersectional," borrowing from the work of legal scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw, to describe the identities of transnational youth because it better invokes social justice (Compton-Lilly et al., 2017). Crenshaw (1991), a critical race theorist, coined the term "intersectional" to denote how factors "interact to shape the multiple dimensions" (p. 1244) of a person's self  and how "the ways one is located and positioned in the world and the ways one is classed, gendered, and

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raced affect one's way of experiences and knowing the world" (Anders and Devita, 2014, p. 34).   Inspired by Crenshaw (1989, 1991), Compton-Lilly et al. (2017) discussed the intersectional networks of identity negotiated by young children in immigrant families. The term intersectional appealed to the critical theoretical framework employed by this study.

Related to identity is personality, and the research on study abroad substantiates claims about travel impacting identity and personality.  People with abroad experiences have certain personality traits, the literature demonstrated, and arguably the most compelling was empathy.  Empathy is the ability to recognize and share the feelings or experiences of others.   Palmer and Menard-Warwick (2012), although they do not study the effects of study abroad on empathy, per se, reviewed the literature to support this line of inquiry and found that empathy can be a precursor to the potential development of critical consciousness.  Marx and Pray (2011) also found through empirical research a connection between travel abroad and empathy.  White pre-service teachers in a short-term abroad program to Mexico channeled the cultural and linguistic frustrations they experienced as foreigners there into some measure of empathetic understanding for the challenges of ELL and immigrant students in the US.   Adding to this work, Saavedra (2016) claimed his personal experiences as a young Peace Corps teacher in rural Mozambique allowed him to empathize with his diverse students back in the US.  His showing empathy furthermore mitigated their anxiety and stress, lowered their affective filter, and led to deeper learning.  In all three studies, students or young adults studying or working abroad cultivated empathy, which relates to identity because participants could identify with others.

In addition to being empathetic, those who study or travel abroad tend to identify as independent, steadfast, self-reliant, and decisive.  Sojourners in one study reported

increases in ability to have self-control, to be self-directed, to resist conformity, and to persevere against peer pressure (Hansel and Grove, 1986). In another study, study abroad participants answered positively to statements such as "Study abroad has enhanced my independence" and "Study abroad has enhanced my self-reliance" (Ingraham and Peterson, 2004). 80% of study abroad participants surveyed agreed with the statement "Studying abroad has taught me how to make my own decisions" (Hadis, 2005).

People with abroad experiences also seem to have efficacy, meaning they are self-confidence, have self-esteem, and believe in their ability to accomplish goals by themselves. Improvements in self-esteem occurred in one study of ten urban high school students, for instance, after their cross-cultural experiences to Ghana (Ramanathan and Creigs, 1999). Participants in another program had greater self-efficacies following their abroad experiences compared to those who did not sojourn (Petersdotter, Niehoff, and Freund, 2017).. Because high self-efficacy at first prevented sojourners from feeling threatened or challenged by a new culture, they socialized more. The number of social contacts met with per week was discovered as a mediator for their development of higher self-efficacy while abroad.

Dolby (2004) found that sojourners cultivated a strong sense of self as well, particularly in regard to their nationality, and were proactive about these identities. Dolby (2004) discussed how one's national identity is strengthened through travel. Living in one's own country creates a border between oneself and one's ability to see oneself as a citizen of that nation state. Traveling abroad is like having that border--geopolitical and metaphorical-- removed: "Students are so focused on their own experiences and their own realities, that they become largely oblivious to the context in which they perform or display their identities"

(Dolby, 2004, p. 171). Sojourners recognized how their homeland functioned as a "space of potential" (Dolby, 2004, p. 171) for defining their personal identities.

People with study abroad experiences identify as having fewer mental and emotional health issues also. High school students involved in one semester abroad program became less stressed and less emotionally detached throughout their sojourn, claimed Monaghan and Hartmann (2014), who described their participants as "consistently positive," "less anxious or irritable," and having "the ability to be emotionally impacted" (pp. 90-91). In another study, the percentage of participants reporting frequent stress dropped pre- and post-travel, meaning that students felt stressed at lower rates upon return from abroad, with similar patterns emerging for anxiety and feeling self-conscious (Bathke and Kim, 2016). The connection of travel to mental and emotional health cannot go underemphasized.

In sum, the research reviewed herein used words like hybrid, fluid, intersectional, decisive, empathetic, independent, responsible, confident, self-reliant, and stable to describe the identities and personalities of people who have traveled abroad. The literature from NLS and transnationalism about the connection between literacies and identity and the connection between travel and personality established by the study abroad research industry position as reasonable the suspicion that international experiences will shape adolescents' literacies because they shape their identities.

**Literacies-Adjacent Academic Outcomes of Travel**

Research strongly supported a connection between abroad experiences and academic-related outcomes. These included grades and GPA, performance on standardized tests, focus on or disposition towards school, better knowledge of particular subject, critical

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thinking abilities, workforce preparation, and more.  So many literacies-adjacent academic outcomes, to include cognitive ones, correlated with travel abroad and predicted adolescents with international experiences would display literacies in conjuction with academics.

According to study abroad research, people who studied abroad did well at school and better than their non-travelling peers. In one study, researchers found that GPA at time of their graduation for participants in college study abroad was, on average, higher than that of non-participants, though they do quickly acknowledge the limitations of these data (Ingraham and Peterson, 2004).  Nevertheless, a possible connection between abroad participants and GPA as a measure of academic performance should not go unmentioned; many literacies are required to have a high GPA.

People who studied abroad increased knowledge.  According to at least five studies, often measuring growth in students' self-reported knowledge on various topics or comparing travelers to non-travellers, those who went abroad always demonstrated higher knowledge.  In one study, functional knowledge, knowledge of world geography, knowledge of global interdependence, and verbal acumen increased among travelers compared to their non-traveling peers  (Cisneros-Donahue, Krentler, Reinig, and Sabol, 2012; Sutton and Rubin, 2004).  Foreign exchange program alumni in another study similarly demonstrated increased knowledge, in this case knowledge of the host country, as a result of their travels (Hammer, 2005).  Another study reported that young adults in Fulbright-Hays programs in Botswana and Southeast Asia increased their knowledge of cultural, historic, and geographic information about their destination regions during their stays (Biraimah and Jotia, 2013).  Showing increased knowledge of the learning process

itself, participants in agricultural study abroad programs articulated shifts in or deepening of their knowledge regarding where and how learning happens (Graham and Crawford, 2012). In all studies mentioned, travel and increased knowledge were correlated. Another way to phrase this is that adolescents became literate in geography, history, vocabulary, culture, and metacagonition while traveling abroad.

People who studied abroad did better on standardized tests. Yakimowski, Russo, and Clark-Adedoyin (2003) provided evidence for this assertion. They found that participation in an African immersion program for at-risk middle school boys correlated with higher academic achievement on various high-stakes tests later on. Higher pass rates on the Maryland Function Tests and increased TerraNova scores indicated positive changes among participants. Although NLS eschews the notion of literacies assessed on standardized tests, this study provides an example of travel impacting literacies by some measure.

People who studied abroad were focused on and wanted to succeed at school. Participants in one study, for example, responded positively to the statement: "My study abroad experience has led to an improvement of my academic performance" (Ingraham and Petersen, 2004). Half of participants in another study were "in agreement" or "very much in agreement" with these statements: "When I came back to my home college after studying abroad, I was more focused on my studies" and "After I returned home from studying abroad, I found myself studying more for the 'pleasure of knowing' than to get a good grade" (Hadis, 2005). These same participants experienced "academic focusing" as a result of studying abroad, meaning they brought their academic pursuits to the forefront of their interests when they return home and placed "a high priority on learning for the sake of expanding knowledge and cognitive skills" (Hadis, 2005, p. 61). A

connection between travel and positive orientation towards learning existed undeniably. Travel may provide motivation for academic success.

People who studied abroad pursued advanced degrees and remained connected to higher education throughout life.  According to an extensive study comparing alumni from a major foreign exchange program to their non-traveling peers, travelers pursued college and graduate degrees 10% more often (Hansel and Chen, 2008).  Undergraduates who studied abroad were more likely to pursue or complete advanced degrees and to remain connected to the educational institutions post-graduation than comparable students who did not go abroad (Mulvaney, 2017).  International experiences seem connected with lifelong learning, or at least pursuing advanced degrees and maintaining alumni networks. The process of staying connected surely requires a variety of literacies.

People who studied abroad had strong critical thinking.  Hansel and Grove's (1986) study of adolescent participants in foreign exchanges found that sojourners increased critical thinking compared to non-sojourners who reported no change. Ingraham and Peterson's (2004) study similarly reported that in response to statements like "Studying abroad has enhanced my critical thinking," study abroad participants' responses skewed positively.  In short, evidence exists that international experiences impact critical thinking.

As further evidence of critical thinking, people who studied abroad demonstrated this trait through deep conversations.  According to one study's findings, students who spent a semester studying abroad "increased capacity to pose complex questions to their teachers and fellow classmates in their academic courses and experiential site visits as well as participate in dynamic and complex dialogues with guest speakers" (Monaghan and Hartmann, 2014, p. 89).  Teachers "engaged more frequently in dynamic and complex

discussions about academic content with students that were on par with the discussions that teachers had amongst themselves" (Monaghan and Hartmann, 2014, p. 90). Knowing how to ask and discuss meaningful questions and to sustain meaningful conversations was a likely outcome of international experiences and conjured speaking as a literacy.

People who studied abroad felt prepared for the real world and workplace. Ingraham and Peterson (2004), for one, found that participants in their study responded positively to statements like "Studying abroad has made me reconsider my career plans" and "Studying abroad has helped me find professional direction." Others found that pre-service teachers felt better prepared to teach increasingly diverse populations because of international field experiences they had as pre-service teachers (Biraimah and Jotia, 2013; Cross and Dunn, 2016). In an increasingly global and interconnected world, exposure to diversity through travel abroad only better prepares people for the diversity they will encounter in their workplace. One particularly interesting study connecting knowledge of the world to career preparation was Kronholz and Osborn (2016). According to their data, students who studied abroad improved vocational identities. They better understood their interests, values, and skills, especially in relation to making career choices. Their abroad experience helped them think more positively about career opportunities, and they felt more confident telling others about their career choices. Most interestingly, they agreed that because of their abroad experience, they knew more about the career options available to them. Travel, it seemed, benefitted them by opening their eyes to the true plethora of opportunities and choices they have in life.

To summarize, existing literature implied that students who study abroad gain knowledge, do well at school, perform well on standardized tests, are focused on school

and want to be successful, pursue advanced degrees and stay connected to learning, can think critically and have deep conversations, feel prepared for a global and diverse world, and know the opportunities and choices available to them.  That they have these abilities, which involve and/or are adjacent to literacies, the idea of literacies as a direct outcomes is predicted as reasonable.  To reiterate, findings from study abroad predict that adolescents with international experiences may experience academic outcomes intertwined with literacies.

**Literacies as Funds of Knowledge**

Next, prior literature revealed that adolescents who have traveled abroad would likely have a range of experiences and literacies to activate as funds of knowledge (Moll, et al., 1992).  In particular, transnational adolescents' experiences and literacies, especially their practices, were assets.

Some scholars prefer the term "funds of knowledge" rather than assets to describe the "historically accumulated and culturally developed bodies of knowledge and skills essential for household or individual functioning" that adolescents bring with them to school and which are "ample cultural and cognitive resources with great, potential utility for classroom instruction" (Moll, Amanti, Neff, and Gonzalez, 1992, p. 133-134).  Lam and Rosario-Ramos (2009) argue that transnational youth need to be educated in ways that draw from and foster their status as immigrants and points of connection across societies as funds of knowledge.

Transnational youth have the ability to leverage their international experiences as funds of knowledge, and especially their out-of-school literacies, to engage with school-based literacies. An abundance of research belabored this point, refuting deficit perspectives and subtractive schooling experiences (Valenzuela, 1999) along the way. Some scholars (Lagman, 2018) have additionally been quick to remind that not all travel is

positive for transnational youth; loss, including language loss, can also be a major part of transnational adolescents' literacies if not approached correctly.

Moje, Giroux, and Muehling (2017) wrote about the importance of incorporating such funds, available to students in their real everyday lives, into classroom instruction:

In a funds of knowledge framework, the funds themselves are as important as--if not more important than the knowledge itself. People learn new knowledge in social networks, communities, and relationships. Time and time again, youth literacy researchers have documented the power of the network, community, or relationship to engage youth in literacy practices…. An analysis of thousands of youth showed that reading and writing practices played important roles within their social networks and funds of knowledge; their motivation to engage with certain texts stemmed largely from the contexts--or funds--in which the texts were embedded. Thus, becoming aware of and, when appropriate, employing youths' funds can both scaffold their reading and writing. There are many different kinds of funds" (pp. 10-11).

International experiences can be understood as one such fund, within which other transnational, linguistic, and cultural funds exist as well, and therefore can, as Moje, Giroux, and Muehiling (2017) described, impact literacies.

Concluding this section of the literature review are excerpts from works that triumph the assets implicit to transnationalism, transnational youth, and transnational literacies. The excerpts iterate the importance of not only transnational but international experiences as assets, or funds of knowledge, and eschew deficit perspectives. Again, what the findings about transnational funds of knowledge predict is that adolescents with international experiences with have funds of knowledge as well.

Among the earliest to observe and articulate asset-views of transnationalism were Lam and Rosario-Ramos (2009), who provided these remarks: "Literacy practices of a transnational scope provide a basis for re-assessing our understanding of multilingualism...and envisioning societal education that recognises and leverages such transnational resources in the literacy education of our young people" (p. 171). Next were Brochin Ceballos's (2012) word, eschewing "deficit perspectives of literacy practices" among transnational youth" in favor of an asset perspective: "Despite decades of research that illustrates the transformative potential of using sociocultural approaches to affirm the literacies and languages found within diverse students and communities, narrowly defined state and mandated curriculum and subtractive policies continue to guide current literacy teaching methods within official educational settings in the US" (p. 688). Consider next Hornberger and Link (2012): "The welcoming of translanguaging and transnational literacies in classrooms is not only necessary but desirable," they wrote. "Developing awareness of and an orientation to [these] literacies in classrooms with students from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds can provide…a fuller understanding of the resources students bring to school and help us identify ways in which to draw on these resources for successful educational experiences" (pp. 261-262). Stewart (2014) then similarly affirmed: "[Transnational adolescents] thrive in their out-of-school literate lives through social networking, in the workplace, and when engaging with entertainment…. They come into the classroom with a large repertoire of literacies, some refined, capital" (pp. 364, 367). Wang (2017) agreed: "Literacy teachers could do well by recognizing repertories as resources for learning. For one thing, it might be worthwhile for literacy teachers to explore students' digital and literacy tools in and out of school" (p. 694). Hsin (2017) certainly did not disagree when he wrote that "transnational experiences provide immigrant children with

styles, increase their knowledge of different lifestyles, and enhance their cognitive development"

(p. 34).   More recently, Taira (2019) wrote, "Deficit perspectives and subtractive processes

contribute to [transnational students'] underachievement … Schools may even participate in the

invalidation and erasure of [these] students' personal and home literacies… [although] existing

scholarship on multiple literacies presents youth 'as skillful and purposeful users of literacy'

(Skerrett, 2015, p. 366) who employ knowledge of multiple contexts and cultural spaces to form

(2020):   "We are concerned that...intersecting labels...can serve to mask the linguistic and literate

abilities of this student population…[and that] transnational knowledge is often overlooked in

literacy classrooms….  Projects that center students' digital literacy practices can create

opportunities to bring their personal lives into the classroom in meaningful ways" (p. 711-712).

While scholars have reported nuanced findings about the precise interplay between

literacies among transnational youth, what nearly all agreed is that these adolescents'

international experiences were assets to their literacies, not deficits.

**Literacies As Useful**

Prior research suggested that adolescents with international experiences might

recognize all the many uses of being literate although the idea of literacies as utilitarian is not

new nor exclusive to adolescents with international experiences. The nature in which the

adolescents in this study recognized literacies' utilities elicited the work of Halliday (1978) as

well as Freebody and Luke (1990). Halliday's ideas about systemic functional linguistics,

rooted in the idea is that language developed because of the functions that language was

needed to carry out in society, is "deeply concerned with the purposes of language use" (Trask

and Stockwell, 2007, p. 293).  Likewise, Luke and Freebody (1990) conceptualized readers as

having fourfold roles, including "text user," which "entails developing and maintaining

resources for participating in 'what this text is for' …. [and] what to do with text" (pp. 10-12).  Holliday, Freebody, Luke and other NLS scholars would argue that part of why language evolved in the first place was to fulfill social functions.  Therefore, all adolescents--and by extension all people--regardless of what international experiences they have create language for functional and useful reasons.

In short, prior research suggests that adolescents with international experiences would engage in literacies that are useful for social tasks or for being a productive member of society because all adolescents and all people use literacies in these ways.  However, the variable of international experiences may situate and shape participants' awareness of literacies' utilities in unique ways.

**Foreign Language Acquisition and Multilingual Literacies**

Literacies include languages, which make linguistic outcomes of travel important for this study. Within study abroad research, especially, much of the focus is placed on foreign language acquisition outcomes. Indeed, studies on foreign language as an outcome of study abroad constituted a thick body of research (Armstrong, 1982; Di Silvio, Diao, and Donovan, 2016; Hansel and Grove, 1986; Jochum, 2014; Keppie, Lindberg and Thomas, 2016; Marijuan and Sanz, 2017; Pinar, 2016; Savicki, 2011; Serrano, Llanes, and Tragant, 2016).

Evidence that study abroad affects foreign language acquisition is ubiquitous, but two studies follow as an example.  Participants in one study abroad program rated their foreign language abilities higher post-sojourn compared to pre-sojourn. Improvement in foreign language was perceived as greater among travelers than their non-travelling peers, who on average actually reported a decrease over the same period (Hansel and Grove, 1986).  Study abroad participants in another study answered positively in response to

statements like "As a result of my study abroad experience my ability to speak a foreign language has improved" and "Studying abroad has contributed to my desire to being learning a foreign language" (Ingraham and Peterson, 2004).

Participants in study abroad programs showed gains according to more objective measures also. Many studies administered questionnaires and/or assessments to study abroad participants pre- and post-travel and sometimes to non-traveling control groups. Jochum (2014), for instance, gave a computerized version of the ACTFL Oral Proficiency Interview, or OPIc, whereas others used Simulated Oral Proficiency Interviews, or SOPIs (Di Silvio, Diao, and Donovan, 2016; Keppie, Lindberg and Thomas, 2016). Some researchers preferred a battery of instruments to compare pre- and post-sojourn data on foreign language acquisition (Serrano, Llanes, and Tragant, 2016). Each study found that students who studied abroad increased in foreign language abilities during their time abroad while abroad and in comparison to their non-travelling counterparts.

Along similar lines was the work of Dewey, Belnap, and Hillstrom (2013). Rather than examine the gains in foreign language proficiency that participants on study abroad programs achieved in isolation, they instead examined the connections between social networks, language use, and language development in ways that were particularly evocative of NLS. Their study, which examined US and Arab students' language gains while abroad, found that because of the social nature of language and its creation to achieve social function those with larger or stronger social networks became more proficient in the new languages they were trying to learn.

The connection between travel and foreign language acquisition was thus well-established by the study abroad literature. In sooth, one could deduce for oneself that if

immersed in a foreign language via an abroad program and trying to learn the language spoken there a person will more likely improve proficiency in that language because he or she is surrounded by and socializing with people who speak it. The research reviewed here corroborated such a claim with the importance of hearing and speaking with others in a language one is trying to learn is beneficial, and therefore travel has benefits for foreign language acquisition.

In addition to often being bi/multilingual, which the language on study abroad proved was an outcome of international experiences, as a result such adolescents would probably have a variety of other multilingual literacies and practices to go along with their bi- or multilingualism.   Transnational adolescents have been shown, for instance, to participate in many multilingual practices.  These practices have included the complex and disputed practice translanguaging, for one, sometimes equated with codemeshing (Baker, 2011; Canagarajah, 2011, 2013; Daniel and Pacheco, 2016; Duarte, 2016; García, 2009; García and Kleyn, 2016; Hornberger and Link, 2012; Hsin, 2017 Martinez, 2010; Young, 2009). Translanguaging has a few key traits.  It is premised on the concept that linguistic resources are part of a single language system that an individual uses to create meaning (Blommaert, 2010; Canagarajah, 2011, 2013; Daniel and Pacheco, 2016; García, 2009;  Hornberger and Link, 2012).  To translanguage means to flexibly move across languages to develop proficiencies in multiple languages, to deepen metalinguistic awareness or to strengthen skills.  Other translanguaging practices may include codeswitching and translating, language brokering, finding opportunities for language immersion, and/or interpreting between culturally and linguistically diverse individuals. Translanguaging pedagogies are generative and descriptive, building upon the actual

language practices of students. Transnational adolescents do not merely use languages nor literacies in isolation; rather, they utilize their multiple languages, and by extension their literacies, as parts in a larger whole (Blommaert, 2010). Transnational adolescents' multilingual practices result in high-level metacognitive and metalinguistic processes that transfer and trickle into other tasks.

Thus, the research on the outcomes of study abroad and the research on the experiences of transnational youth help predict what the literacies of adolescents with any kind of international experience might be like. Very likely, these adolescents would be able to speak or understand more than one language and engage in multilingual practices such as translanguaging, whether or not the were transnational youth.

**Geographic Literacies**

Prior research, especially in the study abroad field, predicted that adolescents with international experiences might display evidence of geographic literacies. The impact of travel on geography competencies and skills has been highlighted by many (Bein, 1988; Biraimah and Jotia, 2013; Carano and Berson, 2007; Cisneros-Donahue, Krentler, Reinig, and Sabol, 2012; Merrell, 1949; Sutton and Rubin, 2004).

For example, in one study of 3,000 undergraduates, an assessment was administered to measure ability in the areas of map skills, place name location, physical geography, and human geography, and performance was correlated with each respondent's age, sex, ethnicity, past travel experience, and past geographic education; indeed, the findings confirmed that a strong connection existed between the number of places travel beyond one's home state and country and geography skills (Bein, 1988). Respondents performed particularly well at questions involving maps; the

practice with maps well-traveled respondents acquired likely contributed to this fact. The connection between travel and geography literacies is made even stronger by the general population's apparent lack of these literacies (Camera, 2015, October 16). Adolescents with international experiences have an advantage.

The likelihood that travel will impact geographic literacies is increased by the apparent lack of geography knowledge among the general population of adolescents. Participants' connection between language and geography resonated prominently particularly in light of what scholars have reported regarding most adolescents' geographical literacy and lack thereof (Camera, 2015, October 16; Carano and Berson, 2007; Turner and Leydon, 2012). Camera (2015, October 16) cited a report which found that 75% of US 8th graders have subpar proficiencies in geography.

In short, previous research has found that adolescents who study abroad improve in geography knowledge and skills. Therefore, if geographic literacies were one type of literacy a study on the literacies of adolescents with international experiences sought to explore, it would be likely that participants would display such literacies.

**Critical Literacies**

The literature in NLS, study abroad, and transnationalism support the claim that adolescents with international experiences might cultivate critical perspectives and even critical literacies as a function of their travel. Such a statement hearkens back to study abroad research, which found that some adolescents and young adults with abroad experience become more critical of society. Data from Monaghan and Hartmann (2014), for instance, showed that high school students involved in a semester-long study abroad program "openly questioned and compared the merits of different political orders" (p.

90).  Adolescents' international exposure correlated with if not caused them to recognize and question power structures within and between societies.

However, while prior researchers have observed  critical literacies among some adolescents, some even in transnational or international contexts, such studies are not pervasive.  Prior research suggested that some adolescents with international experiences might have critical literacies but overall the vibe was that literacies would be unlikely to observe among all adolescents with international experiences.  Prior work certainly fell short of suggesting that travel alone could be a catalyst for cultivating critical literacies.  If a substantial amount of participants in this study did, however, display critical lenses, leanings, or literacies, these data would be worthy of reporting.  In the off chance that this turns out to be the case, a description of critical literacies follows. The description makes more clear what one would anticipate to see as evidence of critical literacies in adolescents should such data be present.

Critical literacy is the application of critical theory and perspectives to literacies, or one's use of literacies to become and be critical.  Recent scholarship in critical literacy includes Luke (2014, 2018), who defined it as "the assumption that reading and writing are about social power" (2018, p. 450) and which "entails a process of naming and re-naming the world, seeing its patterns, designs and complexities and developing the capacity to redesign and reshape it" (2014, p. 29).  When adolescents question why a text was written and who wrote it, when they use literacies to liberate themselves from systems of power and oppression, when they critique the narratives mainstreams society tells, when they self-assess their privileges, or when they examine theirs and others' literacies with a critical lens, that is critical literacy.

Critical literacy may entail being critical of language itself, specifically the idea of standardization. The purpose of language is to communicate ideas, so many doubt what conforming to spelling, grammar, punctuation matter as long as one's message can be understood. Many wonder do rules matter and who created the rules. Take English, for example. Some have argued that it was standardized by a White, privileged class to make claims about theirs compared to others' intelligence, wealth, and worth. It became a means by which one group asserted its power over another:

> It doesn't take much to see the power imbalance when it comes to grammar snobbery. The people pointing out the mistakes are more likely to be older, wealthier, whiter, or just plain academic than the people they're treating with condescension. All too often, it's a way to silence people, and that's particularly offensive when it's someone who might already be struggling to speak up. (Chalabi, 2016).

To clarify, correcting grammatical errors can be a function of a powerful race's or class's efforts to silence minorities struggling to have their voices heard; outside of race and class, this dynamic happens with academic language as well. Such a view of language repositions prescriptive skills as secondary to the messages and ideas being conveyed which run contrary to the reason language exists in the first place to fulfill the social function of needing to communicate. The socially situated and communicative functions of literacies are what matter.

The novel *1984* further illustrates critical literacy. In a dystopian society called Oceania, a small totalitarian regime attempts to control the masses through censorship, excessive surveillance, and other tactics, including language "to narrow the range of

thought" of citizens (Orwell, 1949, pp. 66-67). The government believes that by taking away words, they take away its citizens' ability to think and become intelligent. Of course, language does not work like this, and humans can think beyond what they have words for. Challenging societies use of language in this novel, or if one were to critique it in real life, reflects a critical literacies perspective. If participants in my study display critical literacies, they may manifest likewise.

Inherent to critical literacies and critical theory more broadly is an understanding of how societies function to maintain power by oppressing others, and that key word, *societies*, harkens back to NLS, and indeed, research in NLS contributed to the suspicion that participants in my study might display critical literacies. Naraian and Surabian (2014) validated critical theory's place in NLS in their article. They argued that critical literacy is in fact "a third strand associated with the field of New Literacy Studies that offers teachers an additional frame" and that both NLS and critical literacy "share a commitment to the use of literacy for the achievement of social justice" (p. 338).

Street (2003) also straightforwardly spoke to the role critical theory plays in NLS in the title to his seminal work on new directions in NLS, identifying the "new" as "critical approaches to literacy in theory and practice" (p. 77). Street (1984, 2003) took issue with the heavy causation ascribed to literacy and to the inference that literate people were intellectually and socially more advanced than nonliterate people. In other words, defining literacy narrowly and then using others' failures to meet that threshold is nothing more than a way for one group who does meet the standard to assert their superior over another.

Biviano (2019), also identifying NLS as "a major emphasis" (p. 31) in a study of Appalachian youth, also took a critical view of language. An "awareness of language

diversity" and moving "past an overemphasis on standardized English [as a teacher]...to prevent the internalization of negative stereotypes" led Biviano (2019) to realize: "As I preached the virtues of learning standard English to my students, I often found they just weren't buyin' it. If I failed to acknowledge the literacy practices of my student's personal lives, then I failed to understand the complex social function language played in their day to day lives" (pp. 29-31). Making judgments about others' intelligence or worth as humans, and even overcorrecting students' so-called bad English, can eclipse what is really more important: literacies as meaningful social practices. Understanding how to be critical of language thus trickles into the NLS framework. Keenness to the socially situatedness of language disrupts one's need for language to conform to standard structures.

Research in transnationalism has suggested that adolescents with international experiences may develop critical literacies. While some studies have explored how globalization may impact adolescents' literacies and how literacies can undermine or reinforce inequalities (Blommaert, 2008; Jiminez, Smith, and Teague, 2009; Taira, 2019), on the whole research on critical literacies specifically in transnational contexts was scant. Findings outside of transnationalism, particularly the research on critical literacies and critical cosmopolitanism (Boughton and Durnan, 2014; Byker, 2013; Byker and Marcquardt, 2016; Djurdjevic and Girona, 2016; Dunkerly-Bean, Bean, and Alnajjar, 2014; Hawkins, 2014; Luke, 2000; Luke, 2018; Oikonomidoy, 2016; Rushek, 2019), do point to the possibility that transnational adolescents, because they have bifocality and cosmopolitanism, would likely also have critical lenses, but this is mostly still theoretical and inferential, not necessarily yet proven or suggested. Within transnational, though, studies that did more directly connect international experiences to critical lenses and

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leanings, if not literacies, were not likely much more than twofold. In one study, transnational participants' recognized differences in structures and freedoms between herself and peers abroad (Lam and Rosario-Ramos, 2009). In another, transnational youths' ability to "critically reflect on their histories" through literacies (Brochin Ceballos, 2012, p. 695) were noted to evoke critical literacies. These two examples attest to how critical literacies might manifest among the youth with international experiences in my study, but a lack of other studies to corroborate such predictions point either to a lack of interest in the field or lack of data found to support the claim that transnational or international experiences shape critical literacies.

Circling back to Freire, critical literacies evokes his notions of generative themes and others' extensions of "generative" (Ashton-Warner, 1968; Freire, 1968/2018; Katz, 2020; Skerrett and Bomer, 2011) wherein meaning and literacies are generated by the adolescents rather than externally prescribed to them. Generative literacies call to mind Freire's (1968/2018) ideas about generative words and generative themes and Ashton-Warner's (1968) ideas about key vocabularies. "I have termed these themes "generative,"" wrote Freire (1968/2018), "because (however they are comprehended and whatever action they may evoke) they contain the possibility of unfolding into again as many themes, which in their turn call for new tasks to be fulfilled" (p. 102). Similar ideas were likewise promoted by Skerrett and Bomer (2011), who encouraged teachers to adopt "strategies...to create generative literacy learning environments" (p. 1276). The idea is that knowledge, themes (i.e., worldviews), literacies, and other learning ought to come from adolescents not be prescribed to them. Regarding key vocabularies, to extrapolate a specific curricular suggestions from Ashton-Warner, she wrote about first words: "First words must mean

something to a child. First words must have intense meaning for a child. They must be part of his being. [...] They must be made out of the stuff of the child itself" (1963, p. 33-34).  Ashton-Warner (1963) condemned "imposed vocabulary" because "if you were a child, which vocabulary would you prefer?" (p. 40). Ashton-Warner taught her students to read by teaching them how to spell words that they wanted to know how to spell. What these research suggest about literacies is that if they are to be liberating they must be generated and desired by the person being liberated.  In short, critical literacies, if observed at all in adolescents with international experiences, may manifest as generative themes or key vocabularies.

Despite much interest in and theoretical research about critical, prior work predicts that adolescents with international experiences may have critical literacies but no where near guarantees this will be the case.  However, given multidisciplinary interest in critical literacies and influenced by the critical perspectives framing this study, critical literacies were pertinent to this study.

**Cosmopolitan Literacies**

The idea of cosmopolitan literacies as a possible outcomes of international experiences first appeared in the study abroad literature with regard to cosmopolitanism. Study abroad research recognized cosmopolitanism as an outcome, transcending knowledge of others to include understanding of oneself as all-in-it-together with others.  Cosmopolitanism translates from the Greek for citizen of the world and preferences one's role as a human on planet earth over one's  allegiance to nations with human-constructed, geo-political borders (Oxford University Press, 2020). Ideally, people do uphold local commitments but while taking into consideration larger arenas of concern. One example of traveling abroad cultivating

cosmopolitanism comes from McCabe (1994), who observed that college students on a semester-at-sea program shed themselves of ethnocentric attitudes and cultivated throughout their voyage a higher degree of globalcentricism. They began to look at issues from the standpoint of a citizen of the world rather than a singular nation or culture. Beyond study abroad research, work abounds in cosmopolitanism, including critical cosmopolitan or cosmopolitan critical literacy, and the cultivation of a cosmopolitan worldview as a benefit of international experiences. The work of McCabe (1994) implied that global experiences can trigger people to reconceptualize society as globally connected.

To reiterate, cosmopolitanism and other global competencies as an outcome of study abroad have been established (Hansel and Grove, 1986; Heinzmann, Kunzle, Schallhart, and Muller, 2015; McCabe, 1994; Schartner, 2016; Tarrant, Rubin, and Stoner, 2014, 2015), but the research in Language and Literacy on transnational adolescents is even more revelatory and reflective of a "cosmopolitan turn" in the field (De Costa, 2014). Hull, Stornaiuolo, and Sahni's (2010) work, considered seminal, found that transnational online social networking, if combined with offline extracurricular programs at the local level, created opportune sites for cosmopolitan practice for adolescents. Online social networking provided a proving ground for understanding and respecting differences and diversity in a global world and for fostering the literacies through which such mindfulness develops.

Others have suggested that cosmopolitanism is itself a form of literacy that transnational youth enact. Choo (2018) defined "cosmopolitan literacy" as any "reading, writing, and other meaning-making practices" grounded in cosmopolitan principles "which facilitate critical ethical engagements with diverse cultures and values in our world" (p. 8).

Cosmopolitan literacy means being literate in cosmopolitanism, which means being knowledgeable of and competent in issues related to cosmopolitanism. Purcell (2020) argued that cosmopolitanism is a literacy, and specifically a "transnational literacy" (p. 71). Transnational adolescents "form a developing cosmopolitan sensibility" through a "slow and uncertain process" of reading the world (Purcell, 2020, p. 71).

Zhang (2019), who examined critical literacies in transnational curricula, explained cosmopolitan literacies as premised on certain conditions or dispositions, of which there are several markers. Adolescents are approaching these preconditions for cosmopolitan literacies if they have skills and capacities of creative meaning reconstruction; multiliteracies and multimodalities; respectful imaginings of foreign others and critical engagement with differences; fluidity, hybridity, and intersectionality in identities; and sense of agency in effecting change.

Other scholars who have examined cosmopolitanism or cosmopolitan literacies in conjunction with transnational youth include Byker (2013), Byker and Marquardt (2016), ompton-Lilly and Hawkins (2020), Djurdjevic and Roca Girona (2016), Harper, Bean, and Dunkerly (2010), Hawkins (2018), Hull and Stornaiuolo (2014), Kerr and Vasudevan (2018), and Wang and Collins (2016). The nuances with which each ties literacies to cosmopolitanism vary.

Bifocality appeared as a possible outcome of international experiences as well and evokes some similarities to cosmopolitanism but is not quite the same. According to research, transnational adolescents' literacies fostered "bifocality," meaning "the inclination to see things from multiple perspectives" (Lam and Rosario-Ramos, 2009, p. 186). According to Lam and Rosario-Ramos's (2009), transnational youth interacted with news about their countries of origin but also news from the places they currently resided.

They learned about major political and cultural events and compared the conditions under which they lived to those in other parts of the world. They articulated the multiple kinds of perspectives that their online news reading afforded them, and they assessed life situations from different points of view through interactions with peers from their home countries. These teens' literacies "situated them in a transnational circuit" that seemed "to foster the cognitive orientation of bifocality" (Lam and Rosario-Ramos, 2009, p. 186).

Prior research in cosmopolitanism suggests that it may be possible for adolescents with international experiences to cultivate cosmopolitan literacies although it is possible. Much like critical literacies, cosmopolitan literacies are not expected to be observed among all participants but would be remarkable if they did.

**Summary**

The literature in NLS, study abroad, and transnationalism proved useful in predicting that the participants in my study, adolescents with international experiences broadly defined, would share certain literacies and literacy practices in common. In addition, enough theoretical breadcrumbs were dropped to find new literacies and new ways that travel impacts literacies. In other words, prior research provided enough theory and evidence to warrant this study by not so much as to prove it redundant. Ultimately, the existing literature, framed by critical perspectives, permitted me to suppose a latent benefit of international experiences, possible but not yet researched: literacies. Moreover, these fields provided insight into the ways these literacies manifest among adolescents with international experiences. Whether the findings match what prior research predicted, extend or transcend prior research, or contradict it is what the forthcoming chapters expound. Taken collectively, NLS, study abroad, and transnationalism research along with

critical theory help explain how international experiences impact the literacies of

adolescents and why this line of inquiry was important.

# CHAPTER 3

# METHODOLOGY

In a seminal textbook on qualitative research, Glesne (2016) defined methodology as "how researchers come to know what they know" (p. 298). Accordingly, what I must explain herein is how I came to know about the literacies of adolescents with international experiences. My way of knowing involved qualitative methods governed by predominately interpretivist ontologies and epistemologies; case study and interview study methods; context, setting, and participants representative of real experiences; data collected via writing samples and one-on-one interviews; explicit protocols for transcription, coding, analysis, and representation of data; and measures to ensure trustworthiness and adherence to ethical standards.

## Qualitative Methods

How we come to know about a topic is governed by "assumptions about what is of importance to study, what constitutes legitimate knowledge, and what counts as evidence for making knowledge claims" (Glesne, 2016, p. 298). For me, these assumptions were accounted for by existentialism, interpretivism, and critical theory, in alignment with this project's critical perspectives theoretical framework, and preface why qualitative methods were best suited for my inquiry. Existentialism meant assuming that existence precedes essence and that everything, including knowledge, is inherently meaningless until an acting agent, driven by aesthetics, ethics, or religion, creates meaning for it (Emery, 1971; Greene, 1977; Gutek, 2004; Kneller, 1958; Morris, 1966; Niblett, 1954; Slattery, 2006). Interpretivism meant assuming that reality is socially constructed, that knowledge is however people interpret

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whatever they perceive, and that what people know can shift, evolve, and contradict such that there is no one idea of truth with a capital T that researchers are striving to ascertain; rather we contribute to an ever-evolving meaning-making process (Glesne, 2016). Being critical meant assuming that knowledge can be controlled or liberated, censored or propagandized, empowering or disempowering. What we know "[is] shaped by social, political, cultural, economic, ethnic, and gender values crystallized over time" (Lincoln and Guba, 2000, p. 168) such that research becomes "a political act" which goes "beyond description" to expose ways in which certain groups are subjugated and raise their awareness about change-making practices (Glesne, 2016, p. 12). To recapitulate: Knowing about the literacies of adolescents with international experiences was important, said existentialism, because I, as the researcher, am an acting agent, motivated by ethics, who decided this research mattered. What I came to know about adolescents' literacies, said interpretivism, was mutable and subjective, meaning this knowledge was filtered through my experiences and sensibilities and a different researcher could interpret the data differently, but my interpretation is still important. Lastly, the knowledge this paper purports, said critical theory, like all knowledge, has the potential to help or harm, and I must consider not only the outcomes of said knowledge but how my privilege and positionality affected its acquisition.

Qualitative methods aligned with these ontological and epistemological stances, specifically interpretivism. Noted qualitative methodologists like Glesne (2016) and Seidman (2006) have espoused the importance of interpretation in qualitative research. Because interpretivists reject the ideas of essential truths and laws and view knowledge as open to interpretation, it thus makes sense for us to choose methods designed around collecting data and interpreting findings. The role of interpretivist researchers

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entails "interpretations of some social phenomenon and of interpreting, themselves, other's actions and intentions" (Glesne, 2016, p. 9).  Glesne's explicit recognition of qualitative methods as popular among interpretivists for its affirmation of researcher subjectivity validated my decision to use qualitative methods.

In short, qualitative research was exceptionally well-suited for this study because it focuses on qualities, such as words or behaviors, that are difficult to quantify and thus lend themselves to interpretation (Glesne, 2016).  What concerned me were not numbers and statistics about adolescents' literacies but a "thick description" (Geertz, 1973; Glense, 2016) of literacies, including the "intentions, motives, meanings, contexts, situations and circumstances" (Denzin, 1989, p. 39) for these literacies.  I wanted to know the qualities of adolescents' literacies and international experiences, not their ages or the number of times they have traveled or what their standardized test scores report.  I sought not to quantify adolescents' literacies but to qualify them.

Having now made clear why qualitative research behooves my leanings as a researcher, the remainder of the chapter outlines the attempted case study and interview study designs, the context, setting, and participants in this study, methods for data collection, coding, analysis, and representation, and my efforts to establish trustworthiness and uphold ethics.  School closures due to the COVID-19 pandemic necessitated some minor methodological modifications but thankfully did not compromise the integrity of the study; these changes, namely with regard to data collection, are addressed as needed.

## Study Design

Initially, I had planned for this study to be a descriptive case study with a single-case, holistic design.  Glesne (2016) has remarked that the term "case study" is interpreted

differently in different disciplines, but in qualitative inquiry it regards any intensive study of a case. A case can be anything--a person, place, event, idea, or phenomenon--within boundaries set by the researcher.  The distinction between the conditions that fall within as opposed to outside of the case is what bounds the case.  In this dissertation, I attempted to study the case of adolescents' literacies, bounded by an NLS view of literacies and bounded by participants having had international experiences.

However, with the onslaught of the COVID-19 pandemic, data collection got cut short and not enough data were collected to truly consider this study a case study, which really ought to be more saturated with data (Glesne, 2016). I was fortunately able to acquire one interview with each participant, though, and although miscellaneous writing samples were also collected and from which some data were parsed, the bulk of data derived from participants' interviews.  In this way, the study could be considered more of an interview study (Seidman, 2006). In his handbook on interviewing as a qualitative method, Seidman (2006) said of interviewing:

> It is a powerful way to gain insight into…issues through understanding the experience of the individuals whose lives reflect those issues. As a method of inquiry, interviewing is most consistent with people's ability to make meaning through language. It affirms the importance of the individual without denigrating the possibility of community and collaboration. Finally, it is deeply satisfying to researchers who are interested in others' stories. (p. 14)

In the discussion of methods which follows, elements are borrowed from case study and other qualitative methods per Glesne (2016) along with elements borrowed from interview study methods per Seidman (2006).  In combination, they informed the

methods I used to collect data about the impact of international experiences on adolescents.

## Context, Setting, and Participants

### Context

The phenomenon studied in this research was the impact of international experiences on adolescents' literacies. These literacies existed in the context of adolescents real, everyday lives, in-school and out-of-school. Thus, in this study, the literacies of adolescents were examined in these contexts of their everyday lives. In-depth interviewing made an especially apt method because it encourages participants to reconstruct their experience actively within the context of their lives (Seidman, 2006).

### Setting

Even though much of adolescents' literacies live beyond the school building, one cannot deny that much of their actual lives is spent at school. Assuming a seven hour school day, 180 school days, and eight hours for sleep, adolescents spend an estimated 20% of their waking life at school. For this reason, because the school is a site of literacies in adolescents' real lives, a school was selected as the setting for this study, where participants were recruited and interviewed.

I selected Westdale High School (WHS), a midsize public high school in the Southeast region of the US. The school is located in a district which serves the neighborhoods across a river and about a ten minute drive west from the state's capitol. The district extends southwestward into sometimes swampy, sometimes sandy farmland, surprisingly rural and undeveloped in parts given its proximity to a city. The district houses a regional airport, major hospital, large pharmaceuticals manufacturer, zoo

and botanical gardens, state farmers' market, several flea markets, massive Amazon and UPS facilities, and a recently revitalized river-adjacent district. In addition to some newer apartment complexes geared towards young adults and college students, most residential areas feature modest, single story brick homes, with the exception of a few upmarket subdivisions near the hospital and zoo. There is a sprinkling of mobile home communities and also a large retirement community nearby.

According to data made available on this state's Department of Education website (not sited in References to maintain confidentiality), the district serves approximately 9,000 students, of which 39% are White, 32% are Black, 22% are Hispanic or Latinx, and 6% multi-racial.  The remaining 150 or so are Asian, Pacific Islanders, or Native American.  16% are designated ELLs.  No data were found about the percent of students born outside of the United States or who have had international travel experience.  75% of students in this district live in poverty. The district, using a gender binary based on biological sex, serves slightly more males than females.

On the most recently available annual school report card (not sited in References to maintain confidentiality), WHS earned an "Average" rating based on a variety of academic and school environment factors.  Although the theoretical framework for my study problematized measuring literacies with standardized tests, test score data aids some in understanding the setting of this study.  At WHS, 70% of students enrolled in English I passed the statewide EOC exam. ACT scores at WHS, reported as scaled scores out of 36, were marginally lower than state and district averages, with an 18.3 average score in Reading and 16.2 in English.  WHS has low numbers of students who enrolled in AP courses and passed AP tests (7%), but the district has very high enrollment in CATE

courses (>50%) and a popular dual enrollment program (>10%) where students can earn college credits while still in high school, including college-level English courses.

According to data from the state's election commission and the Pew Research Center (not sited in References to maintain confidentiality), the county in which WHS is located is somewhat conservative, with 55% of voters choosing President Trump in the 2016 election. 78% identify as Christian, the majority evangelical or mainline protestant.

The environment at WHS was perceived by the community as conducive to learning, with over 75% of parents and students reporting satisfaction with the learning environment, over 70% satisfied with the social and physical environment, and a majority satisfied with school-home relations. 85% of teachers return to WHS each year, signaling a strong sense of spirit and community surrounding the school. The school's website boasted an array of athletics, including Bowling and Fishing teams, as well as award-winning Student Government and JROTC programs.

WHS was selected for being representative of statewide demographics and relatively reflective of a typical public high school in the US. Though slightly more diverse and lower income than many schools, yet the opposite when compared to some, the WHS student data roughly reflected overall demographics for the state. Additionally, this researcher had worked at WHS for several years and knew the school and district were supportive of teacher-researchers. An extensive perusal of faculty handbooks and board policies determined that neither WHS nor the district which housed it had adopted any policies explicitly prohibiting academic research in its facilities, and the principal gladly granted permission to conduct the study at WHS. A copy of this permission can be found in the Appendices.

**Participants**

The decision for seven participants came from Seidman (2006). He advised about length and amount of interviews and number of participants was as follows, "The method of in-depth, phenomenological interviewing applied to a sample of participants who all experience similar structural and social conditions gives enormous power to the stories of a relatively few participants" (p. 54). Seven participants seemed appropriate.

Participants were selected through maximum variation sampling to "cut across some range of variation such as students of different ethnic backgrounds" in order to "search for patterns across variation" (Glesne, 2016, p. 51). I wanted participants of varying races, genders, grade levels, academic levels, socioeconomic statuses, family dynamics, and so forth, and I wanted the nature of their international experiences to vary as well. My goal was to build a case about the literacies of adolescents with abroad experiences, which required finding similarities and themes across participants about their literacies. If participants had other underlying similarities, one could argue that their literacies were not, in fact, a function of their travels but skewed by other variables lurking among participants. Maximum variation sampling isolated the common variable of each having traveled abroad.

Participants were recruited based on my prior awareness of their having had international experiences because I was currently teaching or had previously taught or encountered them at school. As a teacher of world literature and wanderluster myself, the topic of travel invariable arose in the classes I taught. I made a mental list of students I remembered had lived or traveled abroad and narrowed this list, per maximum variation sampling, so that I did not end up with participants who were all high-achieving students in gifted classes, for example, or entirely Latinx students in ESOL classes. This resulted in a list of nine students, including one student who had

graduated but had participated in a pilot study to this project and whose data I wanted to include in this dissertation, but she did not respond to emailed requests to participate.

The remaining recruits ran a gamut. They included a foreign exchange student from Germany, an American student who had lived with her missionary parents in South Africa, a Nigerian immigrant on a student visa who came to the US to finish high school, a Chinese-born student who moved to the US for her mother to complete a doctoral program in Public Health, an African American female who recently visited relatives in Jamaica, a transnational female who visited family in Mexico twice per year, an American national whose family went on a religious pilgrimage to Spain when she was in fifth grade, and an ESOL student from Puerto Rico. A more detailed description of each participant can be found in the next chapter. Although I previously knew these students, only data about them collected in this study are reported; personal information added from my prior knowledge of participants is largely excluded.

To recruit participants, I called each one to my room individually during my planning period, lunch, or after school, or I talked with him or her privately in a different location. I relayed the gist of my study, asked the student to participate, and if he or she expressed interest, I distributed a packet containing a letter of intent for them and their guardians to sign along with an initial questionnaire. I anticipated that five of the eight recruited would participate, but all returned their packets except one, whose mother did not feel comfortable with her daughter participating.

## Data Collection, Coding, Analysis, and Representation

### What Data Were Collected

Originally, I had planned to collect data from multiple sources via questionnaires, two interviews with each participant, a group interview with all participants, writing

samples, and samples of social media posts so that the data would be saturated enough to warrant this study a case study. However, the COVID-19 pandemic, along with participants' apparent discomfort with sharing social media screenshots with a teacher, affected data collection. I modified and adjusted data collected to include writing samples and an interview.  Table 3.1 briefly summarizes the data collection sources.

**Table 3.1.**  *Summary of Data Collected*

|  | Greta | Emma | **Kwento** | Jayda | Lali | **Virginia** | Yarelis |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Writing Samples**[1] | | | | | | | |
| Initial questionnaire | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Student-submitted writing sample | 1 | | 2 | 5 | 2 | 5 | 1 |
| Follow-up questionnaire | | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | |
| **Interview**[2] | | | | | | | |
| Length of individual interview | 25:12 | 13:26 | 29:19 | 30:52 | 26:09 | 32:40 | 21:12 |
| **Total Data Sources per Participant** | **3** | **3** | **5** | **8** | **5** | **8** | **3** |

[1]Number corresponds to sources of data collected.
[2]Number corresponds to length (in minutes) of interview.

*Writing Samples*

Writing samples were collected in three ways.  First, from the initial survey that was given to participants upon their agreeing to participate in the study.  The second was any piece(s) of writing written in the last few months they wished to provide.  The third was a follow-up questionnaire given to participants once schools shut down due to the pandemic.  Each is described in a bit more detail below.

Samples of writing were first collected through the initial questionnaire.  An open-ended questionnaire was distributed to each participant for him or her to complete individually once they agreed to participate in the study.  The questionnaire collected

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demographic information, contact information, and participant and guardian signatures. Other questionnaire items were informed by my research question and the literature reviewed.  The questionnaire provided students an opportunity to respond to items without the pressure of answering immediately, and some participants may also have been more comfortable responding to items by writing rather than speaking publicly to an adult.  Because this was a qualitative study, questionnaire items were open-ended and required a user-generated response.  Tips for writing open-ended survey items were aligned with advice from Johnson and Morgan (2016), who identified multiple advantages of open-response survey items such as the gaining of unanticipated answers and findings worded in the language of participants. The questionnaire was paper-and-pencil based, with ample room for participants to respond. The questionnaire also included instructions for the submission of writing samples and screenshots of social media posts, with the latter eventually disregarded.

At the end of the initial questionnaire, instructions were given for participants to submit a writing sample along with screenshots of social media posts.  However, after not receiving any samples or screenshots, I began to suspect that the nature of my requests was problematic. For one, some participants wanted to submit handwritten writing samples, and some wanted to submit more than one sample.  For another, whenever I asked participants about the social media screenshots, they became squirmy, seemed uncomfortable, were confused by what I wanted, acted unsure about how to submit them, or claimed they did not really have anything they thought was beneficial; in other words, they hinting they did want to give their teacher access to their social media.  Consequently, I modified and adjusted this aspect of data collection.  Participants could submit as many writing samples as they desired, typed or handwritten, including screenshots of social media posts if they

wanted although this was no longer a requirement. Though needing some reminding and prompting, all participants with the exception of one were able to submit writing samples prior to the closure of schools due to COVID-19.  The writing samples collected were highly varied in type, length, and content.

The third writing sample came from participants' responses to a follow-up questionnaire.  Insofar as the pandemic, which resulted in severe reduction to domestic and international travel, complicated a research study whose findings supported that abroad experiences have benefits, I wanted to see whether adolescents' perceptions of travel had shifted any in light of these and other travel-related issues.  The consequences of globetrotting, besides the damage it causes to the environment, is the increased speed with which disease can spread. Many have speculated how the pandemic may affect future travel (Sampson and Compton, 2020, June 15).  To recalibrate adolescents' perspectives, I emailed a follow-up questionnaire. The questionnaire was created via Google Forms and asked participants to reflect on the COVID-19 pandemic, their current attitudes towards travel, their literacies since they have been home, and anything else they thought was important for the researcher to know.  Five the seven participants responded to the survey.  The remaining two were sent email reminders, but one of these emailed bounced back along with an error message claiming that the email was no longer on file, which typically implies that a student has withdrawn from WHS.  I do not know why the other non-respondent failed to complete the follow-up questionnaire.

*Interviews*

As this research project became more an interview study than a case study, the interviews were of utmost importance.  An interview protocol was created, overlapping some

with questionnaire items. The interviews were geared towards phenomenological understanding (Seidman, 2006) of participants' literacies and how international experiences impacted them. Interviews were recorded per Seidman (2006), who urged, "In-depth interviews should be tape-recorded" to provide a record of the original words of the participants (p. 114). With participants' permission, I used the Voice Memo app on my personal, password-protected iPhone. I emailed the audio files to a password-protected Google account created specifically for this research study and downloaded to my personal computer to which only I have access. Field notes were taken as I listened closely to participants' responses.

Interviews with participants were scheduled during the school day but with minimal loss of instructional time for participants. One participant, who attended classes off-campus during my planning period, completed her interview after school. The interviews ranged in length, limited partly by participants' need to return to class, with each around 30 minutes. What the interviews lacked in length was compensated for by participants' compelling responses.

Interviews were transcribed within 30 days of recording although for most participants the time between recording and transcription was much less. I transcribed the interviews myself, agreeing with Ives (1995) that "like it or not, the ideal person to transcribe an interview is you" (p. 75). The researcher finds herself "immersed in the interview, provided with the opportunity to listen again to what was said, and to reflect not only on [her] topic, but also on the interview process itself" (Glesne, 2016, p. 119).

To assist with transcription, I uploaded the audio recordings to a site called oTranscribe.com, which provided a more manageable interface to start/stop recording, speed up or slow down recording, and type without having to switch applications or

purchase a foot pedal. The site guaranteed privacy and was designed in such a way that one's data (both the audio file and the written transcript) never left one's local computer.

During and immediately after the transcription process, I penned analytic memos in the style of a bullet journal "not to summarize the data but to reflect and expound upon…future directions, unanswered questions, frustrations with the analysis, insightful connections, and anything about the researched and the researcher are acceptable content for memos" (Saldaña, 2016, p. 45). Emerging codes and themes were also jotted down, as well as notes for what I wanted to ask participants in the follow-up interviews and group interviews I had planned to conduct before the COVID-19 pandemic canceled these plans.

**How Data Were Coded**

As defined by Saldaña (2016), "In qualitative data analysis, a code is a researcher-generated construct that symbolizes or 'translates' data...and thus attributes interpreted meaning to each individual datum for later purposes of pattern detection, categorization, assertion or proposition development, theory building, or other analytic processes" (p. 4). Coding is the process of attaching codes to data and then sorting the codes according to patterns observed.

Coding is neither prescriptive nor ubiquitously lauded: "No one, including myself, can claim the final authority on the 'best' way to code qualitative data…. Coding is a heuristic--an exploratory problem-solving technique without specific formulas or algorithms" (Saldaña, 2016, pp. 9, 69). Some qualitative researchers eschew coding altogether, perceiving coding as "an abhorrent act incompatible with newer interpretivist qualitative research methodologies" or "altogether mechanistic, futile, [and] purposeless…a simplistic closed-system and a 'failure' in post structural research

approaches" (Saldaña, 2016, p. 70). I agree with Saldaña's (2016) rejection of these claims and "believe in the necessity and payoff of coding" (p. 70). My coding process, was heavily influenced by Saldaña (2016) and others (Glesne, 2016; Seidman, 2006).

The data were coded in a series of cycles, or rounds. "Some methodologists label the progressive refinement of codes in a study as 'stages,' 'levels,' or 'feedback loops,'" wrote Saldaña (2016), "but…the reverberative nature of coding--comparing data to data, data to code, code to code, code to category, category to category, category back to data, etc.--suggest that the qualitative analytical process is cyclical rather than linear" (p. 68). Accordingly, my coding process is best summarized as a series of rounds, four to be exact.

Each "round" refers to a time I perused, highlighted, annotated, and/or attached codes to the data. Codes reflected critical perspectives, NLS, study abroad research, and transnationalism. In the first round, I used in vivo coding, highlighting by hand any "words or short phrases from the participants' own language" (Saldaña, 2016, p. 294) that struck me as potentially significant. In the second round, I reread and re-highlighted but this time also annotated, again by hand, attaching descriptive, process, emotion, values, and versus codes, as defined by Saldaña (2016). Descriptive codes summarized the basic topic of a passage in the data such as "reason for travel" or "screen time"; process codes described actions and included gerunds and gerund phrases such as "reading," "writing," "speaking," "listening," "viewing," "creating," or "taking action"; emotion codes labeled the feelings experienced by or inferred about participants, such as "too busy to read" or "disappointed"; values codes such as "likes to read," "environmentalist," or "anti-LGBTQ+" represented participants' perspectives and worldviews; and versus codes like "American schools vs.

foreign schools" identified in dichotomous or binary terms the dualities which manifested in participants' data. In the third round of coding, I created a chart to compare and contrast and visualize better how codes manifested within and across participants. The chart had eight columns. In the first column were listed the codes, with the remaining columns containing the data from each participant with those codes. The final round of coding was to ascertain whether anything important had been overlooked; if so, I added it to the chart.

I adhered to Saldaña's (2016) "streamlined codes-to-theory model" (p. 14) to sort and organize codes into categories, subcategories and emerging themes. As I coded and recoded, I grouped together codes that were similar; for example, "goal-oriented," "planning for the future," and "wants to succeed" were combined and considered one category, and codes like "literacies to remember what one did," "literacies to empower oneself," and "literacies for entertainment" were categorized as "purposes/utilities for literacies." This process involved more coding, recoding, and better sorting codes on the aforementioned matrix. Some codes determined not relevant to my research question were disregarded at this time.

**How Data Were Analyzed**

Following the "codifying" and "categorizing" processes (Saldaña, 2016, p. 9) were data analyses, one etic and one emic in approach. First, reflecting an etic approach, I looked for evidence of what prior research predicted I would find in data from adolescents with international experiences. Having data which confirm what prior research has reported about adolescent literacies gave credence to my new claims observed among the same set of data. Second, reflecting an emic approach, were thematic analysis and grounded theory. Thematic analysis meant "searching for themes and patterns…to arrive at a more nuanced

understanding of some social phenomenon" (Glesne, 2016, p. 184). A grounded theory

approach embracing a process where one "collects data on a topic through interviews and

observations, analyzes those data for conceptual categories, links the categories into a

tentative theory, and then collects more data to see how the theory fits…[in a] process

[that] repeats and continues" (Glesne, 2016, p. 288). These approaches to data analyses

were emic because they were "grounded in a phenomenological view of the universe in

comparison with an a priori set of assumptions about [literacies]" (Given, 2008, p. 249).

An etic approach to analysis grounded my new findings in prior research, but an emic

approach revealed the new findings.

**How Data Were Represented**

After transcribing, coding, and analyzing the data using the above-mentioned

strategies, I found myself with a "thick description" (Denzin, 1989 p. 39; Glesne, 2016, p.

301) of the literacies of adolescents with international experiences and travel's impact. This

description then furnished several insights "grounded" (Glesne, 2016, p. 288; Saldaña,

2016, p. 55) in the original data. The next thing to consider was how to represent these

findings. As Goodall (2008) noted: "We [qualitative researchers] construct *a* truth, but not

the only truth. We *represent* reality; we don't reproduce it" (p. 23). This so-called "crisis

of representation" (Glesne, 2016, p. 219) speaks to the complexities one faces in conveying

findings to various audiences, telling other people's stories, and using language that may

reveal biases and values.

While some qualitative researchers have become increasingly creative in how they

represent their findings--some writing poetry, structuring their narrative as dialogue or

conversation, or experimenting other artistic representations; some creating composite

characters or amalgamations of participants; some creating ethnodrama or autoethnography (Glesne, 2016)--I represented my data more traditionally.  I represent my findings in two parts, first describing each participant and then describing their literacies using a thematic organizational structure, "probably the most frequently used technique… [wherein] the research generates a typology of inquiry-based concepts, gives them names, and then discusses them one by one, illustrating with descriptive detail" (Glesnes, 2016, p. 233

Finally, I chose to compose this dissertation in first-person rather than third-person to emphasize that they are a single person's version of data, not an impossibly objective version:

> Writing in the first-person singular is generally accepted and fits the nature of
> qualitative inquiry. The presence of "I" in your text reflects your presence in your
> research setting.  Your "I" says that yours is not a disembodied account that
> presumes to be objective by virtue of mitting clear reference to the being who
> lived through a particular research experience. (Glesne, 2016, p. 238)

Per Glesne (2016), I cannot, nor should I attempt to, detach myself as the researcher from what I researched.  Acknowledging the subjective pen with which one writes is a necessary step with regard to representation.

## Trustworthiness and Ethical Considerations

Trustworthiness, a term preferred by qualitative researchers, was coined by Lincoln and Guba (1985) and refers to a set of criteria by which the caliber of a study is assessed. "Trustworthiness is about alertness to the quality and rigor of a study," wrote Glesne (2016), "about what sorts of criteria can be used to asses how well the research was carried out" (p. 53).  Many strategies existed to increase trustworthiness: e.g., prolonged engagement, triangulation, thick description, validity and reliability, generalizability,

negative case analysis, member checking, clarification of researcher bias and subjectivity, acknowledgement of limitations, peer review and debriefing, audit trail, analytic memos, and more (Glesne, 2016).  I focus herein on the strategies utilized in this study.

**Triangulation**

Although triangulation was said by Glesne (2016) to be yet "another contested term" in qualitative research (p. 44), a primary way I pursued trustworthiness in this study was data triangulation. Triangulation can refer to using multiple data-collection methods or to the incorporation of multiple kinds of data sources, multiple investigators, and even multiple theoretical perspectives, wrote Glesne (2016).  "Using more than one method for data collection and more than one type of respondent," wrote Glesne (2016), can contribute to eliciting more complex perspectives on an issue and to noticing more" (p. 153).  In my study, I gathered data from several sources--questionnaires, interviews, and writing samples--and I gathered them from several participants.  I also gathered data in prior research from multiple theoretical perspectives, including critical theory, NLS, study abroad research, and transnationalism.  My data is triangulated because each of my findings are grounded in multiple data, multiple participants, and/or multiple perspectives.

**Reliability**

Further increasing trustworthiness was this study's reliability, which meant taking measures so that the steps of this study--such as its data collection procedures--could be repeated, with the same results. In other words, reliability means the study could be reproduced.  The general way of approaching the reliability is to make as many procedures as explicit as possible.  Although opportunities for repeating a case study rarely occur, one should still position one's work to reflect a concern over reliability.  The inclusion of

questionnaires, interview protocols, and instructions for writing sample submissions included in the Appendices along with the level of detail and specificity with which this methodology chapter has been written make easy work should any future researcher wish to replicate the study.

**Delimitations and Limitations**

"Part of addressing the trustworthiness of data," wrote Glesne (2016), is to realize both the delimitations and limitations of your study" (p. 213). Delimitations refer to what the researcher did not do but could have, and limitations include anything that limited the research in some way but were beyond her control (Glesne, 2016). Regarding delimitations, in this study I could not possibly address everything associated with adolescent literacies. I did not, for example, focus on how variables such as race, gender, or socioeconomic status interact with literacies, nor did I address how my positionality as the current or former teacher of participants may have distorted results. I also did not address literacies as measured by standardized assessments; rather, I bounded my definition of literacies with NLS theory. I also did not fully register that six of the seven participants were female until very far into the data collection process. Aspects about gender may have impacted results, but I do not address this variable in my findings. Regarding limitations, the interference of the COVID-19 pandemic affected the amount of data I could collect unless I majorly extended the data collection timeline. The length of interviews was, furthermore, shorter than I desired. Students needed to return to class more quickly than I anticipated; it was a difficult, and possibly selfish, to hold them away from an activity they needed to or wanted to be at. However, consistencies among the data I was able to collect, though the amount of data was smaller than expected

and interview lengths were shorter, suggested that additional data would have merely served to corroborate what I already had found.

**Positionality**

Glesne (2016) argued that "clarification of researcher bias and subjectivity," which means "reflecting upon your subjectivities and upon how they are both used and monitored" (p. 53), is crucial for trustworthiness. Qualitative researchers call this positionality—that is, "a researcher's social, locational, and ideological placement relative to the research project or to other participants in it" (Hay, 2005, p. 290). Often influenced by embodied factors such as race, gender, class, and formative experiences, a researcher's positionality explains who she in relation to her study, which helps the audience better understand the research and any biases which may be latent (Glesne, 2006). Interpretivists doubt whether once can ever be completely unbiased because everything we perceive is filtered through our own subjective experience. Therefore, being transparent about biases--i.e. reflecting on one's positionality--is important. My researcher positionality is multifaceted. I am not only a researcher. I am not only an interpretivist researcher. I am a teacher, wanderluster, humanitarian, cosmopolite, White female researcher. As a full-time high school ELA teacher, my position on literacies as a social practice affected the research I searched for and found for the literature review, why I researched literacies among adolescents, and what I was drawn to in participants' data. As a wanderluster, I came to this study positioned with beliefs about the benefits of travel. As a humanitarian, I have a strong passion for social justice, a positionality which affected why I conducted this research with "practical goals," to "help to change or accomplish something," to have "potential significance," or "to raise awareness, foster self-understanding and self-

determination, and create opportunities to engage in social action and seek social justice"
(Glesne, 2016, p. 39; Schram, 2010, p. 32).  As a cosmopolite, I believe that global
problems require humans around the world to work together across arbitrary, human-
constructed, geopolitical nation states, and I fully acknowledge this is a subjective
position.  As a White, female researcher, furthermore young, English-only speaking, from
an upper-middle class family, my positions of privilege may have affected the research:

> In terms of White researchers researching across differences, letting go of prior
> notions of who and what defines research; questioning choices that are made
> regarding research design and analysis; and interrogating White privilege, biases,
> and assumptions we bring to the processes are all critical to transformational
> research that seeks to improve human conditions. (Petersen, 2008, p. 50)

Milner (2007), Thompson (2003), and Tillman (2002), also proffered helpful advice for
White researchers.  Especially in the racial justice renaissance, or what some are calling a
new civil rights movement (Strauss, 2020, June 6), I cannot no longer be complicit in
ignoring the effects of my  race, gender, and class, even how they affect my work as a
researcher.  Additionally, avoiding stereotype threat or a white savior complex or othering
while also recognizing my own privilege and positionality are key when working with
historically marginalized groups, from which some in my study were.

**CITI and IRB Processes**

Shifting now from trustworthiness to ethical considerations, first and foremost, was
fulfillment of CITI Program coursework in research ethics and compliance along with
proper Internal Review Board (IRB) protocol dictated by the university attended by this
researcher assured ethical standards were met. The proposal for this study was reviewed by

the Office of Research Compliance, the administrative division which supports the University of South Carolina IRB, and a major professor serving as advisor. The Office of Research Compliance, on behalf of the IRB, determined that the research study, in in accordance with the Code of Federal Regulations 45 CFR 46 et. seq., was not subject to the Protection of Human Subject Regulations and therefore no further oversight by the IRB was required. A copy of the exemption letter can be found in the Appendices.

**Permissions**

Permission from the WHS principal, participants, and parents was sought. As stated earlier, an extensive perusal of faculty handbooks and board policies determined that neither WHS nor the district which housed it had adopted any policies explicitly prohibiting academic research in its facilities at the time of my study. The principal gladly gave me permission to conduct the study at WHS. A copy of this letter, with identifying information redacted, is located in the Appendices. No letter of consent or assent was required given IRB exemption; however, an invitation letter was provided to participants and their guardians. This letter, which can also be found in the Appendices and also with identifying information redacted, included my research purposes, brief positionality statement, assurances of confidentiality, transparency about risks, precautions to minimize harm, and intentions for data. Participants' and guardians' signatures were a prerequisite for this study.

**Confidentiality**

Confidentiality was protected through the use of pseudonyms for participants and site of research and by keeping data with identifying information locked or password-protected. Additionally, identifying information contained herein has been redacted as needed. Efforts were made to avoid mention of participants' names during the interview

process and neither their names, nor the names of other teachers or students at WHS that participants may have mentioned, were ever typed or printed unless written by the participant himself or herself; initials, pseudonyms, or redaction were always used.  The data collected were not anonymous, but they were definitely confidential.

**Security**

Any paper copies of data collected--initial questionnaires returned by participants,  printed copies of interview transcripts along with handwritten field notes, copies of participants' writing samples, and printouts of the follow-up questionnaire--were organized by participant and placed in a binder kept in a locked desk at WHS or in my personal home office also under lock and key.  Data collected digitally included audio recordings of interviews, typed transcripts of interviews, and responses to the follow-up questionnaire distributed as a Google Form.  Audio recordings were stored on my personal, password-protected iPhone and then emailed to a Google account created solely for the purpose of storing data for this study; they were also downloaded to my personal computer, also password-protected.  The Google account also housed participants' interview transcripts and responses collected via the aforementioned Google Form.  "Saving and organizing all documents related to your research...as a record of your research," wrote Glesne (2016), not only data collected but also any field notes, research journal, coding schemes, analytic memos, etc. composed during the process, form an audit trait that also  increases the overall trustworthiness of one's study.

**Remaining Risks & Conflicts of Interest**

At the time I typed this dissertation, no risks or conflicts of interest nor ethical dilemmas had occurred.  Mention of specific programs and products is illustrative not due

to affiliation. Neither participants' names being leaked, hacking incidents, nor mislocation of data had occurred to my knowledge. The only real risk to participants that remains is confidentiality, but I cannot control if participants, their guardians, or colleagues with knowledge of this study reveal their identities. Participants and their guardians were notified of all risks.

# CHAPTER 4

## FINDINGS: PARTICIPANTS

This dissertation was governed by one research question: How do international experiences impact adolescents' literacies?  Bound by a definition of literacies as skills, modes, languages, domains, and practices and buttressed by others' prior research in NLS, study abroad, and transnationalism, my findings answered this question.  However, insofar as these findings were grounded in the unique experiences of seven participants, a description of these participant is first provided; all names and identifiers are pseudonyms. The traits which make each participant unique, including the nature of his or international experiences, are emphasized.  Table 4.1 provides a summary of participants.

**Table 4.1.** *Summary of Participants*

|  | **Age** | **Gender** | **Race**[1] | **Nature of International Experiences** | **Languages**[2] |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Greta | 16 | F | W | German exchange student; living with host family in US; has also traveled to France. | German, English, French |
| Emma | 16 | F | W | US adolescent who lived with her family as missionaries in South Africa when she was in kindergarten and first grade; has also traveled to Spain and Morocco. | English, German |
| Kwento | 15 | M | B | Nigerian adolescent who immigrated to the US last year; has also traveled to Dubai and Washington, DC. | Igbo, Nigerian English, American English |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Jayda | 16 | F | B | US adolescent with family in Jamaica; has traveled there twice on short trips. | AAVE, English, Jamaican patois |
| Lali | 18 | F | L | US student whose extended family lives in Mexico; travels twice a year for extended periods to Mexico. | Spanish, English, Spanglish |
| Virginia | 16 | F | W | US student who spent a week in Spain on a religious pilgrimage with her family. | English, French |
| Yarelis | 17 | F | L | US student from Puerto Rico who moved to the continental US as a freshman in high school but has not been back since. | Spanish, English, Spanglish |

[1]W=White, B=Black, L=Latinx
[2]Listed in order of most to least proficient

**Greta**

Greta was 16 years old at the time of the study and had been in the US around seven months. From the Black Forest region of Germany, she came to the US for a year of study and to have an abroad experience, to improve her English as her first language was German, and to increase her chances of getting into a university back in Germany. At the time of my study, she was taking Engineering, Student Leadership, English II Honors, and Geometry Honors courses. Greta had much to say about education. She was a good student who did the work when she needed but preferred to learn alone. She did not like when teachers abused their power or when men promoted misogynous views. Greta compared US and German schools and identified German teachers as more open with students about political views and US schools as more inundated with testing and oversight.

Greta said she has two "blood" siblings and two "host" siblings, and she cared about her family and friends, talking often with them and citing memories, Christmas being among the fondest. She compared Christmas traditions in the US to Germany, where Christmas Eve is the more important time and nobody celebrates in their pajamas. She cannot wait to return home to have her grandmother's schnitzel.

Greta's interests were sports, music, and nature. She loved to do sports in her free time, namely soccer and "being in nature," and she had planned to tryout for the school's soccer and track teams. She aspired to become a physical therapist or have a job involving sports. Greta also read about sports or people from sports. Regarding music, she played the flute, listened to all types of music, and said music made her happy. She cared very strongly about the environment, especially animals, and participated in Germany in "Fridays for Future," a weekly climate strike where students skipped school to advocate for policies that lessen humans' negative impact on the world.

Greta seemed confident in herself in the interview and appeared sophisticated. She articulated her ideas assertively despite speaking in her non-native language. Throughout her interview she was cheerful and smiled politely but always while sustaining a stern, sincere countenance and eager to answer questions as honestly as she could.

Greta's abroad experiences, outside of her current US stay, had included her life in native Germany, of course, but also a school trip to France and some family holidays to Corsica and Italy. She defined foreign places as where "other languages" were spoken. Remembrances of people's kindness and their willingness to share their culture with visitors stood out about her travels, as did the ease with which her family could travel between countries by car in Europe compared to traveling to other countries from the

US.  She also remembered the food.  She missed the food in Germany.  Sometimes, Greta talked about her international experiences with her friends.

Greta defined literacies as the ability "to write correct words, sentences" and "to understand what other people mean."  Her native language was German, but she spoke English quite fluently, and she took four years of French in school.  She said she normally read a lot but had struggled to the find time while in the US.  She has been too busy with other activities.  The last book she read was on the trans-Atlantic flight here, and she chose this book because there was a movie for it.  Even though she chose this book because it was adapted into a movie, she did not watch that many movies or television shows because they were "too long" or had too many episodes and she would get impatient for the end or would rather be doing something outside.  Greta said books were good to read to feel what other people feel.  Besides writing for school, Greta wrote to remember people, places, and events, including retrospective text messages to her friends, especially on their birthdays.  For her writing sample, Greta submitted a paper on tetanus written for an Anatomy and Physiology class.

**Emma**

Emma, US-born but German on "her dad's side," was a junior, aged 16, at the time of this study.  She was enrolled in Art, History, English, and German courses.  She preferred fact-based classes like math and science because "once you figure it out, you know it's always going to be the same thing."  She identified as "very hardworking" and "a fast learner."  Emma wanted to study abroad in Germany when in college and then pursue a career that involved travel. She had looked into Foreign Language and International Trade programs at a large state university.

Emma's interests were typical for a Southern girl. She liked country music. She rooted for university football and talked about the team frequently with her friends. She played on her high school's tennis team. She cared about her friends and family, her Christian faith, and improving the lives of people in poverty. She did not like when people were mean to others because of what they looked like, where they came from, or how poor they were. "I try to be nice to people as much as I can," Emma said. She had a quiet and soft-spoken demeanor but was articulate.

Emma's travel experiences outside the US included two years in South Africa during her early elementary school years, because her parents were missionaries, as well as more recent vacations to the Bahamas, England, and Spain, which included stops in Morocco and some islands. Emma said her travel experiences were "always very fun" and "really cool" and that she liked "exploring new places and learning about different cultures." Travel had shown her "that there's just so many different cultures and, like, some people don't have as much." Memories of the impoverished living conditions she saw, especially in the SOWETO in South Africa, have lingered with her. She also said her travels caused her to read about things she encountered abroad which piqued her curiosity, including others' religions.

Emma wrote that literacies meant "that everyone can educate themselves by reading and writing" and are "important because it is a part of everyday life." She liked science fiction movies, shows, and books, and stories with "action" or in the dystopian genre, including *The Hunger Games*, *The Maze Runner*, *The Red Queen*, and *1984*. She enjoyed the text she was currently reading in English class too, *Gilgamesh*, as evidenced by a vivid plot summary and thematic analysis provided in her interview. Although Emma

wished she had more time to read, she hated to write, however, and struggled with writing in large quantities.  She wrote mostly essays when necessary for school. Unlike the stereotypical teen, she claimed to text infrequently.  Regarding foreign language, Emma wanted "to be fluent" in German because "it's a cool language," she had been taking it here at school "for, like, a long time," and she was considering minoring in German in college.  Emma did not submit a writing sample.

### Kwento

Kwento was born in Nigeria and had affiliations to the Igbo and Iklah tribes. He had been living in the US for almost a year at the time of the study. He was 15 years old. He had come here to attend school and was staying with an aunt and uncle in a house, which he juxtaposed to his "compound" apartment in Nigeria. His current schedule included PE, Algebra, Biology, and English II courses, with math and science at the Honors level. Kwento described himself as "looking forward to correction" and "always learning."  He often compared Nigeria and the US, especially the school system, saying the schools in Nigeria were very stressful because of the amount of classes taken at one time and because teachers could "cane" students.

Kwento loved, played, watched, and talked with his friends about *futbol*.  He listened to Afropop and hip-hop.  He liked "Nollywood" movies, which tended to be religious, and American movies in the science fiction, drama, action, and comedy genres.  Despite liking comedies, goofing off, and making people laugh, Kwento admitted to shyness. "I need you to make me interact with others more," he wrote to his teacher.  Religion seemed to play a big role in Kwento's life as well.  He watched religious movies, attended church, and had a conservative view towards homosexuality.

He cited differences among the churches he attended in each country and said people here "fake being in the spirit."  Yet he was also knowledgeable of an indigenous pantheist religion and aware of the large Islamic population in Nigeria. He feared the spread of Boko Haram, a jihadist group camapaigning for a fundamentalist Muslim theocracy to be established in Nigeria.  However, he hated when people asked him about negative stereotypes about Nigerians, such as their alleged perpetration of romance and advance-fee scams.

Besides his native Nigeria and current stay in the US, Kwento had traveled to Ghana, Togo, Côte d'Ivoire, Dubai, and London. He had also traveled previously to the US on a school trip to Washington, D.C., which was when he decided he wanted to pursue a student visa and finish high school in the US.  He said his travel experiences were "all amazing" and "showed me how other people live, other cultures."  Travel was beneficial for Kwento because it allowed him to experience people, places, and things "in their own way" without relying on others' interpretations.  He noted that "stereotypes and racism," which some US students harbor towards him, are paradoxically consequences of his international experience and immigrant status.

Kwento defined literacies as the "ability to read and write" and "important to aid communication."  He read about topics which interested him, including science and NASA.  He read articles, for example, about "like how Mars has plants, how we can survive there" and "science fiction, something about robots and stuff."  He had also been reading articles about COVID-19 since the pandemic began.  He said reading helped with his vocabulary. Kwento indicated that the US and Nigeria have different attitudes towards reading, that American parents "want their kids to always read, not be on their phone, always be

on books, noses in their books," but in Nigeria, reading for pleasure is less a part of the culture. Yet, Kwento is multilingual, with proficiency in his tribal language Igbo, Nigerian pidgin English, and American English. He did not take or need ESOL class. For his writing sample, Kwento submitted a letter introducing himself to his English teacher and a short reflection, also for an English class, on whether grammar is or is not important in today's world.

**Jayda**

Jayda, a Black female, was born and has lived all of her life in the US, mostly in the state where this study was conducted, although she did maintain some connections to New York City on her father's side and Mississippi on her mother's side. At the time of my interview, Jayda was a sophomore in high school looking forward to her sixteenth birthday. Her schedule included a computer class, a GradPoint block (an online learning platform to recover credits for previously failed classes), an English II class, and Academic Studies (a block provided to students with IEPs to strengthen skills in core subjects and get extra help on assignments for other classes). She said of her grades, "They're bad." Yet, Jayda remained focused on the future and wanted to be a nurse.

Jayda found joy in music, cosmetology, her boyfriend, friends and family, and overcoming loss and trauma. Her interests were RandB, hip-hop, and sometimes Jamaican music, watching beauty vlogs and manicure tutorials on YouTube, and taking cute photos with her baby relatives. She seemed very smitten by a boy on the football team whom she had been "talking to" since the homecoming dance when they exchanged social media account information and "then we started communicating." She mentioned "best friends" and "cousins" but said she really does not like people or have that many friends. With the few friends Jayda does have, she loves to talk about food. "That's really all we talk about,"

Jayda said. Jayda had "lost a lot of people" in her life, including some male relatives to gun violence and has a relative with special needs that requires full-time care. Jayda cared about people's feelings, did not judge other people, and liked to give advice. She also liked helping people and was currently helping a friend practice a praise-dancing routine for an upcoming Black History Month assembly at school.

Jayda's international experiences have come in the form of two trips to Jamaica, each a long weekend or so in length and both within the last year. She dreaded the flight both times. "I hate airplanes," she said. "That's my fear." Jayda went to Jamaica because a few years ago she reconnected with her father, who has family there and wanted to take Jayda to see her grandmother for her birthday. Jayda remembers how beautiful the beaches were. In addition, "It helped me understand more of their culture than what is down here," Jayda said. Jayda also realized that some of her household's practices, such as listening to reggae music and burning sage, came from Jamaica and were more prevalent there. Jayda described a memory of Jamaica that involved going to a family cookout but not having fun.

Jayda was very loquacious and gregarious in her interview, talking excitedly and sharing willingly, which controverted the statements she made about misanthropy, shyness, and phobias as her character traits. "I'm antisocial around all of my family," she claimed. "I'm just so quiet they really think something wrong with me, but it's not." I think she aw the irony because she joked "I don't like humans but I date one" in one of her writing samples.

Jayda's life centered around literacies. She liked to read, and one of her grandmothers called her a bookworm. She eloquently recalled several books she had read in the past. Jayda read out loud to herself and out loud to her little cousins "but I just can't read in front of everybody." She liked when characters had similar experiences as her,

such as losing a loved one, which helped her cope.  Jayda chose a book about a transgender teen and watched a reality on this tipic also because she wanted to understand the experiences of a friend "that are, like, the same gender as they are."  Jayda frequently read and comprehended nonfiction texts about rappers she liked, including YNW Melly, who was in jail.  When she "looked up his name," she found "some of his docket stuff comes up, and I just read it."

Jayda also read and wrote via social media and liked to repost inspirational quotes she found on social media.  When she was not busy SnapChatting or Facetiming with her boyfriend, they wrote "paragraphs" of text to keep each other focused on their goals.  Jayda wrote prolifically, including rap lyrics, letters to herself, and doodles of people's names, and she submitted several writing samples for my study, some torn from what appeared to be a journal.  Jayda used to write more when she was in middle school, inspired by an aunty who said, "If you write how you feel you can get all your pain away. So that's what I be doing."  "And sometimes," Jayda added, "I be forgetting stuff, so I just write it down."

Though not officially recognized as bilingual, Jayda spoke in African-American Vernacular English (AAVE), as some of her quotes have indicated, and her dad had taught her some Jamaican patois, with evidence of his New York accent having influenced her dialect as well. She said that sounded like him when she got mad and that "people don't understand me when I talk."

Jayda's was highly literate and, more importantly, understood the importance of being literate. She provided as an example a male relative who lost custody of a child because he did not understand some paperwork he was signing.  What was remarkable about Jayda was that, despite her literacies, she has been told she belongs in Special

Education. "I don't know how to comprehend stuff," Jayda claimed. "That's what my mama said."

**Lali**

Lali, which she went by "because a lot of people mispronounce my real name," was short for Quetzalli, a name in her ancestors' native Náhuatl, an Aztec dialect indigenous to central Mexico. Lali was a senior in high school at the time of my study. Her current coursework included Environmental Science, AP Government and Economics, and a Student Leadership course. She had no fourth block and got to leave campus early. After graduation, Lali planned to attend a two-year college in pursuit of a business or paralegal career, partly because she wanted to stay close to home for college in respect for her culture's expectation that children live at home until married. She hoped to migrate to Atlanta in the future.

Sometimes, Lali admitted, she procrastinated "because I have a lot to do outside of school," but "I care a lot about my education." Lali animatedly recounted her prior English courses, having taken AP Language and Advanced Writing with a notoriously rigorous teacher and saying the latter was "the hardest class I've ever had my whole life" but seeming to have enjoyed it nonetheless. She was most confident in her writing and said she was "very good at writing essays" and particularly proud of a descriptive piece she wrote about her grandfather in Mexico: "We had to describe and narrate, like, about someone or something that you really like, and it was only about them, like, every single little detail about them, and I wrote about my granddad. Yeah, it's a lot of description so I had fun." Alas, Lali was one of only two participants who enjoyed in-school literacies while also having a highly literate extracurricular life. She joked that her attraction to ELA classes was by process of elimination: "Well, I don't like math or science or social studies, and

English class is just, like, a concept where it's like you never end the learning. It just keeps going and going, and you, like, learn new things."

Outside of school, Lali's life revolved around church, and like most teens she listened to music in her spare time, and she had initiated a cooking hobby since the pandemic began. Regarding her Catholic faith, Lali summarized some recent Easter celebrations: "I am Catholic and so this past week...we call Holy Week. Thursday is the day in which we acknowledge the last supper of Jesus, which is also a painting you can find in almost all Hispanics homes…. I spend some time writing and reading in Spanish as well because I contribute to my church from my home…. I've watched all my church's ceremonies through TV." Regarding music, interestingly, Lali preferred to listen to songs with lyrics in Spanish even though she read books written in English. Regarding her new cooking hobby, for one thing Lali's favorite memories of Mexico involved the markets, which she said were like WalMarts "but for every single section there's, like, a store…and in every single corner…a man with a little cart" who sells some food such as *esquites*, fruit cups, slushies, tacos, or hamburgers, "anything basically like that." She told me the best places in our area to get treats like that. Lately, Lali had been "watching a lot of cooking videos" and made "pretty good" churros "from time to time now."

Lali was born in the US, but her parents and older sister were not although all are legal residents. Twice a year for as long as she can remember, Lali has visited the town in central Mexico where many of her paternal and maternal relatives still live. "We go all summer and we go for a week and half in winter break," Lali said. "I can tell you exactly where." Quite quickly and competently using Google Maps on my computer, she zoomed out of our state and onto the town, finding the "bridge" where her family's properties are

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located. "My house is, like, right here," she pointed to in seconds. Differences between the US and Mexico were immediately apparent when crossing the border, Lali said, giving examples of lodging, infrastructure, police presence, income level, and education disparities, brought to life with her personal anecdotes and stories of an uncle's plight. Lali recognized that people in Mexico lived in poverty and had a harder life than her. She perceived her ability to travel there as a privilege. "It's a really nice opportunity for me which, like, a lot of people don't have, and I just take it as something good in my life." Lali said she always felt guilty when she got back to the US because her cousins cannot come with her. She perceived their life in Mexico as less privileged. She felt especially bad for her uncle, but she tried to remain practical, justifying his circumstances by prior choices he made which precluded him from immigrating legally. She said about her uncle, "I think it's very sad because...he has eight kids, and they live in a three-room house, and our house is right next to theirs, and my dad, since he's able to come back and everything, our house is like four times as big as theirs, and I just feel bad."

In her interview, Lali appeared knowledgeable, inquisitive, good natured, and good tempered. She could talk for long periods without prompting or follow-up questions. "I have worn glasses my whole life," was the first things she said when asked to tell about herself.

Lali defined literacies as "the ability to read and write enough to be understood in a given language" and "where you say the words the way they're supposed to." For Lali, literacies were "useful to express your needs and wants" and "important because it is what allows us to communicate." "Being able to communicate is one of the best concepts there is," she wrote. Not surprisingly, Lali enjoyed reading. She liked fantasy, action, romance, and mystery books, citing the novel *Gracelings* as an example. "I am a very quick reader," she said. "I can

read a 400 page book in two weeks." She reads about topics that make her curious, too. Lali was self-conscious about her vocabulary acquisition, however. "Despite having taken AP Lang and Advanced Writing, I still don't know a lot of unique words," she said.

Lali was terrifically multilingual, fluent in both English and Spanish, but she emphasized that she spoke "Spanglish," which she identified as its own blended language different than English and Spanish. She watched most shows on Netflix in English but one in Spanish, she read books in English, but she listened to music in Spanish. Lali also had at least an awareness of her ancestors' Náhuatl dialect. She had a foreign exchange student live with her family a few years ago and previously took German courses for her foreign language credits.

Lali also wrote social media posts updating her Latinx community about local events, and she learned "by writing things down." The writing sample she submitted was an analytical essay on portrayals of a Disney villainess; she had wanted to submit the narrative essay about her grandfather but could not find a copy.

**Virginia**

Virginia--so named by her mother, who loved this state and "missed it immensely" at the time of her birth--described herself as "a social justice warrior" with "long brown hair, not cut for years" and "a backpack full of good books."

A high school junior at the time of my study, Virginia took classes through a technical college in the morning and regular high school classes in the afternoon. Her schedule included two so-called "Early College" classes, French, and AP Chemistry. "There's, like, a pretty high rate of being gifted amongst members of my families," she said, "and I've been tested and found gifted…. Education is really important in my house." She

had a "relatively high reading comprehension level." Evidence of higher level, critical thinking occurred when she astutely questioned my study's methodology and how I might "skew the results." As a student, Virginia was "accomplished but suffers from bad habits" such as procrastinating, cramming or binge-reading, failing to study, and getting distracted easily. She had two younger brothers and lives in a subdivision near school.

Regarding hobbies and interests, Virginia rarely listened to music but was willing to try anything new "except rap." She watched older TV shows, classic movies, foreign films with her family, cat videos, or informative videos on YouTube such as CrashCourse and other science-related channels. She talked often with her friends about current events and controversial issues, going to church functions, and standing firm in her values. She cared about academic achievement, future success, family and friends, and her faith. Unlike other participants, who made no political statements about President Trump, Virginia felt comfortable sharing openly that she supported him, specifically his economic, school choice, and medical cost transparency policies; her openness bespoke a confidence and firmness in her viewpoints characteristic throughout her interview.

Virginia had traveled to Spain, and "the reason was initially religion," she wrote. "It was a year of faith, so my Catholic grandmother wanted to walk a historic pilgrim's trail know as the Camino de Santiago." Virginia spent a week there in the summer before 5th grade. It is the only time she has traveled abroad. "Overall, the experience was very pleasant," said Virginia. She fondly recalled friendly locals, delicious food, the hot but nice weather, and the church that was the pilgrim's final destination, where the stone architecture and large incense swinger were highlights. She had a funny story about eating canned and pre-packaged cheese in a hot, fast-moving taxi. Overall, her

abroad experience benefitted her.  She got to see how others' lifestyles were different, she increased appreciation for family togetherness, and she learned real-world lessons about preparedness and planning ahead.  Virginia hypothesized that literacies and travel were interconnected for two reasons, both centered around family. First, a family that values one is likely to value the other; and second, families with better circumstances are able to travel and they're able to emphasize literacies.

Virginia wrote in her questionnaire, "The word 'literacy' is more than an ability to read words. Literacy is as much about reading comprehension and critical thinking as it is about understanding what word or words a combination of letters represents."  She added in her interview, "Really it means the ability to analyze information that you read. It's more than just knowing what specific letters mean as a word."  Literacies were "important because it empowers people" and "allows [people] to make informed choices and take control of their own lives."  She emphasized, "You have to be able to think about what you read."  Viriginia also recognized multimodalities and multiliteracies, as evidenced when she said, "There's a lot of different ways that people interact with the environment, and print text is just one of them. So, if I'm not so good at reading print text, but I'm really good when it comes to environmental literacy and I can tell what's going on, then I've sort of got balanced strengths. I'm saying 'I' generically here."

Virginia read voraciously, sometimes binging.  She had recently read lots of young adult novels, but her favorite genre was dystopian.  Books that came to mind when asked her favorites were *Lord of the Rings*, "but it was also hard...because all the characters' names were really similar"; *Carry On* "because it's a fan fiction…and you get to see her writing progress"; *Flowers for Algernon,* one of the "classics"; *Brave New World*

"because...we are living in a society in which people choose to give up their control for pleasure"; and *Bridge to Terabithia* "because it can grow with you." She and her friends talked about books and recommended books to each other. Aside from fiction, when issues were important to her, she would read statistics "to bring me a sense of comfort" about her stance. Sometimes her dad read aloud political articles at the dinner table.

Virginia took French and was an emerging bilingual. "My mother," she said, who was a French teacher, "loves movies in which French is the most commonly spoken language, and movies that relate to Francophone history in general." A knowledge of linguistics supplemented her grasp of foreign and native languages, as her dad had taught her about prescriptive versus descriptive language.

About writing, Virginia said she "struggles with procrastination," had "a bad tendency to start and abandon projects," and quipped that "a lack of consistency is the only constant trait of my writing," yet she was actually quite prolific. She mentioned writing and rewriting an entire rough draft and having a lot of fun doing so even though it was not required. She submitted a small portfolio for my study, including a rumination on love, an essay on women's role in a Malawian boys' success story, and several poems. Virginia preferred typing to handwriting and reading printed books over e-books.

In her interview, among other topics that arose, Virginia asked mature and interesting questions about my study's methodology and even recognized possible variables that could affect the study: "Well, I guess that something that could affect this study is that there's, like, a pretty high rate of being gifted amongst members of my families, and I've been tested and found gifted, so that might skew the results. Like, I'm

really not trying to brag but it would probably skew the results. I also have, like, better pre-elementary education, like pre-school, so that's a variable."

## Yarelis

Yarelis was a high school senior at the time of my study, aged 17, with a birthday that made her very young for her grade level. She was enrolled in English IV, Marine Science, Academic Studies, and Study Hall. She had a difficult time at school with discipline violations. "I don't like to follow rules," she wrote in her initial questionnaire, "[and] I argue and complain about everything with the teachers." She reiterated this trait in her interview: "I don't like to follow rules. I've been speaking back to the teachers. I don't like them to tell me [what to do]. I just hate that, when people tell me stuff to do. The only person who tell me to do something is my mom, 'cuz she did like the head of the house. The other people they just piss me off." However, Yarelis wrote, "I am a fast learner. I [just] get bored at school." She disliked how many rules US schools have and how impersonal they seemed compared to Puerto Rico.

Yarelis described herself as "funny," "loyal to people I care about," and "put together with outfit." She admitted to having many strong opinions. She seemed sensitive and extremely empathetic and was incensed when a movie character was mistreated by her peers for something she could not control. Yarelis, always on her phone and usually wearing earbuds, listened to music much of the day, including RandB, hip-hop, and rap genres, but not Spanish music. She watched "comedy, horror, dramatic, bloody" movies and television shows about fixing and remodeling houses or cartoons like *Tom and Jerry*, *The Flintstones*, and *Pheneas and Ferb*.

Yarelis moved from Puerto Rico in 2016, when she was a freshman in high school and spoke very little English at that time. She confessed, "It was hard for me to, like, adapt

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to the new school. It was hard because I was new, and I didn't know nobody in this school." When I asked her, "Do you consider Puerto Rico a foreign country even though it's, of course, part of the US, and you're a US citizen?" she replied, "Yeah, it's a foreign country because it's a different language." She was glad she came to the US because she has learned English since moving here, and she recognizes that being bilingual is a marketable skill. The second factor that made a country "foreign" was serving food different than one's home country, and such is the case between the US and Puerto Rico: "Over there … we make food different than when they make it over here. We don't use spicy over there, and here they eat spicy. No, like, most people put spicy stuff when they eat but we don't do that over there. Like, Puerto Rico, it's like surrounded by water. Over here we eat not like surrounded by all water."

Yarelis was very open with me in the interview, but she admitted to being shy around most people. "I am shy when I talk," she said, and even though she had very "strong opinions," she hesitated sharing them in public because "I figure people are gonna make fun of me and stuff. I just don't express it." She would rather do worksheets or independent projects in class because "when we have to do it in front of people, I don't handle that. I, like, panic talking in front of people." Again, despite such comments, Yarelis had no problem opening up in her interview.

Although Yarelis would also say things like "I don't like reading too much" or "I don't like writing," she did plenty of each in her spare time. She especially enjoyed reading comics. "I like to read comics. Only comics. Yeah, comic book with pictures. I like to read those," she said. She wrote letters to people in whom she had romantic interest, and "I write songs, like in Spanish and English, when I feel like I have inspiration for it."

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The writing sample she submitted was an assignment for her English class as part of their unit on the epic poem *Beowulf*. After learning about the traits of an epic hero, students had to create their own heroes and origin stories. Yarelis created Amir Johnson, from the Bronx, who got electrocuted when his kite became tangled in a lamppost and zapped his hands while holding the kite's string. He realized he had a superpower one day when some older kids at school were picking on him. The injury had empowered Amir to shoot light from the scars on his palms. He used his power to fight bullies, save lies, and help his community. Everyone called him Blue Lightning.

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CHAPTER 5

FINDINGS: TRAVEL'S IMPACT ON LITERACIES

In this chapter are highlighted the most salient findings about how international experiences may shaped literacies. While some findings confirmed what the data predicted would be true about participants' literacies—e.g., multimodal literacies, literacies as social practices, positive attitudes towards literacies, engagement with extracurricular literacies, fluid navigation of hybrid identities through literacies—these traits have already been observed among transnational adolescents or adolescents in general and are only worth mentioning briefly as confirmed by the data in this paper.

Five new traits among participants were observed and found very worthy of extrapolating. These findings built upon prior scholarship but suggested new ways international experiences of various kinds may impact literacies. According to the data, international experiences may result in the following: the recognition of literacies' utilities, multiple oral language practices, geographic and geolinguistic literacies, critical lenses and literacies, and emerging cosmopolitan literacies. To reiterate, international experiences appeared to impact these literacies. Table 5.1 contains a gloss of these findings.

**(1) Recognition of Literacies' Utilities**

Emma was the first interviewee to articulate the uses of literacies when she emphasized how people need literacies for "just basic activities, like going to the store, you need to read, like, what it is, and, like, if you-- If you're driving you need to read the signs

**Table 5.1.** *Summary of Travel's Impact on Adolescents' Literacies*

| Literacies | Indicators | Travel's Impact |
|---|---|---|
| (1) Recognition of Literacies' Utilities | Participants used literacies for or recognized the utilitarian purposes of literacies. Participants viewed literacies as useful for communication, memory, entertainment, wellness, coping, empowerment, giving advice, and employment. | International experiences broaden adolescents' worldviews, including their views of literacies. |
| (2) Multiplicitous and Multilingual Oral Language Practices | Participants provided rich data in their oral interviews, talked at length without prompting, talked about talking, talked about a variety of topics. Participants referred to texting and emotional connections as forms of "talk." Participants articulated direct statements about the benefits of travel and speaking that evinced the merits of exposure to diversity, academic gains, personal development, and literacies as benefits of travel. Participants had globally situated linguistic repertoires that included multiple languages, translanguaging, codeswitching, language brokering, and/or immersion practices, etc., especially with regard to oral language. | International experiences provide opportunities for aural immersion that promote language acquisition and/or maintenance and that appeal to adolescents' talking-centric sensibilities. International experiences provide a global setting to situate and foster a linguistic repertoire also highly enhanced by oral language practices. International experiences provide fodder for speaking. |
| (3) Geographic and Geolinguistic Literacies | Participants were literate in geography and maps, knew about many places around the world, connected language with place, and understood the flow of languages across the globe. | International experiences reveal new places and a relationship between language and place. |
| (4) Critical Lenses and Literacies | Participants were literate of critical, socioeconomic, or social justice issues, or participants enacted literacy practices in learning about or solving the problems innate to or tangential to those issues. | International experiences expose students to issues of inequity. |

| (5) Emerging Cosmopolitan Stances and Literacies | Participants displayed emerging markers of cosmopolitan stances and literacies, including respectful but critical encounters with difference, fluid and hybrid identities, and sense of agency that one's actions have local and global consequences. Participants displayed other markers emblematic of emerging cosmopolitan literacies were environmentalism, music literacies, attraction to fantasy and speculative fiction genres, and use of other globalizing connects. | International experiences reveal not only the differences between people and places but also the deeper similarities which unite more than divide us. |

and stuff." Going even further than "needing" literacies, however, two participants explicitly emphasized the utilities of literacies. Simply put by Kwento: "I use them." Lali wielded similar phrasing: "I think it's useful" to be literate, she said.

I adopt these terms "use" and "useful," as did participants, as well these words' derivatives--e.g., utility, usefulness, utilitarian. If a person cannot use literacies for any real reason, there is little point in being literate. Awareness of literacies' utilities demonstrates higher order thinking as well. Understanding the *whys* of literacies is deeper than knowing the *whats*. The age old question students ask their teachers, "Why do I have to know this?" is something adolescents with international experiences can answer about literacies. Literacies are a means to an end not the end, and the participants in my study grasped this gravity.

Adolescents in this study had deep understandings about why people needed to be literate. In truth, while some participants did define literacies conventionally, more so they recognized that literacies go beyond skill. This finding is significant not because it proves what others have already suggested about the fundamental nature of literacies developing to serve functions in society (Gee, 2012; Vygotsky, 1962, 1978), but because it is also indicative of the broader contexts adolescents acquire as a result of travel. Travel expands

the size of a person's world because it reflects having experienced more places on the globe, which literally expands their awareness of the world.  This awareness provides a broader context to situate meaning and purpose, including the purposes of literacies. Travel allows adolescents to acquire holistic, utilitarian-minded conception of literacies because they have an expanded view of the world in general. Literacies for participants in this study were not about acquiring skills here and now but about using skills and practices to communicate, to remember, to entertain and be entertained, to maintain health and wellness, to cope with difficult situations have empathy for others, and to empower oneself and others, the last of which speaks directly to the critical theoretical framework adopted in this study.  Each of these utilities is discussed in greater detail below.

**Communication Utility**

Most frequently, participants cited "communication" as a primary utility.  "I use them to communicate," said Kwento. "They are important to aid in communication," he reiterated.  "If there is no communication...then there is no point" to much of anything. He elaborated, "I mean if you're not literate, you're not going to know how to talk to people, make conversation with people…. Just communication, that's all. That is the most important thing: communication. If you can't communicate, really you can't do anything. Like this.  This is communication. If you go for an interview for a job, it's communication. That's literacy." Lali also emphasized communication as well.  She wrote in her questionnaire, "Literacy is important because it is what allows us to communicate in a way more than just speaking. Being able to communicate is one of the most important concepts there is."  She confirmed in her interview, "With communication, with language and writing, it's one solid meaning to where…two or more people can both communicate fully."  To summarize,

literacies are viewed as useful because they allow people to communicate and understand each other.  Kwento and Lali's data provided two noteworthy examples.

**Memory Utility**

Another use for literacies identified by participants centered around memory. Participants used literacies to share memories, to remember information, and to keep important records, or they understood literacies' potential for this utility.  Greta, for one, texted with her friends about "what we did in the past together."  She described one particularly long text to her best friend: "When she had her sixteenth birthday, I [had] known her since the fifth grade, so six years now, there was just, like, the review from the six years. So that's pretty long text…. It was really long. It was just, like, the crap we did in those years, all the experiences we had and all that and so. That's the only thing I write when I am writing for myself."   She also said, "I sometimes write something down what I saw or what I did in my holidays or when we went to a new place for vacation," presumably to remember what she did.   Jayda also wrote things down so she did not forget them: "When I'm working on it a rap, and I don't want to lose my thing, I write it down" and "sometimes I be forgetting stuff, so I just write it down." Jayda also said she read books about "traditions," wanting to remember the past, and that making "new memories as we grow" in the future is important in her relationship with her boyfriend. Lali too wrote to remember.  She conveyed that she actually learns "by writing things down" and will often "write down a lot of notes to help me study and not go brain dead."  For her, writing as a literacy mode and practice helped her learn.  Yarelis, when asked about the importance of literacies, gave a story about her mother, a housekeeper. Her mother records what she cleans in each house in order to get accurately paid at the end of the week--that is, keeping

a written record was useful for her compensation. Yarelis later identified memories as a main topic of conversation among her friends, too: "We even talk about our past, like, childhood and stuff." In short, literacies were used by participants for sharing memories with friends via text, journaling daily in a travelogue to keep track of new experiences, writing down rap lyrics to be able to recite them later, reading about the past, scripting new memories, taking notes to learn and remember knowledge, or keeping a running tab. People need to be literate to remember the past, to make, keep, and recall memories in the present, and to pass information to future generations, and the adolescents with international experiences in this study did or valued doing so and thus suggested some connection between the variables of travel and literacies via literacies' memory utility.

**Entertainment Utility**

Participants also used and recognized the usefulness of literacies for fun, for entertainment, and to make people laugh. Being literate provides people with a means to entertain themselves. Statements like "I read for fun," describing English classes and teachers as "fun" and "funny," identifying comedy and cartoons as among one's favorite genres, listening to music "because it makes me happy," and laughing "a lot," "joking around," making "people laugh," and "making fun of people" when talking with friends exemplified how that adolescents connected literacies with entertainment. Virginia, Kwento, and Jayda's data contained the strongest examples of participants recognizing the entertainment utility of literacies. Virginia dwelled most explicitly on this topic. She had a lot of "fun" rewriting an entire rough draft for English class even though she did not have to, she said she wrote for "fun" more often now than she did when younger, she was "having a lot of fun" with the book she was currently reading because she got to follow the

protagonist's development as a writer of fanfiction, and she said "it's fun to see" what her friends' opinions are about books, politics, and other topics when she speaks with them. Kwento also identified the entertainment utility, responding "to make people laugh," "to play," and "to exercise," when asked, "What are the purposes that you use literacies for?" Even Jayda, tickled while penning in a diary entry--"I'm writing to myself like I'm talking to someone. Haha. That's a laugh"--connected literacies, journaling in this case, to fun.

**Wellness Utility**

Participants attested that literacies can be used in some sense to stay healthy and well, too. Kwento implied this when he said he used literacies "to exercise." His and other participants' affinities for sports, which involve doing athletic activities but also reading about sports and learning to be healthy, also connected literacies to health. Greta said, "I like to read about sport or about the people from the sport," and later,

> I want to study sport…. You can learn…about all of the muscles and all of
>
> that. And then I want to know, like, to be a physical trainer, so that I know when
>
> you...injure, like, I don't know, what you need, or you have to do or something like
>
> that, 'cuz that's a thing. I do a lot of sports, so I would just like a job connecting
>
> with sports.

Greta's literacies were directly connected to sports, which involves exercise and can help people become healthy. Learning about sports, muscles, and physical training requires reading, writing, and the rest. While both Greta and Kwento emphasized exercise, Virginia pointed out how literacies connected to the nutritional side of health as well. In both her questionnaire and interview, Virginia provided food labels as an example of how people can use literacies to stay healthy:

Take, for example, a food label. It represents the contents of the food. Further

research shows the health benefits and risk of consuming the food. An informed

reader will see that the label is high in both sodium and iron, research these

substances' effects upon the body, determine that iron is essential to the health but

that sodium is harmful in excess, and decide to eat this food in moderation, as

opposed to in large quantities or not at all.

She later added, "If you can look at a nutrition label and figure out how to research it and

how it impacts your health when you eat that food that's literacy. But if you just go, 'Yep.

1,000 milligrams sodium. Done, done!' then that's not really literacy." Insofar as Greta,

Kwento, Virginia, and the other participants connected literacies with exercise, sports, and

nutrition they used literacies for health reasons. Literacy practices included recognition of

literacies' uses for health and wellness.

**Coping Utility**

Adolescents with international experiences used literacies to share their feelings and

cope with their emotions. Yarelis left no room for doubt when she listed "expressing my

feelings" and "for make express anything you feeling" as reasons she wrote. Jayda

explained in greater detail, "My middle school teacher said that if you write how you feel

you can get all your pain away." She raps "to spill the pain that I'm feeling." She

submitted a rap as a writing sample, which references her "feeling pain on the inside," "all

this pain that I'm feeling," and how "the words that are spoken" in her rap help her

explain. She wrote in another writing sample about being "hurt so so much I don't know

how it feels when I'm healed." Clearly, Jayda used literacies, namely writing, to

emote. As well did Virginia, though not by rapping. She admitted that reading can bring

her a "sense of comfort" and that writing sometimes helps her overcome fixations. She will "get a phrase or image stuck in my head, and it won't go away until I've written it down." She also submitted a short prose piece in which she argued that love as a feeling is an object, something one can "see, hear, taste, touch, feel, and even smell." Again, an adolescent, Virginia, used literacies, here reading and writing, to navigate feelings. Insofar as viewing is also a literacy, Yarelis provided a particularly compelling example of using a film to cope with personal issues. In a film she recently had seen, a female character was teased for being extremely tall but stood up to bullies and in the end found a boyfriend who had loved her all along. This film seemed to help Yarelis cope with some of her own feelings about being different. A literacy, this time viewing, again was used to navigate and cope with feelings.

**Empathy Utility**

In addition to using literacies to deal with their own feelings, adolescents also used them to understand others, to learn how others feel, and to empathize with or relate to them. Greta said, "I think the books are good to...feel what the people feel, ...like how they really felt." Liking when characters' feelings were similar to hers, another participant, Jayda read books about characters who have lost loved ones "because I lost a lot of people." Additionally, she had a friend who was transgendered and had checked out a book from the media center that featured a "person, like, the same gender as they are," and she watched a reality show about a transgendered person to help her better understand this friend's experiences. Emma used literacies to learn about others, too, having become curious about their religions after seeing them practiced where she traveled abroad and reading about them as a result.

**Empowerment Utility**

The participants in my study also recognized how literacies educate, express, and empower oneself. "Literacies mean that everyone can educate themselves," Emma bluntly wrote. People must have literacies "to express your needs and wants to other people," said Lali. "Literacy is important because it empowers people," wrote Virginia, "because it allows people to make informed choices and take control of their own lives as they navigate the deceptive world in which they live." Jayda gave an exceptionally compelling example of a relative whose lack of literacies lost him legal rights:

> If you have to go a court or something and somebody try to use something against you, you can just have your written statement and what they said, and if they have a fake one, you can, like, show them, like, trade it out, and if you're a judge, you would have to be able to read those. Like, if you have-- 'Cuz, my uncle, signed a paper that he didn't read and gave his rights up to my cousin so that's another example. He just didn't read.

Jayda's uncle's disempowerment through lack of literacies serves to reinforce the importance of actually being literate, so that one can, quite literally, advocate for his legal rights.

The ability to see literacies' potential to empower is predicated on the desire to help others and see others do well, and an innate sense towards helping others underscored participants' perceptions as useful for empowerment. Partipants saw literacies as useful for helping people and giving advice. When Greta spoke with her best friend, she asked "does she have any problems I can help her with or whatever." Emma was able to articulate her interest in helping when she said of her family's mission work, "We mainly just wanted to help people and spread the word of God and stuff like that and just help people and get to

know them, be friends with them." Kwento said he would like "to help old people someday" and "with helping Nigerians come over," which of course will require many literacies. Jayda used literacies to give advice by reposting motivational quotes related to important issues in her life, like overcoming "toxic relationships." She also used literacies by talking with her friends about what they think she should do. She also was just helpful in general, volunteering to help a friend rehearse a praise-dancing routing for an upcoming Black History Month assembly. Lali exhibited pride in her helpfulness, too: "I help many of my friends with schoolwork," she said, which inevitably involved literacies, I am sure. Literacies are used by adolescents with international experiences to help others, mainly by giving advice.

Lastly, even the way that some participants connected employment with literacies reflected a connection between language and empowerment. The ability to speak a foreign language was perceived as useful and empowering for employment, and illustrating this point was Yarelis. Explaining that the reason her mother still works as a housekeeper despite being in the US for four years and wanting other work, Yarelis lamented her mother's progress in learning English. She explained, "If you speak both languages they pay you more." Even when bilingualism is not an issue, literacies are important for employment. Emma recognized, for example, "Well, in the real world, you just need it to, um, be able to understand what you're doing, like in a job or something." Kwento similarly stated, "It you go for an interview for a job, it's communication. That's [why you need] literacy."

**Summary of Literacies' Utilities**

As shown, adolescents with international experiences understood that literacies are not skills to be learned but also modes, languages, domains, and practices to be

meaningfully utilized in their real lives.  Adolescents with international experience thought

of literacies beyond a set of skills that a teacher forces them to learn.  Learning skills were

merely a step towards what really mattered: communication, memory, entertainment,

health, emotional support, empathy, and autonomy to help oneself and others.

The idea of literacies as utilitarian is not new. Rather, self-awareness about the

functions of literacies is what surfaced as remarkable about the participants in my study.

Travel, it appears, allowed my participants to perceive a more macrocosmic view of

language and literacies that revealed their functional aspects. Much like travel opens the

doors to a bigger world, it also opened the doors to bigger picture understandings about

various phenomena in adolescents' lives. As quoted in this section, participants used words

like "see" and "need" and "real" when describing literacies. Travel impacted their literacies

because travel helped them "see" the innumerable ways that literacies are "needed" in the

"real" world.  Their travel resulted in a broader context in which to situate meaning and

purpose in their lives, including the purposes and uses of being literate.

### (2) Multiplicitous and Multilingual Oral Language Practices

Travel impacted adolescents' literacies through aural immersion. Prior research

predicted that adolescents with international experiences might know more than one

language and might engage with multilingual practices, but my findings add emphasis to

the speaking-related aspects of foreign language acquisition because the literacies of

adolescents include talking-centric proclivities.  Listening to others is key.

**Talking Frequently about an Array of Topics**

Participants' literacies were talking-centric, most evident in the frequency of talking

and array of topics they talked about. Greta said she loved hanging out and just talking with

her friends and not really doing anything in particular. She talked with soccer coaches about opportunities, she talked with people in multiple languages, she talked with family back in Germany over FaceTime, and she talked with her best friend back in Germany about "how it is here, how is it there, what's she's doing" and "has something changed, how is she, does she have any problems I can help her with or whatever." Emma liked talking with people she met doing mission work in South Africa, she talked about college and sports with her friends, she talked to make plans, and she mentioned having talked with the school's German foreign exchange student, Greta, "a couple times." Kwento talked with his friends back in Nigeria about football, movies, "how they are doing, how are their families," and said they talked about deeper issues than most adolescents in the US do. "They tell me their own, what they think is right now out there in the world," he said. "We think of every concept and conclusion." Kwento said he wished he could do conference call with his classmates during E-Learning, showing he missed and therefore valued talking with others. Jayda talked with her boyfriend about wanting each other to succeed, she talked about food with her cousins and boy friends, she talked with her girl friends for advice, and she talked about "goofy stuff" with her friends. Lali said she has talked about her travels to Mexico with some of her friends and has started to open up about that more. Virginia and her friends were especially verbal. "What I talk about with my friends is as diverse as my group of friends," she said. With her best friends, they "usually discuss politics, such as elections, events which affect our community, … and each other's personal lives"; with her church friends and people with who she was on friendly terms but not close, topics of conversation may have included religion, church, the Bible, fashion, current events, school work, extracurriculars, art, and

grades; and at home, sometimes even at the dinner table, her family talked about articles and books, including "stuff from Jordan Peterson or Malcolm Gladwell or just stuff from the news, and then, like, we'll talk about it." Lastly, Yarelis said of her friends and family, "We talk about everything. We talk about food, we talk about people, we make fun of people and stuff, we even talk about our past, like, childhood and stuff. Most talk about future situation, like if stuff happens in the house, fights and stuff." Data from Yarelis and the other participants made me think that with regard to literacies adolescents with international experiences do more talking than anything else and are probably drawn to talking because it involves a primary discourse.

**Expanding Definitions of "Talk"**

More striking than the frequency and array of talking were the evolved meanings of "talk" that some participants employed. The term has come to mean more than literally talking. One participant used the word "talk" with reference to texting which is not literally talking. More interesting was the use of "talking" to indicate that a person is in or trying to become in a romantic relationship with someone else. The slang meaning of "talking" has come to be synonymous with "dating." Gresge (2016, October 12) explores the origins of this vernacular quirk. When "members of the potential relationship are in some sort of communication with each other" and "symbolic talking occurs over texting or social media," young people no longer call this dating, but it is not platonic either; they call it "talking" (Gresge, 2016, October 12, para. 1). Jayda used the term "talking" in this way when she said she had been "talking" to her boyfriend, meaning flirting with and dating him, since the homecoming dance. The meaning of the word "talking" beyond the use of one's voice to utter coherent sounds and ideas defines a romantic relationship as the ability

to understand on a deeper level a different person. The idiom elicits a deep sense that connections are about communication, which adolescents refer to as "talking," and bespeaks the importance of talking in adolescents' lives in general.

**Speaking (and Writing) that Evinced the Benefits of Travel**

Whatever experiences an adolescent has, they should be articulate about those experiences. Adolescents should be able to speak and write about what they have seen and done. If my findings are to have implications about funding abroad experiences for high school students because these experiences impact their literacies, adolescents who gain access to these experiences should be able to articulate these outcomes. The evidence suggests they would be. The participants in my study not only spoke but also wrote about positive outcomes of their travel experiences. They demonstrated through talk and text that their travel experiences were beneficial. In this way, literacies and international experiences intersected.

Participants' speaking and writing contained direct statements about the benefits of travel. The benefits included that they learned about "new culture and how they live there" and about "so many different cultures" and "how lifestyles were different over there." "I like exploring new places and learning about different cultures," said one participant. Another said travel "helped me understand more of their culture than what is down here because the, like, type of music they play." Another said, "I am grateful that I got to travel while I still had the opportunity to do so." Participants described travel as "very pleasant," "very fun," "really fun," "benefitting me," "very cool because it's, like, very different lifestyles," "a really nice opportunity for me which, like, I feel a lot of people don't have," and "something good in my life." Kwento was particularly vocal about the benefits of travel. In his questionnaire, he wrote that his travels were "all amazing," "showed me how other people

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live, other cultures," and let him "experience new things." In his interview, Kwento said about travel, "When you see something for yourself, it's what you see and what you understand." Kwento said travel lets people formulate their own thoughts about the world without relying on others' versions because those narratives. Collectively, Kwento's and the others' speaking and writing promoted a positive perspective about international travel. In their speaking or writing, participants recognized differences between the US and other countries, which means they displayed what the literature has called has global competencies, intercultural competence, multicultural awareness, et al., which have been suggested as outcomes of abroad experiences As one participant plainly noted, "Travel just shows me that, like, everybody is different." Times when participants compared the US to places abroad constituted evidence of awareness about the benefits of travel.

In their interviews, when participants compared countries, they showed awareness of not only differences but also underlying issues, systems, etc. that explain some differences. Cultural appreciation and awareness of diversity are outcomes of travel, so that participants articulated as much in their interviews provides evidence of speaking that evinces travel. Common points of comparison were education and food. Greta, Kwento, Lali, and Yarelis each compared education in the US to education in Germany, Nigeria, Mexico, and Puerto Rico, respectively. Greta compared attitudes towards testing, amount of courses students can choose from, the cost to participate in extracurricular activities in school, and teachers' openness with students. Kwento compared what students discuss at school, the quality of school facilities, tone of classrooms, amount of anxiety caused, amount of courses taken at one time, and corporal punishment practices. Lali compared the cost of education and differences in compulsory school laws. Yarelis compared the way teachers treated students

and bemoaned how teachers in the US yell at students who do not wear their school IDs whereas her school in Puerto Rico was small enough that "every teacher knows your name" because "they see your face everyday."  Greta, Virginia, and Lali each compared food between countries. Greta compared US to German food: "So like a really good schnitzel, like, I never saw here a schnitzel. Yeah, like, people or restaurants have them, but that's just, like, a German thing, or a traditional thing, or whatever, or the food from my grandma…. She is making the same food every time we're coming."  Virginia compared US to Spanish food: "The food was delicious" and "The food was great, actually," and told a funny story about "sardines and pre-packaged cheese."  Lali compared US to Mexican food in a vivid account:

> Ok, so there you're walking down the street, like, pretend it's like a open WalMart, but for every single section there's, like, a store, and then the cashiers don't exist, of course.  Imagine in, like, every single corner there's, like, either a man with a little cart that has cups of fruit with lots of, like, honey, lemon, everything like that. And another there's, like, slushies, and another there's, like, corn on the cob, and another… and then there's, like, a thing called *esquites*. It's just like corn in a cup, and they put, like, mayonnaise and cheese and everything. It's really good. ....  And then street vendors also have, like, tacos and, like, hamburgers and everything like that. And I don't think they have it here for, like, health issues, like, this and that, but I really wish they did because it's good.

To reiterate, participants' exploration of others' differences, drawn in this case to education but also to food reflected global competencies, reflected a known outcome of travel abroad.  Furthermore, these global competencies were articulated by participants vis a vis their speaking. Again, travel impacted their ability to talk about travel.

Other benefits of travel abroad, touted mostly in the literature on study abroad programs at the college level, are academic- and success-oriented, and participants in my study talked about having such traits or displayed other evidence of these traits in their interviews or writing. Participants made positive remarks about themselves as students, they had clearly stated goals about the future, and they were mature.  The following statements from participants testified to positive academic orientations: "I would describe myself as a very hardworking student and fast learner," "I am looking forward to take correction," "[I am] always learning," "I care a lot about my education," and "I have a relatively high reading comprehension level."  Participants talked about their education with their friends, too: "My friends and I mostly talk about school and what work we have," said Emma. All participants had clearly stated college and/or career goals as well: Greta, to attend university and become a physical trainer; Emma, to attend Clemson, major international relations, and minor in German; Kwento, to become a computer scientist and "have a family, and...grow old with my wife, stay in my house, lay on my bed, and think about what I have achieved in this life"; Jayda, to become a nurse; Lali, to complete her Associate's degree at a technical college then pursue a paralegal career or transfer to a four-year college; Virginia, to become a teacher although the subject "sort of fluctuates a lot 'cuz I like to study different things"; and Yarelis, to move to another state in the US where people are kinder towards immigrants and more open-minded. Encapsulating participants' concern for the future were these remarks from one: "Schoolwork, grades, and my academic achievement are some things which are very important to me, as they will have a tremendous impact on my future success."  In fact, many participants identified "the future" as a frequent topic of conversation among their friends.  "We talk about the future," Jayda said of conversations with her boyfriend.  She explained,

When we text, it's really about [the] future…. He was a football player, and I am trying to get my grades up because I want to be a nurse…. We want to see each other succeed. …. I said, "I gotta come to school, so you need to come to school, too," and that's when he was like, "All right," and then he just started coming to school more, and I guess he started focusing more.

Jayda and her boyfriend used talking and texting to think about and plan for the future and to make sure each other were making the right choices on that path, but Yarelis, for another example, substantiated that adolescents converse about "the future" when she said she and her friends "talk about future situations." Participants also just seemed to have a general air of maturity and sophistication. Greta was more mature than her US counterparts, having already graduated from a German high school. Lali maturely understood the benefit of classes even when they were hard and had a mature but moving reaction to the COVID-19 pandemic's effect on her senior year of high school. Virginia said she was "friends with some teachers and adults." Virginia's maturity about my study, like Lali's maturity in her calm and cool reaction to the pandemic and Greta's maturity as a student, contributed to a larger picture that painted adolescents with international experiences as mature, goal-oriented, and academic-oriented. That participants spoke and wrote about their academics, goals, and maturity were what the data ultimate showed.

To summarize, one of many oral language practices observed among the participants in this study was speaking that articulated the positive outcomes of international experiences as perceived by participants. Although this in and of itself is an interesting finding because it suggests a connection between travel and the ability to articulate one's experiences through speaking, more interesting—given the research

question central to this study about the impact of travel on literacies—was when a participants made a direct statement about literacies being an outcome of travel. When Kwento was asked whether travel impacted his literacies, first he responded too quickly, "I don't think so," but after a moment of pause, he corrected himself, saying affirmatively, "Yes. Yes!" In short, backed up by evidence in the literature which my study confirmed about the benefits of travel, participants additionally articulated these benefits, thus suggesting a connection between travel and oral language practices.

**Multilingual Oral Language Practices**

Other oral language practices observed among participants in this study were predicted by prior research, but not predicted was the emphasis on oral language I observed. What was interesting about my findings is that participants who were not transnational but had international experiences in other contexts also displayed evidence of practices in their oral language beyond their ability to speak more than one language. What the data therefore suggest is that transnationalism is not the only form of international experiences that facilitate bi/multilingualism, translanguaging, codeswitching, brokering, and immersion opportunities; rather, any form of travel may play a role in shaping these literacies especially when oral language practices are involved. A gloss of data demonstrating these multiple oral language practices related to bi- and multilingualism among participants follows.

One such practice observed among participants in this study that related to oral language was participants' ubiquitous bilingualism or multilingualism. Every participant in this study was bi/multilingual, meaning they could speak or were becoming proficient in speaking more than one language. Greta was fluent in German and English with some

experience in French. Emma had taken three years of German at her high school, with plans for more.   Kwento had knowledge of American English, Nigerian pidgin English, and the tribal language Igbo. Jayda spoke SAE and AAVE and knew some Jamaican and New York phrases.   Lali knew Spanish, English, and Spanglish, with some knowledge of a Náhuatl dialect. Virginia was learning French and often watched French movies. Yarelis spoke Spanish and English. Regardless of the nature of their experiences outside of the US, the common factor of travel may have motivated their acquisition of second and/or maintenance of first languages.

These data also revealed that participants engaged in translanguaging, which research in transnationalism predicted would be the case, and rather than  switching back and forth between languages, engaging in either one language *or* another, they practiced translanguaging, sometimes synonymized as codemeshing (Canagarajah, 2011, 2013; Daniel and Pacheco, 2016; Duarte, 2019; García and Kleyn, 2016; Hornberger and Link, 2012; Kim, 2018).  Participants used multiple languages at once or as part of an integrated whole.  If a participant  was fluent in Spanish and English, translanguaging meant they either use both simultaneously or, if they did use them separately, that the two languages were viewed as two of many parts within a single, larger communication system.  Lali's remarks about Spanglish (Martinez, 2010) illustrated her translanguaging: "I speak Spanish Spanish and Spanglish, which is, like, when a person who knows both languages says a sentence with both words, kind of, and they just, like, come out. Like, you don't have to think about it. 'Cuz I think in Spanish, and I speak in English." Lali later added, "Most of the people I talk to, like, on social media and everything, they all know English and Spanish. So, it's never one solid English thing that I post. It's always both languages. A

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post, it's always both languages." Yarelis, who also spoke Spanish and English similarly said, "Most of my friends speak Spanish, but I text them both in English and Spanish."

Slightly different from translanguaging and codemeshing practices was codeswitching, also observed among participants. Sometimes Lali or Yarelis, for instance, spoke both languages at once as previously described, or sometimes they switched from English to Spanish depending on the situation. Their process of switching between languages mainly took place in home versus at school. At school they were required to speak English, and Yarelis even checked out books from school in English rather than Spanish, but at home they spoke Spanish with their families. Lali said, "I mostly speak just Spanish now at home unless I am on a Google Classroom chat or on FaceTime with a friend because the main language at my home is Spanish," and she also wrote, "I listen to music with lyrics in Spanish" and watched one TV show in Spanish. Similarly, Yarlesis, who has lived in the US for four years explained, "In my house we barely watch English programs. We always on Spanish 'cuz my mom still don't know English." Despite the ability to translanguage, external pressures engage in a process more akin to codeswitching (Baker, 2011; Martinez, 2010; Young, 2009) depending on whom they are around dominated their linguistic practices, and not necessarily for the better. Codeswitching requires a person to hide a part of his linguistic self at certain times rather than embrace all aspects of oneself at all times. However, the cognitive processes involved in not only speaking two languages but being able to switch between the two is laudable and likely function of travel.

Some participants in my study were positioned as language brokers (López, Lezama, and Heredia, 2019). Lali's translation of local news events into Spanish for her

community, which she said she did via social media but also likely did orally with her Spanish-speaking family and friends, provided an especially compelling example of language brokering. She took it upon herself to translate news in English about a recent tragedy affecting her community into Spanish because Spanish language news outlets were not covering these events, and not everyone where she lives speaks English.  While some studies have shown language brokering can have sociocultural and psychological effects to include linguistic and cognitive repercussions, (López, Lezama, and Heredia, 2019), no evidence of this was observed among participants. Lali seemed proud to have been the intermediary between English and Spanish in her community.

Lastly, participants had opportunities to immerse themselves in other languages. Greta, a native German speaker, was immersed in English through her year as a foreign exchange student in the US.  Lali and Yarelis maintained proficiency in Spanish through immersion in this language at home.  Virginia immersed herself in French by watching French-language films.  Taken together, their data pointed to the importance of immersion in foreign language acquisition and maintenance.  This finding hearkens back to what researchers in study abroad have found about the effect of travel on foreign language acquisition.  Young people who studied abroad in a country whose language they were also learning perceived greater gains in their foreign language acquisition compared to their non-traveling peers, and they showed greater gains between pre- and post-sojourn assessments of foreign language (Armstrong, 1982; Brito, 2017; Di Silvio, Diao, and Donovan, 2016; Hansel and Grove, 1986; Jochum, 2014; Keppie, Lindberg and Thomas, 2016; Marijuan and Sanz, 2017; Savage and Hughes, 2014; Savicki, 2011; Serrano, Llanes, and Tragant, 2016). The suggestion made is that being immersed in the other language

fosters one's ability to learn it.  The more participants in this study were immersed at some point or another in a language, the more multilingual they were.

The work of Monaghan and Hartmann (2014) support that international experiences may impact oral language practices, especially adolescents' ability to have deep conversations.  Adolescents in their study, who spent a semester in a traveling high school, "engaged more frequently in dynamic and complex discussions" throughout the duration of their sojourn (Monaghan and Hartmann, 2014, p. 90).  Over time, the adolescents became deeper thinkers and sustained deeper conversations with each other and their teachers. Monaghan and Hartmann (2014) concluded that travel may impact speaking by way of the deep conversations sojourners become positioned to have as a result of the diversity of experiences to which they are exposed.

My data further suggests that travel impacts literacies via oral language practices especially. Findings about the multiple oral language practices of adolescents confirmed existing scholarship but also emphasize two new points: the importance and prevalence of speaking as a form of literacies in their lives of adolescents with international experiences and the connection between travel and speaking more than one language that emerges.  Taken together, an aural immersion component associated with travel might explain why adolescents with international experiences displayed multiple and multilingual oral language practices.

### (3) Geographic and Geolinguistic Literacies

Another interesting trait observed among participants was their knowledge of geography in general but also language geography.  Geographic and geolinguistic literacies each has to do with being literate in matters of the earth, hence the stem *geo-*. Geographic literacies are concerned with where countries are located on the earth and how maps

work.   Geolinguistic literacies are concerned with how languages have spread throughout the earth, issues of power related to these movements evocative of critical perspectives, how languages remain tied to place, and where different languages are spoken.  Participants in my study were literate in many of these regards.

**Geographic Literacies**

Geographic literacies, to elaborate, include such skills as the "ability to memorize the names and attributes of locations at a variety of scales" and "the ability to locate places and attributes on a map" (Turner and Leydon, 2012, p. 54).  They are "vital to success in other disciplines including economics, earth sciences, biology, history, media studies, engineering, sociology, and political science … [because they] help us better understand how people, places, and events connect" (Turner and Leydon, 2012, p. 54).

With regard to geographic literacies, participants excelled. Lali's ability to show me, in a matter of seconds, exactly where in Mexico her family lived best elicited the geographic literacies adolescents with international experiences develop.  Lali traveled with her family--two parents, a sister, and herself--twice a year to the town in central Mexico where many of her paternal and maternal relatives still live.  "We go all summer and we go for a week and half in winter break," Lali said. "I can tell you exactly where."  Quite quickly and competently using Google Maps on my computer, she zoomed out of our state and onto the town, finding even the "bridge" where her family's properties were located.

The very reference to places that participants had visited spoke to a certain level of geographic literacy as well.  Hypothetically, a teen could tell about the Eiffel Tower but not know what city it exists in.  That participants named specific places is significant. Greta

mentioned Germany and France. Emma mentioned Germany, South Africa, Spain, and Morocco. Kwento mentioned Nigeria, Côte d'Ivoire, Dubai, and Washington, D.C. Jayda mentioned Mississippi, New York, and Jamaica. Lali mentioned Mexico and Germany. Virginia mentioned France, Spain, and Malawi. Yarelis mentioned Puerto Rico. Participants' knowledge of place names bespoke geographic knowledge.

The connection between travel and geography competencies have been validated by prior research (Being, 1988; Biraimah and Jotia, 2013; Cisneros-Donahue, Krentler, Reinig, and Sabol, 2012; Merrell, 1949; Sutton and Rubin, 2004). For example, in one study of 3,000 undergraduates, an assessment was administered to measure ability in the areas of map skills, place name location, physical geography, and human geography, and performance was correlated with each respondent's age, sex, ethnicity, past travel experience, and past geographic education; indeed, the findings confirmed that a strong connection existed between the number of places travel beyond one's home state and country and geography skills (Bein, 1988). Respondents performed particularly well at questions involving maps. The practice with maps which well-traveled respondents acquired likely contributed to their literacies.

**Geolinguistic Literacies**

Where my findings extend what prior work said would be true about the literacies of adolescents with international experiences were the geolinguistic literacies I observed them to have. To clarify, geolinguistics refers to "the analysis and implications of the geographical location, distribution and structure of language varieties within a temporal framework, either in isolation or in contact and/or conflict with one another" (American Society of Linguistics, n.d., para. 2). Said by another, geolinguistics "deals with the

external fate of languages as they are distributed over the face of the globe" (Mackey, 1972, p. 1)

Applying Mackey's concept of geolinguistics revealed a unique way in which participants distinguished between places. Some participants defined distinctions between countries linguistically. A "foreign country" was a place where a different language that one's own is spoken. Neither the culture, architecture, food, religion, or geography made a place foreign; rather, speaking a different language did. Such were both Emma's and Yarelis's conceptions. When I asked Yarelis, for one, whether she considered Puerto Rico a foreign country even though it is technically part of the United States, she explained, "PR is a foreign country because it's a different language." One of the few details about her father that another participant, Jayda, mentioned was that he was from New York and that he had an accent. Again, place and language are associated. Language, participants recognized, is intimately connected to place and place-based identities.

Several participants recognized and explained the geographic origins of their names in ways that evoked geolinguistic knowledge also. Emma connected her name to Germany when she told me that her last name was German. Kwento connected his name to Nigeria when he explained in his writing sample what his first name, an Igbo word, translated to in English, that his middle name recalled his royal lineage, and that his surname came from an indigenous god of thunder. Lali connected her name to Mexico when she explained that her name was a word in the Náhuatl dialect, spoken in a region in Mexico "where 100%, like, ancestors from Aztecs are from, and they speak a dialect of, like, what Aztecs used to speak with Spanish, and so a lot of names come from there. So, yeah, that's where my name's from." Even Virginia connected her name to the US state when she explained that

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her mother so-named her because she loved that place. All in all, participants' connection between language and place vis a vis their pride in their names evinced geolinguistics.

When Mackey (1972) described the geolinguistic perspective with which he approached language studies, he argued that attention to language power, language attraction, and language pressures were key. Most relevant to my participants was his first point, language power, which he labeled "that set of forces or motives which make people learn and use another language" (p. 34). Participants in my study demonstrated geolinguistic literacies in their self-awareness about the power of language, specifically why being literate in one's own language and learning another language can have benefits. Evidence of this point included Yarelis's awareness of the connection between English fluency, employability, and income potential. Yarelis recognized that certain languages are valuable in certain places. She knew she would be more employable, and thus more in control of her destiny, if she spoke multiple languages. She showed cognizance of the forces which motivate people to learn a language.

An argument can be made about travel's connection to not only geographic but geolinguistic literacies. Indeed, what my findings have added to Bein (1988) and others is that the proficiencies gleaned from travel extend beyond geographic literacies to include geolinguistic literacies as well. Travel not only impacted adolescents' ability to read, use, and locate places on maps. Rather, travel also seemed to have impacted participants' understandings about language issues, including the connection between place and language and how knowledge of certain languages relates to certain issues of power and economy. This finding also directly connects to the critical perspectives framing this study at large although the next section delves into a finding with even stronger connections.

## (4) Critical Lenses and Literacies

Prior research predicted that some adolescents with international experiences might acquire critical literacies, but nearly all participants in my study did.  How the participants in my study adopted critical lenses and/or engaged with critical literacies, of which socioeconomic knowledge and social justice leanings may be prerequisites, were found despite being not commonly observed among adolescents in other studies.  Prior research exists to show stakeholders want adolescents to develop critical lenses and literacies, and experts have investigated and hypothesized some ways to do so, but my findings definitively reveal travel may be a more direct means to this end than previously realized.

Having a critical lens means approaching issues in the world in accordance with critical theory, which involves recognizing injustices and doing something about them.  Critical literacies, to reiterate, can refer to "competence and knowledge" in this particular domain (Oxford University Press, 2020), meaning a person is literate in critical issues and approaches issues by thinking critically.  Critical literacies can also refer to literacy practices enacted when being critical; this may include "dialectical critiques of society" (Oxford University Press, 2020), "the assumption that reading and writing are about social power" (Luke, 2018, p. 450), and "critical approaches to literacy in theory and practice" (Street, 1984, p. 77).

The most compelling evidence of critical lenses and literacies came from Greta.  She was literate in critical issues pertaining to gender, education, and politics, and she described power as a problem in these aspects of society:

> I would say that still a lot of countries have the thing where males have too much power. Like, it's 2020....  That's for me a pretty sad thing....  I would say some people getting too fast power, like, politicians, or I don't know, wherever in, doesn't

even have to be, like, president, or whatever, can be in a sports club or in school, a

teacher, or I don't know, all like that, they getting, like, too fast too much power, so

it feeling too powerful.

She went on to give an example of a teacher who yelled at students and treated them

meanly but got good results and therefore went unchecked by the principal. "That was just

not a good thing," Greta said. Just because a person is in a position of power, she said,

"You still don't have a right to yell at us for nothing. That's just not a good thing." Greta

was literate of and critiqued issues of power in societies, with regard to gender and politics

and the other time in education.

Kwento displayed emerging critical perspectives when he recounted what he told

his friends back in Nigeria about the perks of travel:

Like, you would want to come and see this for your own self. That's what I would

tell them, that you should come over here, not just remain in Africa, just go ahead

with what people tell you. You should come here and see it for yourself…. I think

when you are telling someone something, it's what a person saw. When you see

something for yourself, it's what you see and what you understand. And then your

movies is different. I thought the White House was a place that was easier to break

into because of movies I've watched.

Here, Kwento emphasized how travel empowers people because it lets them formulate their

own thoughts about the world without relying on others' versions because those narratives,

like the fictional White House movie Kwento watched, can perpetuate misconceptions.

Kwento appears to have taken a critical view of travel as able to deconstruct misperceptions

of others and empower people with a more accurate view of the world.

Kwento provided even more compelling evidence of critical lenses and literacies when he problematized language as potentially oppressive. Having been victim to mockery for his accent, Kwento was quite literate in how language can be used to oppress others. One of the writing samples he submitted for this study was a reflection for an English class on whether learning standard English (spelling, grammar, etc.) was or was not important in today's world. He wrote, "People use grammar as a way to make fun of people who make mistakes, but I don't get this. If you understand what the person is saying or writing, why point out the mistake? English was made by rich White people who wanted to feel like they are better than others, and they don't realize that everyone is the same." His comment strongly evoked the work of Chalabi (2016), who critiqued language as a social construct that allows the group who constructed it to assert power over another who does not meet their constructed expectations.

Virginia and Jayda were also literate in the ways language can function as a system of power and oppression. They displayed critical lenses and/or literacies through their explicitly stated views that literacies can empower or disempower. Speaking about empowerment, "Literacy is important because it empowers people," said Virginia, "and literacy allows people to make informed choices and take control of their own lives." Speaking about disempowerment, Jayda spoke of literacies being important for legal defenses and described an incident in which her uncle lost custody of a child due to his lack of literacies:

> Cuz, like, if you have to go a court or something and somebody try to use
> something against you, you can just have your written statement and what they said,
> and if they have a fake one, you can, like, show them, like, trade it out, and if you're

a judge, you would have to be able to read those. Like, if you have-- 'Cuz, my

uncle, signed a paper that he didn't read and gave his rights up to my cousin so

that's another example. He just didn't read.

In the same way that literacies can empower people, like Virginia contended, so can

lacking them disempower people, as Jayda attested.

Emma showed she was literate about power as a problem in society as well when she

identified power as a major theme in *The Epic of Gilgamesh*, which she was currently reading

in her English class. I asked her to describe anything she was reading, and she replied,

Right now we're reading *Gilgamesh* and writing essays on that…. So this guy, he's

two-thirds God and one-third human, so it's weird there, and so they send down like

a person to try and, like, defeat him, but then they become friends, and they go on

all these journeys, but eventually the friend dies, and so he doesn't want to die, so

he searches for everlasting life, and then he eventually dies anyway.... Basically, he

has, like, too much power, and they just don't want him to have that much power,

and they just need to find someone to equal him out.

Emma could have described the plot and theme of this story in any way she wanted but

without prompting retold the story as a fable about power. That her thoughts immediately

went to power suggested that power issues were something often on her mind. In her mind,

people, or in this case characters, given too much power can be dangerous. This example

also speaks to critical literacies as practices. Emma's literacy practices of reading a text

was causing her to think critically and critique issues of power.

Emma's attraction to the novel *1984*, also a text she read for school, could be

indicative of emerging critical literacies. When asked what stood out to her as memorable

in the ELA class in which she had me, the researcher, as a teacher, she cited this seminal

dystopian work. The book concerns itself in part with the potential of language to privilege

certain groups while oppressing others, a major trait of critical literacies.  Though Emma

did not exercise other aspects of critical literacies such as questioning who wrote the text

and why, the critical literacies-related themes of the novel may have attracted her to the

text, made it memorable, and better situated her for other critical literacy practices.  Like in

the previous example with *Gigamesh*, with *1984* Emma is also engaging in the practice of

reading a text as a means for considering critical issues; her practice is thus an example of

critical literacies.

Predicating critical lenses and literacies is some level of socioeconomic knowledge,

and participants in my study demonstrated such knowledge. Even if they did not fully

display critical literacies, the presence of socioeconomic knowledge in various ways shows

they were on a path to gain critical literacies.  Participants were literate in wealth and social

class divisions, in economic systems, in how economies impact other spheres of life, and in

their own economic statuses.

I will begin here with the first-mentioned: awareness of poverty and privilege.

Participants indicated that poverty in other places when compared to the US stood out

when they traveled and revealed their own privileges.  Indicative of this claim were

statements such as "There's like so many people that don't have as much as we do," "We

have it so much better," "We just take stuff for granted," and "It's too perfect in

America."  Consider Emma's description of the living conditions in Soweto, the

impoverished and crime-ridden suburbs of Johannesburg, South Africa, which became sites

of protests and human rights activism to end apartheid:  "They don't really have much.

They're just all really nice, like, even though they didn't anything.... It just shows me that...we have it so much better over here, and we just take stuff for granted sometimes, and they didn't really have anything, but they were always happy and nice to everybody they met. So that was nice." Lali also contrasted poverty and privilege:

A lot of people here, they don't-- They think their life is the worst or whatever, but whenever you travel to another country, especially another poorer country, a third-world country...you see a lot of differences in people's lifestyle. Like, a lot people, they don't even get as much in a week as someone gets here in a day. Over there it's, like, very different to gain higher wages, and you do really rough work because a lot of people over there they don't have money to go school because over there you have to pay money.... They have to buy their own books. They have to buy everything of theirs.... Some people in a day they get enough money to maybe buy, like, a packet of chicken breasts and, like, some bread, and that's it. In a whole day.

Lali's comments, like Emma's, revealed that some adolescents with international experiences recognize their privileges as they juxtapose their experiences in the US with poverty in places abroad.

Other evidence of socioeconomic literacies came from participants who had strong knowledge of how economic systems functioned. Several participants compared economies. These participants included Lali who, for one, coherently recounted what her German foreign exchange student had told her about the Germany economy: "Because it's more of a socialist country. So she was like, 'Yeah. We have, like, a lot of benefits from it, but we're not rich rich. We get to do a lot of things but we're not, like, money rich.' And I

was like, 'Oh, so it's like instead of money they give you, like, benefits,' and she was like, 'Yeah, basically.' Lali understood the economics of democratic socialism to mean higher taxes but better services.

Participants also displayed knowledge of how economic systems interplay with other aspects of society.  For one, Lali discussed the economic implications of legal versus illegal immigration. She said of her parents, who are legal immigrants living with her in the US:

> They always did their taxes.  They never used any food stamps, EBT, anything like that and, like, anytime we went to, like, the doctor for us or anything, like, they would always pay out of pocket. So, I think that was, like, really helpful because a lot of people that come illegally they never, like, do any of that. They always ask the government for money. They always don't do taxes, and I think that's really bad.

For another, Virginia discussed the implications of economics on Malawian society and US society. She wrote a paper for an Early College course about how women's role in the Malawian economy influenced a male character's success.  In the paper, Virginia addressed "the lack of economic opportunities afforded to women in Malawi," "women's participation in the Malawian economy," "[how] female entrepreneurship fuels the economy and benefits families," and the "fascinating interactions between people, society, and the economy."  When Virginia also spoke  in her interview about the US economy, she referred to the US's "forever war" as "sort of a waste of money that could be used to help other things like the economy...and, like, stimulate America's growth." She said she would vote for President Trump in the 2020 election if she could because "he's definitely improved the economy" and because "I like money." In the follow-up questionnaire, she expressed concern about "the economic impact of the coronavirus." Virginia's thinking reflected

knowledge and competence of socioeconomics. Furthermore, she most clearly employed a variety of literacy practices as she cultivated and expressed her socioeconomic literacies.

My findings about participants' concern with their own financial statuses lastly conveyed an at least emerging competence or knowledge in socioeconomics. Greta showed concern for money in statements about school sports, college tuition, and international flights being expensive. She said of sports, "That's probably a really, really good thing about high schools here, that you have sports here, you don't have to pay for them." She described how "expensive" college has become in Germany:

> We have to pay for universities, for our own.... We have to pay. Yeah, so, and we don't have scholarships. That's kind of sad because there are a lot of students. They are really good. I know some; they're good. And they're just not being able to because of the family situation and whatever to have that much money.... My goal is to go to university. I mean, I need money and all that, but yes.

Of international flights, Greta said, "My friends can't just fly over to me or I to them. That's just so much money." Greta's concern about the cost of leisure activities, higher education, and travel abroad showed she understood the monetary value of these items. She did not have an inflated or inaccurate view of money; rather, she had an accurate, concerned view. To reiterate, participants concerns about their own finances showed knowledge socioeconomics, a precursor of sorts to critical literacies.

Social justice leanings, and even what one might call social justice literacies, also lay tangential or precursory to critical lenses and literacies. Social justice literacies mean being literate in social justice issues or enacting a variety of literacy practices for social justice purposes.

Evidence of being literate in social justice was most apparent when participants recognized that something in society was unjust. Greta spoke about injustices in education, the environment, and gender roles. Emma spoke about the injustice of people being mean to others for no reason. Kwento spoke about injustices perpetrated through racism, stereotypes, and religious extremism. Jayda spoke about injustices related the legal system. Lali spoke about injustices in immigration. Virginia, coyly confessing some have dubbed her a "social justice warrior," spoke about perceived injustices in abortion rights and the death penalty. Yarelis lamented the injustices involved when people are bullied for what they cannot control. In short, participants were literate in a variety of social justice issues that included education, genderism, racism, religion, immigration, and criminal justice.

Lali was also literate in legal issues encompassed by social justice. Her interest in a legal career could also be interpreted as having a sense of social justice. Several participants made references to laws and justice, including Jayda and Virginia, but Lali disclosed a plan to pursue a career as a paralegal: "So, I'm going to Tech for two years. I'm going to study Business Management and, if I can, I'm going to also do my Associates in Paralegal Services…. I actually, like, I just think it's, like, a good job because there's always opportunities to get a job in that field." Lali's paralegal prospects came in conjunction with her fixation with a recent murder and criminal investigation in her area and her emphasis on the importance of "doing things legally" with regards to immigration. She clearly cared strongly about the law's potential to help people, a mark of social justice interests.

Additionally, Lali's social media posts represented employing literacy practices for social justice. In her community, a young child had recently disappeared and was later found

to have been murdered, and Lali posted updates about the investigation to her social media, mostly in Spanish so that members of her community who did not speak English could get the news. In this instance, she used social media for social justice. She used a multimodal literacy practice with regard to a social justice cause. She recognized that lack of Spanish-language news about a recent event in her area was unfair, and she did something about it. She informed her community herself. Her literacy practices, as well as her literacy in terms of knowledge about various causes, were tied to social justice advocacy.

While adolescents who have never traveled abroad could theoretically cultivate critical lenses and literacies, the scholarship on study abroad participants and transnational youth support connections between travel and critical sensibilities (Brochin Ceballos, 2012; Boughton and Durnan, 2014; Byker, 2013; Byker and Marcquardt, 2016; Djurdjevic and Girona, 2016; Dunkerly-Bean, Bean, and Alnajjar, 2014; Hawkins, 2014; Luke, 2000; Luke, 2018; Monaghan and Hartmann, 2014; Oikonomidoy, 2016; Rushek, 2019). My findings extend this scholarship to suggest that travel in any form may facilitate the acquisition of critical lenses and literacies among adolescents. Prior research predicted that adolescents with international experiences might cultivate critical literacies but every participant in my study did. This finding suggests a stronger connection between travel and critical leanings than previously realized.

### (5) Markers of Emerging Cosmopolitanism
### and Cosmopolitan Literacies

The final and most salient data collected about the literacies of adolescents with international experiences pertained to cosmopolitanism. When Hull and Stornaiuolo (2014) coined the term "cosmopolitan literacies," they were referring to "the rhetorical stances and

ethical commitments involved in communicating across difference—the cognitive, emotional, ethical, and aesthetic meaning-making capacities and practices of authors and audiences as they take differently situated others into account" (p. 17). While evidence of participants' communicating across difference was somewhat present, other markers in the data suggested participants were moving in cosmopolitan directions with their literacies. This section of my findings describes said markers, as defined by Zhang (2019). I then reflect on how four other unique traits in the data-- participants' concerns about climate change, their music literacies, their attraction to fantasy and speculative fiction genres, and their use of other globalizing connects—were also emblematic of emerging cosmopolitan literacies.

**Respectful Critique, Dynamic Identities, and Agency as Markers**

To help me comprehend what constituted emerging cosmopolitan literacies was the work of Zhang (2019). This researcher identified four specific traits frequently exhibited among people as stepping stones towards cosmopolitan literacies: "skills and capacities of creative meaning reconstruction via multiliteracies and multimodality," "respectful imagining of foreign others and critical engagement with differences," "fluidity" and "hybridity" of identities, and "agency in effecting change" (pp. 585-586). Most salient in my data were respectfulness, fluid and hybrid identities, and sense of agency.

***Respectful but Critical Imaginings of Difference***

Signs of respectful imagining of foreign others and critical engagement with differences may include making connections to global issues, encouraging transnational explorations, disrupting stereotypes of the other, enacting dialogues in cross-border online platforms, having mindfulness of one's knowledge of local practices and how they include

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global elements, and being willing "to reach out, listen, and move closer to distant audiences and critically negotiate meanings across cultural, historical, linguistic, geographic, and ideological differences" (Zhang, 2019, p. 585). Respectfulness, as manifested in the aforementioned practices, relate to cosmopolitan literacies because they create the necessary "condition" or "disposition" (Harper, Bean, and Dunkerly, 2010).

Evidence of respectful but critical engagements with difference abounded among my study's participants as they described similarities and differences between the US and places abroad, and they did so with an empathetic rather than scathing or judgemental tone. Lali observed that "both sides of the border are very different" between the US and Mexico and went on to extrapolate these differences, Greta compared Christmas traditions in the US versus Germany, Jayda compared the types of music people in Jamaica enjoy compared to her peers in the US, and I could exhaust more examples; rarely did participants make value statements about one being better than the other. Differences observed elsewhere were not positioned as inferior to the US but interpreted as functions of local culture and history within global society. Participants did not report shock, prejudice, xenophobia or the like, nor positioned foreign countries or cultures as inferior to American culture.

Even when participants acknowledged a flaw about a place, the comparison did not exist for pure juxtaposition or stop at negativity. Prime evidence occurred in participants' statements about education. Greta noted the excessive testing, intense government oversight, and the fear of repercussion that prevented many US teachers from sharing their political and religious perspectives with students compared to Germany "where teachers can say their own opinion about the government and all that," yet she also understood that

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lack of German teachers' accountability often caused them to abuse their power in the classroom. Kwento critiqued the anxiety that Nigerians schools caused students due to work overloads and corporal punishment compared to US schools, which he called "easier," "calm," "fun," and "not stressing kids out," but I have also heard him say that students in the US are unmotivated because there are no consequences for failure. Lali wrote about Mexico, "A lot of people over there they don't have money to go school because over there you have to pay money to go to school since, like, middle school. So, a lot of people don't go. Like, my mom didn't go to middle school." She also noted about Germany schools, which she learned from a foreign exchange student her family hosted, "Their whole government and education is all, like, together. 'Cuz you know the situation in Germany, right? Where either at 6th grade, I think it is, either they make you go into like an academic school or a hands-on school…. Either you go to a hands-on school or academic school….. Like, their whole lifestyle, society is wrapped around, like, education and government." Yarelis explained,

> When I was in middle school and elementary school [in Puerto Rico] we don't have to do stuff like this that we do here. So we didn't even have ID. Every teacher knows your name. They see your face everyday. They did have rules. One day I speak back to a teacher, the art teacher, back in middle school, and she called my mom, and then my mom came, like, and fast, like, I think it was like in five minutes, and she told me something, and I have to, like, behave myself so I could pass middle school.

These participants were less concerned with observing a difference between two places than they were with identifying the global issues related to education--accountability, testing, discipline, tracking, teachers' attitudes towards students, socialist funding of

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schools, et al.--that these points of comparison allowed them to recognize.  The comparison

was more important for helping them think about global issues from multiple perspectives

than it was in establishing why one group or place was better than another.  Travel related

to these cosmopolitan conditions and dispositions insofar as participants were critical of

something in their own or others' country which they only realized needed critique because

they had international experiences for comparison and contextualization.  Participants

displayed mindfulness of local practices and how they included global elements.

Other evidence of respectful imaginings of difference, according to Zhang (2019),

may include encouraging transnational explorations, enacting cross-border dialogues, or

disrupting stereotypes.  Aside from the obvious travel abroad experience that each

participant possessed as evidence of transnational exploration, participants would

sometimes discuss these experiences with their non-traveling peers.  Lali, for one,

encouraged transnational explorations by sharing her own experiences with her friends:

"Once my friends find out I go…. I talk about it a lot."  Her friends were especially curious

about the legalities and logistics of transnationalism, especially since her parents were not

born in the US.  Cross-border dialogues were enacted most by Greta and Kwento, who

each stayed in contact with friends in their own countries via WhatsApp and

Facetime.  Disrupting stereotypes was achieved most noticeably achieved by Emma.

Although Lali strove to correct her friends' misconceptions about her Latinx family's legal

status and Kwento strove to correct his US peers' assumptions that Nigerians are all

scammers or live in huts, Emma's travels disrupted stereotypes that she herself had

previously harbored. What she remembered most about her family's time in Soweto, the

predominately Black, impoverished southwestern suburbs of Johannesburg known for their

political unrest during apartheid, was how "nice" the people there were. She had assumed that lingering racism and destitute conditions would make them angry, depressed, and resistant to help from White missionaries.  However, the opposite was true. She could not believe how friendly they were despite their living conditions.

Lastly, Virginia provided excellent evidence of a desire "to reach out, listen, and move closer to distant audiences" across "ideological differences," which Zhang (2019) said indicated the respectfulness towards difference upon which cosmopolitan literacies are predicated (p. 585). Although Virginia said things about being "firm" in her values, she nevertheless enjoyed discussing issues with her friends about which they disagreed. She especially loved talking with her best friend about politics "because, like, we have different opinions but we still respect each other's opinions, so it's fun to see what we're thinking."

### Dynamic Identities

Another precondition of cosmopolitan literacies, as defined by Zhang (2019), is the adoption of dynamic identities which can be fluid, hybrid, and intersectional. People with cosmopolitan literacies, often as a function of travel, evolve into both local and transnational meaning-makers.

"Globalisation," wrote Bean and Dunklerly-Bean (2015), "has significantly impacted the increasingly fluid and rapid movement of people, ideas, information, and capital that position the global and the local not as polarities but as mutually informing" (p. 47); therefore, "given the fluidity of adolescent identity and the literacies embodied within those identities, a monolithic, homogenised view of adolescents denies [those] possibilities" of fluidity necessary for cosmopolitanism (p. 49).  The best example of fluidity in my data came from Virginia with regards to her speaking habits.  In response to

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a prompt asking her what she talks about with her friends, she replied, "What I talk about with my friends is as diverse as my group of friends is, as what I talk about with my friends depends on with whom I am talking." She went on to itemize how with her best friend she talked about politics. With her other close friend, she talked about religion. With her church friends, she talked about the Bible and indulged in "occasional moments of vulnerability." With the group she sits with in the cafeteria during breakfast and lunch, she talked about "fashion, current events, and their personal lives." With her classmates during down time, she talked "mostly about school work and extracurricular work." With the "few people I know who are invested in the arts," she talked about art. With her teacher and adult friends, she mostly discussed grades. With her parents, she discussed books, films, and articles or "just stuff from the news." To each new conversations, Virginia did not take with her a single set about topics she identified as enjoying to discuss; rather, she understood that shifting depending on the context had more merit and allowed her to relate to a larger group of people, even those who were different than her. While the fluidity is not between local and global, as Bean and Dunklerly-Bean (2015) described, her identity was fluid nonetheless and thus constituted emerging cosmopolitan literacies.

Similarly, hybridity, is "an emic description that captures the dual living realities… [where people] inhabit, then, a classically liminal position characterized by feelings of in-betweenness that permeate sense of identity and everyday life… [and also] is involved in enactments of everyday cosmopolitanism" (Wang and Collins, 2016, pp. 2780-2781). Evidence of hybrid identities as markers of cosmopolitan literacies were referenced earlier when I discussed adolescents' language practices, though not explicitly in terms of hybridity. Hybridity, was exemplified in adolescents' multilingualism and translanguaging

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practices, when they employed language hybrids. Lali and Yarelis spoke a blended version of English and Spanish with with their friends.   Lali referred to this as "Spanglish" and said of her social media posts, "Most of the people I talk to...they all know English and Spanish. So, it's never one solid English thing that I post. It's always both languages. A post, it's always both languages." Similarly, Yarelis had said that even though most of her friends' native language was Spanish that they texted in both Spanish and English.  Linguistic fluidity was found in their shifting language practices. Although they hybridized languages with their peers, Lali and Yarelis also shifted languages depending on the context. They spoke different languages in the home versus school environment, and they preferred certain languages for certain tasks. For example, Lali listened to music in Spanish and watched some television in Spanish, but she preferred to read in English.  Yarelis preferred music in English but watched television shows with her mother in Spanish.

Another example of hybridity came from Kwento. In one of the writing samples he provided, a letter he wrote his English teacher to introduce himself at the start of the semester, he identified himself as more than Nigerian.  "I am from Nigeria, where I lived for the first 15 years of my life….  I was born into the Igbo tribe and Iklas." He then goes on to define what each of his names mean, including their tribal, Christian, and pagan religious origins. He also identified his speaking of "pidgin English," which is a combination of English and Igbo and what he spoke even when in the US.  In short, Kwento identified himself as many things at once.

The ability of adolescents to tap international experiences in order to define themselves in more than one way--be it in linguistically or with regard to their music tastes and preferences or even through food and clothing--was notable and hinted at emergent

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cosmopolitan identities and literacies. Rather than define themselves in a single way that they maintained and carried with them through different situations, adolescents' identities changed depending on their contexts. Per Bean and Dunkerly-Bean (2015), Wang and Collins (2016), and Zhang (2019), such hybrid, fluid, intersectional practices can be evidence of emerging cosmopolitan literacies.

I find it important to reiterate that participants' exposure to diversity through travel alone, while contributive, is not necessarily what created their fluid and hybrid identities. As Wang and Collins (2016) observed about the participants in their study, the "flexibility" of adolescents with international experiences often emerged through exposure to difficult situations in their early lives along with the added demands of fitting in as they progress through their lives. Their travels indeed resulted in an "awareness of and ability to negotiate cultural difference," but "put simply, exposure does not automatically lead to the embrace of difference. Indeed, for those...who demonstrated a greater capacity to negotiate difference, to potentially become cosmopolitan, their ability to do so often hinged on managing and suppressing feelings and blocking out negative experiences" (Wang and Collins, 2016, p. 2793). In other words, I cannot conclude this section by suggestion travel in and of itself resulted in fluidity and hybridity, though certainly it contributed; although participants in my study did not share with me their negative experiences, these and other variables may exist.

*Sense of Agency to Enact Change*

Finally, the concept of agency, meaning the ability to sense that one's actions have impact, reflects cosmopolitan literacies in several ways. People enact literacies to foster agency--that is, to "bear responsibilities with pressing local and global issues to stay together ethically and justly" and to "transform narrow self-interest into a sense of

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responsibility in achieving the global good… [and] accentuating a critical dimension of cosmopolitan dispositions" (Zhang, 2019, p. 239).

Evidence of agency was most visible in data from Lali and Greta. Lali believed that her translations of news report about a recent crime in her area into Spanish had an important effect on her non-English community. She felt she was providing her community with a valuable service by making news available in Spanish. Similarly, Greta participated in the "Fridays for Future" marches, weekly strike where teenagers skipped school to show they want lawmakers to create policies to diminish the negative impact humans have on the environment. Greta would not have participated had she not believed the strikes would lead to change. Both Lali and Greta, as well as other participants who enjoyed helping others and viewed that work as having lasting impact, felt they could make a difference in the world. They used literacies in some capacity to do so. These acts of agency, which involved literacy modes and practices, were indicators of emerging cosmopolitan literacies.

**Environmentalism as a Marker**

Aside from the evidence of the traits of cosmopolitan literacies delineated by Zhang (2019), a unique connection between cosmopolitan literacies and environmentalism began to emerge in my data. What became clear were not necessarily the cosmopolitan literacies employed by adolescents per se but how a cosmopolitan worldview was reflected in the literacies they did enact. These adolescents adopted a view of the world that valued local society and culture while also understanding that people are part of a larger human race that must work together to solve problems. This view seemed influenced by their environmental concerns. Participants' environmentalism evinced cosmopolitanism which in turn provided a site to develop cosmopolitan literacies.

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Several participants explicitly expressed concerns about the environment.  Greta wrote in her initial questionnaire that she cared "about the animals around the world and the world for itself" and that she participated in the Fridays for Future climate marches. Kwento showed concern for the earth when he wrote he felt "happy because our earth is benefitting" from the slowdown in pollution from humans due to the COVID-19 pandemic.  Yarleis also expressed concern about global warming when she said, "Antarctica, the ice, it's just melting. I know if the ice melts, the sea level is going to rise...and if the water comes up, like, we don't have no place to live. If the water spread out to the United States, and then we gonna die. I don't wanna die."  Her fear-driven approach spoke to the anxieties adolescents often experience, and her specific mention of water levels was perhaps reflective of her island upbringing.

The most direct connection between literacies and environmentalism came from Virginia. She submitted for her writing sample an essay for an Early College class on Malawian women's economic contributions.  In this paper a section reads,

> While an increase in population may lead the economy to flourish, it has not had the same effect of the environment.  Without knowledge of proper agricultural practices, such as limiting deforestation, or access to modern tools and products, the high demand for food and fuel overwhelmed Malawi.  The aforementioned deforestation led to a drought. That, combined with the aforementioned lack of modern agricultural technology, led to famine. This famine was exacerbated by the lack of modern infrastructures…. The hunger, disease, and overall scarcity that affected almost every person in Malawi then led to a breakdown of social norms…. [Women] were left to fend for themselves.

Virginia's use of essay writing to analyze and make connections between environmental concerns, local economies, and shifting social norms represents, among other positive attributes, an astounding link between environmentalism and literacies.

Virginia and her peers' concern for the environment constituted a first step towards assuming cosmopolitan stances and literacies. They realized that global warming was a global issue that requires the human race working together to solve, that people are similar despite ostensible differences, and that differences must be put aside in order to fight threats that affect all people; and their speaking, writing, and other practiced evinced these traits.

This finding led me to believe that future students could engage with cosmopolitanism by way of environmentalism insofar as global efforts to fight climate change could be presented as an analogy or metaphor, perhaps even a catalyst or crucible, for cosmopolitanism stances and literacies. Most students recognize that climate change is a global crisis that the world must work together to solve and that solving this problem does not require one to sacrifice local identities or priorities. Cosmopolitanism, in general, is similar. It is "universality in difference" (Appiah, 2006, p. 151). Giving credence to this supposition, that being environmentalism can be a metaphor for emerging cosmopolitan stances and literacies, was its existence among participants atop their more concrete markers of cosmopolitan literacies, per Zhang (2019).

**Music Interests as Markers**

Participants' tastes in music and the ways they were literate in music also represented a marker of emerging cosmopolitanism insofar as they were gateways between local and world cultures. That participants had strong music interests and music literacies

represented a way they already connect between local and global sites, hence evidence of emerging cosmopolitan literacies.  Said another way, one avenue through which adolescents may cultivates cosmopolitan literacies is through music.

Interestingly, much of the data regarding adolescents' music literacies came in response to a prompt in the initial questionnaire: "Describe what you listen to."  I had expected a broad range of answers to include but not be limited to music. I anticipated talk radio, podcasts, audiobooks, voicemail, teletherapy sessions, white noise machines while sleeping, or autonomous sensory meridian response (ASMR) as possible responses. However, such was not the case.  All immediately went to music.

While it is possible that participants did not grasp the breadth of the prompt, that everyone's responses immediately went to music bears some significance. Moreover, most participants displayed examples of music literacies.  Musical literacies may include the reading or writing of music, penning lyrics, playing an instrument, knowing about music and musicians, and proficiency in computer software that produces, records, and mixes music (Csikos and Dohany, 2016; Herbst, de Wet and Rijsdijk, 2005; Levinson, 1990).  The adolescents in my study possessed such literacies.

For one, participants harbored positive affects towards music, for one thing. One participant made the statement, "I listen to a lot of music.  It doesn't matter where or what. I just love music and listen to it makes me happy." Other participants made similar remarks.  Few people actively dislike music in general, and that included the participants in my study.

 Participants  were literate in and listened to a variety of genres from around the world. Among the diverse range of genres mentioned  were country (Emma), Afropop, which is "African hip-hop" (Kwento), reggae (Jayda), RandB and hip-hop (Jayda, Yarelis), classic

rock and alternative rock (Virginia), video game parody songs (Virginia), and music in Spanish (Lali).  An international tinge lurked among participants' musical tastes.  These adolescents' genre tastes were anything but monolithic; nor were they mononational. Aside from multiple genres, participants expressed interest in music from multiple places. In addition to Virginia's use of the Japanese-based Vocaloid app, Kwento referenced Afropop, short for African popular music, which meshes contemporary pop music with traditional African music (Barlow, Eyre, and Vartoogian, 1995).  Jayda occasionally enjoyed reggae, a style of popular music of Jamaican origin characterized by a strongly accentuated offbeat, prominent bass line, simple harmonic structure, and lower tempo (Oxford University Press, 2020).  Although Lali did not enumerate any Latinx genres specifically, such as reggaeton or mariachi, she did profess a preference for listening to music in Spanish.

Some participants play edinstruments.  Greta could play the flute.  Virginia played the piano, and she used  the piano as a metaphor in a poem she submitted among her writing samples. Others wrote music, including Jayda and Yarelis with rap and song lyrics.

Virginia acknowledged some level of proficiency in computer software to compose music. She explained of her use of Vocaloid:

Do you know what a synthesizer is? Like, those electric keyboards? It's sort of like a downloadable synthesizer but instead of piano music it's human vocals, and it's like, you put syllables together to create songs. So if you're not very good at singing but you still have written a song that you think is really cool, you can purchase this software and let it sing it for you, and each 'vocaloid' is associated with a character. The most popular...has, like, green pigtails. They're from Japan.

As Virginia talked about Vocaloid, she almost sounded like a professional electronic music creator and certainly demonstrated emerging music and technology literacies.

Most fascinating about my participants' music literacies were the way they "continuously shifted in response to the cultural practices and values of the physical geographies in which he alternatively lived" akin to what one researcher observed about the transnational participant in her study (Skerrett, 2018, p. 31). Kwento's data, Jayda's data, and Virginia's data each illustrated this point. Kwento made parallels between Afropop and hip-hip, defining them similarly but listening to one in Nigeria and the other in the US. When Jayda was around her brothers and cousins, she listened to rappers like YNW Melly, but when she went to Jamaica she embraced reggae. She said of rap, "My brothers, they play, like, all type of music," and she copied whatever they liked. She said of reggae, "I liked hearing the type of music they Jamaicans play. Like, my mama, she's spiritual, and she plays reggae music, so I'm kinda used to the music they play, and whatever my mama do." Virginia also seemed to assimilate her music tastes to whomever she was around. She listened to They Might Be Giants by herself, classic rock bands like the Grateful Dead and the Beatles with her parents, and whatever her friends recommended as long as it was "not rap." Kwento's, Jayda's, and Virginia's experiences with music shifted depending on whom they were around and may be indicative of the same phenomenon Skerrett observed about the transnational youth in her study. Perhaps the same is true for any adolescent with international experience. These adolescents may have the ability to adapt their music literacies, and by proxy other literacies, to the geographic or cultural sites they visit. The data from prior research and from my study have suggested that adolescents' literacies, including but not limited to their musical

literacies, change and evolve as they travel, possibly as a consequence of travel; they are hybrid and fluid.

Lali's and Yarelis's languages preferences for music evoked hybridity and fluidity also. Both were multilingual and could speak Spanish, English, and what they call Spanglish. Yet, they had different preferences for the language of music they enjoy. Lali stated, "I love music in Spanish." Conversely, Yarelis stated, "I barely listen to Spanish music. I just listen to it when my mom put it in the car," but "I write songs, like in Spanish and English, when I feel like I have inspiration for it." Adolescents' music literacies, like their identities and multilingual practices, are hybrid and fluid.

Herein lies the tie-in with cosmopolitanism. Participants' shifting, fluid music tastes, which is indicative of transnational literacies more broadly, was another example of hybridity and fluidity, which Zhang (2019) identified as a marker of emerging cosmopolitan literacies. It is interesting that most participants with international experiences displayed hybridity and fluidity specifically with regard to music. Participants' travel made them feel comfortable shifting their musical identities, and by extension other aspects of their identities, depending on their contexts rather than holding more rigidly to a single identity that they take with them from place to place. Participants' music-listening practices reflected shifted depending on where and with whom the adolescents were located. Jayda listened to rap when she was with her brothers and cousins but she listened to reggae when she was with her mom. Virginia listened to They Might Be Giants with her friends, classic rock with her parents, and was willing to explore new genres as well.

The nature of music itself also evokes cosmopolitanism. Not only is music something appreciated globally, it has local implications. Just like global and local concern

for the environment was emblematic of cosmopolitanism, so is the idea that music is appreciated worldwide yet maintains local nuance. Music becomes another metaphor, and therefore vehicle, for students to understand cosmopolitanism. Perhaps that is why music literacies were observed among participants.

**Preference for Fantasy and Speculative Genres as Markers**

Participants' preference for fantasy and speculative fiction genres, including dystopian stories, indicated a rectifying of identities with those of others through the neutral ground of fictional worlds. The use of fiction to be an intermediary safe space between one's present reality and others around the world is mirroring of cosmopolitanism's local-in-the-global nature. Furthermore, international experiences may impact adolescents' curiosity about the world as evident by their quests to understand the real world through fiction.

A common trait in the data was observed about participants' reading interests. Participants indeed read books for pleasure, and they most frequently indulged in fiction. They mentioned novels like *Flowers of Algernon, Hunger Games, Brave New World, Bridge to Terabithia, Maze Runner, The Red Queen, Carry On, Color Me Dark, Lord of the Rings, Graceling, Long Way Down*, and more. None of the books invoked in students' minds when prompted "What do you enjoy reading?" or "Tell me what you read" were texts they were read for English class. With the exception of Emma, who in her interview mentioned *The Epic of Gilgamesh* and *1984*, two texts read for her current English class, adolescents read fiction for non-school reasons.

Thinking about the aforementioned texts enumerated, trends in genres appeared. Participants overlapped with attraction to sci-fi, dystopian, speculative, and fantasy genres. Bespeaking sci-fi interests were Kwento's statements about NASA, Stephen

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Hawking, space-related conspiracy theories, and super hero television shows and to an extent Greta's interest in sports, environmentalism, and physical therapy and her choice to submit a paper for an Anatomy and Physiology class as her writing sample. Emma's mention of the *Hunger Games* and *Maze Runner* series and the novel *1984* along with Virginia's mention of *Brave New World* bespoke adolescents' dystopian interests. She said that this genre is "more relevant to us" because it reflects the consequences of what current societies are doing wrong like "isolating themselves" and "trying not to think about how their actions impact others." Virginia also bespoke adolescents' interest in speculative fiction, citing *Flowers of Algernon*, a story that speculates what would happen if scientists discovered a surgical cure for low intelligence, as one of her favorite books. Lastly, bespeaking interest in fantasy genres, Virginia mentioned the classic fantasy series *Lord of the Rings*, Emma mentioned *The Red Queen*, and Lali mentioned *Graceling* as among their likes, and while she did not mention any titles by name, Yarlesis watched movies "about zombies and vampires, like lady freak-of-natures."

Participants' attraction to fictional worlds, where science fiction, dystopian, speculative and fantasy stories are often set, was paradoxical. In a study that sought to understand the relationship between literacies and travel to factual places, one might have hypothesized that adolescents with international experiences would have reported reading or having read about the real places they had visited or intended to visit. Such was not the case.

Though true that many adolescents, with or without international experience, may be drawn to dystopian genres, Fictional worlds provide a common ground or neutral meeting place for understanding others. As Ames (2013) wrote, adolescents' attraction to these

genres, particularly dystopian literature, reflects that they are "actually quite interested in [global] topics, although they often turn to the safe confines of fiction to wrestle with them" (p. 3).

To summarize, adolescents who traveled were drawn to fiction reading that could assist in their cultivating cosmopolitan views. Certain fiction genres can help adolescents relate to others and situate themselves among others, a key marker of emerging cosmopolitanism.

**Globalizing Connects as Markers**

Globalizing connects are literacy technologies that allow reading and writing practices to move between local and global boundaries. "Obviously the computer and the Internet are globalizing instruments par excellence but so are any other things associated with unified communication systems," wrote Brandt and Clinton (2002), "[but] in technologized, post-modern societies, in which the trade routes of goods and ideas--not to mention identities and affiliations--can be complex, corporate, and fluid, globalizing connects are regular actions in reading and writing" (p. 352). This is true even if one never leaves his or her physical location. Through globalizing connects, my participants' literacies were situated in and situated my participants in global societies. Specifically, aside from the previously mentioned markers of environmentalism, music, and fiction, other literacies manifested via global connects: texting, social media, affinity spaces, the pandemic in some ways, and of course actual travel itself plugged participants into global marketplaces of ideas.

Participants' texting and social media usage could connect them to anyone in the world with an internet connection. For some participants, including Greta, Kwento, and

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Lali, these practices regularly did connect them globally.  From our state, via texting and social media as globalizing connects, Greta connected with her friends in Germany, Kwento  connected with friends in Nigeria, and Lali connected with family in Mexico.  Specifically, they preferred FaceTime and WhatsApp.

Participants' viewing of YouTube and Netflix connected them with global society because that content is viewable by anyone in the world; texts--in this case videos--were shared by a worldwide audience.  When media is available to the entire world rather than to people in a certain locality or culture or belief system, it becomes globalized and allows consumers of that media to be part of a global community.

Participants were connected to global societies through "affinity spaces" (Gee, 2004), "where people affiliate with others based primarily on shared activities, interests, and goals, not shared race, class culture, ethnicity, or gender" (p. 67). Participants' affinities included food, sports, music, religion, and environmentalism.  These affinities included global communities, like Emma, who rooted for a university team in college sports and was thus immediately connected with a worldwide network of fans with her affinity for that same team despite not necessarily having other demographic traits in common or living in the sample place.  One could reside in Dubai or speak Spanish or be Black or be female but all would be part of the same affinity space of that team's fans in global society--that is, all over the world people read, write, talk, listen, and view content about that team.

The pandemic even became a site through which participants' literacies situated them in global societies.  The word pandemic, composed of the stem *pan-* for "all" and *dem-* for "people," meaning that a disease has spread to affect all people around the world.  COVID-19 was not some localized problem; it was something that connected

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people worldwide, and so when participants wrote or spoke about the pandemic or described reading or watching content about the pandemic, as did Kwento, Lali, and Virginia in their follow-up questionnaires, these literacy practices situated them in a global society. Their practices provided a final link between my participants and a global community also concerned about COVID-19. The pandemic is a global connect because it as phenomenon through which all world citizens are connected; when our literacy practices involve the pandemic, we connect with this global community.

Travel itself is a globalizing connect. It is a way that people literally connect with others by traveling to where others live, but it also positions the traveler as a member of the traveling community. In the same way that birds of a feather flock together, so do travelers attract to other travelers. Like attracts like.

People around the world are connected in a variety of ways, whether they are physically present with each other or not. These constitute a myriad of global societies. Participants plugged into these societies or had the potential to plug into these societies through literacy modes and practices related to texting, social media, affinities, the pandemic, and the nature of travel. Participants' literacies were situated locally as well as globally, and they employed literacies to situate themselves locally and globally. Participants' connections with global societies were cabled by their literacies.

Through globalizing connects, participants' literacies were situated in and situated participants in global societies. Several globalizing connects—texting and social media, online streaming services, affinity spaces, the pandemic, and travel—were markers of emerging cosmopolitan literacies. Students realized they were part of a local community and global one, and they could move fluidly within this hybrid. Their local literacy

practices existed within larger global networks, and such local-within-global bipositionality bespoke cosmopolitanism.

**Summary of Cosmopolitan Markers**

Respectful but critical engagements with difference, fluid and hybrid identities, sense of agency, environmentalism, music literacies, speculative fiction genre preferences, and other globalizing connects were markers of emerging cosmopolitan literacies among participants. This finding has been supported by prior research which has shown that travel often predicates, or at least reinforces, cosmopolitan views, practices, and literacies (Compton-Lilly and Hawkins, 2020; De Costa, 2014; Heinzmann, Kunzle, Schallhart, and Muller, 2015; McCabe, 1994; Purcell, 2020; Schartner, 2016; Tarrant, Rubin, and Stoner, 2014, 2015; Sahni, 2010).

Compton-Lilly and Hawkins (2020) gave life to this point. Their work with immigrant youth revealed a direct connection between the youth's transnational awareness and transnational literacies and their cosmopolitan practices, which they went a step further and call critical. They confer that immigrant adolescents' "multifaceted and fluid literacy and language practices...foster transnational awareness and can ultimately lead to the emergence of critical cosmopolitan stances and humanizing views of the world" (p. 2). Like the immigrant youth in Compton-Lilly and Hawkins' (2020) work, the participants in my study acquired analogous transnational awareness, which explains why they began to cultivate and cosmopolitan stances and literacies. Adolescents with international experiences, like immigrant youth, have worldviews and literacies that are cosmopolitan because they have transnational awareness due to their travel.

In short, travel can effectuate cosmopolitan literacies because travel results in transnational awareness. Evidence of transnational awareness among participants in this study came from their critical but respectful engagements with difference, their hybrid and fluid identities, their sense of agency in effectuating change, their environmentalism, their music practices, their preference for speculative fiction genres as neutral ground between transnational places, and their use of globalizing connects.

### Final Remarks on Findings

This study sought to answer a question about the impact of international experiences on the literacies of adolescents. To answer this question, I interviewed and gathered other data from seven adolescents, each with unique international experiences. I found that in addition to confirming what the data predicted would be true about their literacies, new findings revealed their literacies were utilitarian-oriented, talking-centric, geocentric, critical, and cosmopolitan in ways that suggested travel was a mediating factor. These findings add the fields of New Literacy Studies, study abroad research, and the research on transnational youth. The findings have revealed new literacies adolescents with international experiences employ.

That participants' situated their literacies in and used literacies to situate themselves in global societies, not just local ones, was perhaps the most remarkable finding. This finding tied especially to cosmopolitan literacies, which participants in my study nascently cultivated, and also to cosmopolitanism in general as an outcome of their travel. Participants' literacies, situated in global societies, reinforced and was reinforced by cosmopolitan views. The way that the adolescents in my study could connect them with people anywhere in the world helped them understand that the human race is and should be more connected and united than isolated and divided.

An important trickle of critical perspectives flowed through these findings as well. Participants recognized empowerment as a utility of literacies, they recognized ways that people use language to empower or disempower, they critiqued issues of power in and through their speaking and writing, and they used literacies for social justice. Critical theory undergirds the critical lenses and literacies and the cosmopolitan literacies observed among participants. A critical perspective also accounts for looking for possible issues of inequity among adolescents with international experiences.

Ultimately, as a result of this study, I found that Greta, Emma, Kwento, Jayda, Lali, Virginia, and Yarelis had experiences in countries outside of the US for very different reasons; yet, their literacies bore similarities. A conclusion could be made that their international experiences accounted for these similarities. In other words, the data suggest that travel impacts adolescents' literacies in unique ways rooted in critical and cosmopolitan perspectives.

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CHAPTER 6

FINDINGS: NEW INSIGHTS

As I looked back on this project and its findings about the literacies of adolescents with international experiences, three important new insights emerged. One, I realized the highly beneficial nature of travel despite the circumstances. Two, I realized with little doubt that travel positively and advantageously impacts literacies. Three, I realized that international experiences were more common among adolescents than I anticipated, that this counternarrative warranted attention, and that teachers might improve adolescents' literacies by leveraging the international experiences they are likely to have had.

**Travel's Inherent Benefits**

Because the adolescents in this study each experienced literacies similarly but had different types of international experiences, the implication is that the underlying factor—international experiences—mattered more than the nature of said experiences. Without discounting the negative aspects of travel, which I admit do exist, I realized that travel of any kind also has inherent benefits despite the circumstances or context in which it occurs.

To review, the adolescents in my study had a range of travel experiences. Participants included a German national in the US for a year of study, an American girl who lived in South Africa with her missionary parents during elementary school and a more recent trip to Spain, a Nigeran teen male who moved here for high school and hopefully college, an African American female who recently traveled to Jamaica to visit family, a Latinx senior whose family traveled during winter and summer breaks from

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school to their home in Mexico, an American girl whose family traveled to Spain when she was in fifth grade, and a high school senior who moved to the US from Puerto Rico when she was a freshman. The reason for commonalities in their literacies is explained not by the type of international experience but by the fact of having had international experiences.

Similarities between my findings and findings in prior research about the literacies of transnational students and about the literacies-adjacent outcomes of study abroad programs provide credence to the claim that students with any international experiences have the potential to cultivate literacies in similarly beneficial ways. The many parallels which existed in findings about the literacies of transnational youth, about the literacies-adjacent outcomes of study abroad programs, and the literacies of participants in my study whose international experiences ran a gamut suggest that travel itself, in whatever context, can impact young people in meaningful ways, with literacies primed as one object of impact.

These parallels also have implications for what types of abroad experiences adolescents, and by extension young adults, should have in order to experience desired outcomes, be they related to literacies or not. Scholars have already shown that length of abroad experience does not correlate with the impact of travel (Reynolds-Case, 2013; Ritz, 2011; Smith and Mitry, 2008; Walters, Charles and Bingham, 2017). My findings corroborated that type of travel does not correlate with impact, as all participants, despite the type of travel, were highly literate. International travel beyond traditional study abroad programs, foreign exchanges, and school-based or teen-geared tours such as EF or Passports could include mission trips and family vacations and ought be lauded and touted and potentially valuable. Moreover, short trips could be just as impactful as long trips. Any trip has the potential to impact a sojourner and his or her literacies.

Ultimately, the parallels reveal: Most travel is good travel. Even if some aspects of travel are negative, the benefits outweigh the downsides. There is something similar about international experiences--be the context transnational, immigrant, foreign exchange, study abroad, mission work, religious pilgrimage, vacation abroad, visiting family abroad, or even living abroad for a parent's work--that impacts and interacts with literacies in mostly positive ways. Transnational youth, matriculates in study abroad, exchange, and immersion programs, and adolescents who have traveled for any other reason acquire international experiences that are similarly impactful.

### Travel's Indisputable Impact on Literacies

The second major insight which emerged from my findings is that the literacies of adolescents are near indisputably impacted by international experiences in ways that are positive and advantageous. My participants' literacies remained uniquely informed by their having traveled abroad. Below, I synthesize, review, and enumerate holistically how travel impacted their literacies and reiterate why the impact is positive.

The coincidence of advantageous literacies and international experiences among participants was so high. Their very simultaneous presence among a population of adolescents suggests they have something in common. Granted, I cannot say that just because a rise of ice cream sales happened at the same time the number of baby conceptions increased that the two are related, but if this claim were backed up by literature then perhaps I could make that claim. Such was the case for the coincidence of literacies and international experiences. Every participant had literacies with similar traits, and every participant had some sort of international experience. Plus, prior literature did already exist to suggest their connection is not a fluke (Bein, 1988;

Hornberger and Link, 2012; Lam and Warriner, 2012; Merrell, 1949; Ramanathan and Creigs, 1999; Taira, 2019; Warriner, 2009; Yakimowski, Russo, Clark-Adedoyin, 2003).

Secondly, while this study was qualitative and descriptive and therefore disregarded need for a control group, considering the literacies of adolescents among the general population for comparison does illuminate the likelihood of travel as a mediating factor in the literacies of participants in this study. Even though some scholars have suggested that adolescents lead highly literate lives (Moje, Overby, Tysvaer, and Morris, 2008; Smith and Wilhelm, 2014), others have concluded the opposite. Some have found that adolescent in general have decreased enjoyment in reading over the years, decreased amount of reading per day and reading engagement, and were less likely to read at or above grade level if they perceived reading negatively (Clark, 2019). Additionally, news about students' poor performance on assessments of literacies, namely standardized tests, in some states further paints a grim picture of literacies in the US (Bowers, 2018). The literacies of adolescents in my study who traveled abroad appear stronger than what the data said about the literacies of the general adolescent population. Travel may have some impact.

Third, travel may positively impact literacies because the more a person travels, the more she can "see...for your own self," as Kwento said, that literacies are an important part of the "real world," as Emma called it. Consider hypothetically the literacies one would employ when traveling: booking airfare and lodging, researching the places where one is going by reading travel guides and watching travel documentaries, learning basic phrases in the native language, seeing print in other languages and alphabets, learning about alphabets and languages as a result, hearing people one does not understand, translating dollars into a foreign currency, journaling about what one has seen and done, posting photos to social

media, texting and talking with friends and family back home, having conversations with new people one meets, becoming interested in new things because of what one has encountered, researching those new interests, translanguaging, codeswitching, codemeshing, global literacies, critical literacies, cosmopolitan literacies, reading maps, reading situations, reading body language, reading books and magazines while on trains and buses, reading the text that is the world around us, and so much more. This is what the participant meant when she said, "Well, in the real world, you just need it literacies to be able to understand what you're doing." Exactly. The "need" for literacies is literally everywhere. Travel impacts literacies because travel helps people "see" these innumerable ways that literacies are needed in the world beyond those that are needed in one's immediate life and local surroundings.

In a similar vein but more reflective of this study's theoretical framework, travel may impact literacies because travel reveals the circumstances that allow a person to become critical and cosmopolitan, and once one has these perspectives he or she is more likely to understand the utilities of literacies in ways that motivate him or her to be literate especially when issues of equity, empowerment and disempowerment, or social justice are involved.

Fifth, travel and literacies have underlying similarities that reinforce their impact on each other. The academic, linguistic, sociocultural, critical and identity outcomes of travel fertilize the academic, linguistic, social, critical, and identity components of literacies, and vice versa. These underlying similarities are like water flowing through the same plant. Travel and literacies are like a leafy houseplant plant, with the former comprising the roots and the latter its foliage. Whether the hydration comes from the academic, linguistic, sociocultural, critical, or identity watering cans, either way the roots and foliage will

expand and blossoms will appear. The thicker the roots, the bushier the foliage. The waterer cannot flow through one but not the other. Travel abroad is like the roots of a plant that spread to retain more water, which in turn can flow into the ever-increasing foliage that are literacies, which in turn fuels this plant's growth through photosynthesis. Travel impacts literacies, for sure, but then again literacies impact travel, too. Literacies and travel, more simply put, are made of much of the same stuff. Both are about interpreting and making sense of the world.

Participants made direct statements about the impact of their travels on literacies-- i.e. travel impacted literacies because participants believed that travel impacted their literacies. When asked, "Do you think that having traveled abroad has made you better or had any impact on the way that you read, write, speak, or listen?" one participant, Emma, responded, "I think so." Similarly, in response to a question "Is your interest in reading ...in any way related to having traveled?" Kwento answered after thinking for a moment, "Yes. Yes!" Participants believed that travel positively impacted their literacies.

Travel positively impacts literacies because travel provides fodder for literacies. Travel supplies adolescents not only reasons but content to consume and produce, texts to read, write, speak, hear, and watch. For Emma and Kwento, travel was the fodder for their literacies because something they experienced while abroad caused them to read; in Emma's case, exposure to foreign religions caused her to read and learn about them, and in Kwento's case, a field trip to NASA sparked his interest in reading about science and space. Another participant, Lali, described how her travels gave her something to talk about with her friends: "When they find out that I go to Mexico--a lot of my friends do know that I go, but they don't know my parents go--they're, like, "How do your parents go?" Lali

answers their questions and tells her friends about her trips, about her parents, and about how her family acquired legal status. Kwento talked to his friends about his school trips too, telling them about how saw President Obama come out of the White House and wave, but they did believe him until he showed them a photograph. Travel also provided fodder for participants' critical and cosmopolitan literacies because they recognized injustices only in reference to things they had experienced through travel. For example, Greta, whose travel led her to compare schools in Germany and the US, recognized injustices in education. She referenced the unfairness of how teachers in the US do not or cannot share as openly their political views with students as a problem in the US compared to Germany, and she recognized how teachers can get too much power and take advantage of their authority in Germany, which is unfair, because teachers do not have as much administrative oversight as they do in the US. Her speaking about these injustices betokened critical literacies in addition to being fodder for literacies. Whether providing fodder for reading and researching interests, for topics of conversation with friends, or for speaking out against injustices, international experiences feed the literacies of adolescents, thereby strengthening them.

Travel also impacts literacies because aural immersion impacts language acquisition, and knowing a foreign language contributes to a host of other metalinguistic awarenesses. Participants in my study immersed themselves in languages they wanted to learn, whether that were Lali speaking Spanish in her home or Virginia watching French language films, and as a result could speak multiple languages. Travel also provides an immersion opportunity. When a person travels to a place where a different language is spoken, that language is more likely to be acquired. Study abroad research and others have

already concluded this, and my study confirmed it. The general proclivities of participants towards speaking further pointed to the potentially strong aural immersion component of travel may especially have on foreign language acquisition.

Next, travel impacts literacies because international experiences create "funds of knowledge" (Moll, et al., 1992). A detailed section in the literature review showed that transnational youth had transnational funds of knowledge and predicted that participants in my study would also acquire funds of knowledge from their travel, which indeed they did. Participants perceived their international experiences positively, talked about travel in their interviews with me and with their friends, and displayed numerous other traits that were assets and from which they could draw knowledge and skills for literacies. In short, travel impacts literacies because travel is a fund of knowledge.

Travel may impact literacies by way of fiction's potential to be a way to rectify local with global experiences. Participants in my study were especially drawn to speculative fiction and fantasy genres, which I previously cited as evidence of emerging cosmopolitanism. Ames (2013) has shown that adolescents may turn to dystopian fiction to grapple with global issues: "Teenage readers are drawn to the way these texts repackage societal concerns from reality, displacing them into the safe comforts of fiction where they are addressed recurrently with more favorable results" (pp. 3, 17). Travel may lead adolescents to become more curious about global issues, which speculative, dystopian, and fantasy fiction genres allow them a safe, neutral place to explore.

Home and family environment certainly facilitate the impact of travel on literacies as well. In some ways, the nature of travel can explain the impact it has on literacies; in other ways, how travel and literacies are nurtured can also explain their impact. In sooth,

this revelation came from a participant. When asked, "Do you see in any way any connection between you having traveled and the way that you read, write, speak, listen, and so forth?" she replied,

> I think it has to do with family structures, honestly, because families that have the resources and planning skills to have an extended vacation in a different country are also families that have resources and planning skills to make sure their children study, have a study space, and have study materials. ... So, this isn't, like, to denigrate other families because some people have unfortunate circumstances; it's just to say that families with better circumstances are able to travel and they're able to emphasize literacy. It's also about values that a family holds because...if a family values certain experiences like international travel, which sort of broadens someone's horizons, they'll probably also value literacy because literacy also broadens your horizons.

What remarkable revelations. Adolescents whose parents value travel also likely value literacies, and families with the means to travel also have the means to encourage literacies at home. This participant's revelations suggest that the likelihood of travel impacting literacies increases in a conducive home environment.

Before concluding this section, I want to reiterate that travel not only impacted literacies, but the impact was positive. Evidence of the positive impact become most apparent though recapitulating the traits with emphasis on why they are advantageous and literacies that stakeholders—students, teachers, parents, researchers, lawmakers, et al.—should desire in adolescents. Stakeholders should want adolescents to recognize, as did the participants in this study, that literacies serve purposes beyond mere mastery of autonomous

skills disconnected from the sociocultural contexts in which they exist. All adolescents should be effective communicators, which my findings on participants' talking-centric literacies and speaking and writing about the benefits of travel have suggested is true about adolescents with international experiences. All adolescents should speak more than one language, and all should also define language broadly. All students should have the advantages of multilingualism. All should recognize where different languages were spoken, who intuited geographic places as cultural sites for languages, and who understood that language and place are related. All should care about the environment, especially if environmentalism can function as a vehicle for cultivating cosmopolitan values that help citizens of the world work better together. All should be aware of power, wealth, and social injustice, too, even if it involves questioning their own privilege and admitting their role in oppression. All should want to know their places and roles in the world, to know literally where they are on planet earth and where other places are as well, and to contextualize their localities and local identities within global societies. All should be critical. All should be cosmopolitan. These are literacies my data suggested adolescents with international experiences cultivate, and the literacies were positive. In short, I did not find that adolescents who have traveled abroad were unintelligent or badly behaved or literacies-averse; I did not find that they never read or write. Quite conversely, I found they had desirable literacies that I would love for any of my students to possess. Stakeholders should desire adolescents develop traits in their literacies like the adolescents in this study. If travel could be a means to these ends, what a wonderful thing.

To summarize, international experiences positively impact adolescents' literacies. The reasons why are because travel avails a broad view of the world including a broad

view of literacies and their utilities; because travel creates the circumstances needed to become critical and cosmopolitan in ways that illuminate the empowerment utility of literacies; because travel is perceived by adolescents as having a connection with their literacies, and perception is reality; because travel provides experiences for adolescents to read and write about; because travel provides aural immersion opportunities that facilitate acquisition and/ore retention of foreign languages; because travel provides transnational funds of knowledge that are inherently assets; because travel reveals complexities and travesties that motivate understanding of others through the globally accessible neutral ground of speculative fiction; and because travel is a value often shared by families who also value literacies and have the resources to promote both.

## Travel's Increasing Frequency

The final insight to emerge from the data stemmed from how many adolescents seemed to have international experiences, how their commonplaceness composed a counternarrative to my preconception of travel as a white privilege, and what the commonness further implied about travel and its byproducts as funds of knowledge for literacies curricula.   Said another way, international experiences were more common among adolescents than I realized, were latent and yet easily leverageable among adolescents for literacies, and made the curricular implications of this study quite compelling.

To begin by reiteration, international experiences seemed pervasive, or at least more common than I anticipated. The participant recruitment phase of my study provided initial evidence if this fact. I had intended to recruit at least five and was worried finding even that number would be challenging.  In reality,  I had no problem recruiting

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participants. Every student asked to participate, with one exception, agreed with even more volunteering but never formally needing to be asked. So many adolescents at my study site, it seemed, had international experiences. I had anticipated that far fewer students had traveled abroad, and that those who had would be white and from families with disposable income, as the data about study abroad trends and the high cost of travel have suggested, but I was very wrong.

Indeed, once I looked, ample statistics substantiated the increasing commonality of international experiences among the population, including adolescents. The number of foreign-born immigrants in the US has nearly tripled in the last fifty years (Radford, 2019, June 17), and 10% are designated ELLs (National Center for Education Statistics, n.d.), indicating a likelihood of international or transnational backgrounds. Matriculation in college study abroad programs is increasing also, having steadily risen from 154,168 students during the 2000-2001 school year to 313,415 in the 2014-2015 school year (Institute of International Education, 2018). The number of international airline flights has nearly doubled since the millennium began, with approximately 100 million tickets booked by US passengers in 2003 and 200 million in 2017 (Bureau of Transportation Statistics, n.d.), a fact mirrored by the near doubling of rates with which adolescents reported traveling abroad during the turn of the century (Lyon, 2005). In one study of adolescents, 61% stated they had traveled in another country with family (American Council on Education, 2008). Globally, people with international experiences is even higher, an estimated 1 billion tourists, of which an estimated 370 million are adolescents (World Tourism Organization, 2016). Reflecting the cultural shift in value of abroad travel, some school districts have actually implemented grant-funded opportunities for high school students to travel (DCPS Global Education, 2016). These data show that

international experiences among adolescents are more common than what prior data, which came mostly from study abroad research, had suggested.

The main reason why I expected my participants to be more racially monolithic despite statistics about increasing racial diversity in our country is because of what study abroad data suggested. While no data are available on the precise breakdown of adolescents with international experiences in terms of percentage with international experience, nature of experience, or other demographic factors, the readily available data in study abroad research suggested that participants in my study would likely be White. 73% of those who study abroad in college are White, with the remaining minority roughly equally split among Black, Hispanic, and Asian students (Institute of International Education, 2018). These data are not at all representative of the overall US population, which is 53% White, 24% Hispanic, and 14% Black (US Census Bureau, 2017). I incorrectly assumed that that the participants in my study would be predominately White despite a much more diverse school population, just like the majority of college study abroad participants are White despite a much more diverse US population.

For similar reasons, I also expected participants to be wealthy. Study abroad scholars have done extensive research on what motivates undergraduates to matriculate these programs. They have identified travel costs, other socioeconomic factors, and need for some students to remain in the US to work so they can contribute to family finances as factors considered (American Council on Education, 2008; Hurst, 2019; Johnstone, Smith, and Malmgren, 2020; Salisbury, Paulsen, and Pascarella, 2011; Simon and Ainsworth, 2012; Twombly, Salisbury, Tumanut, and Klute, 2012). Aside from their findings, the costs accrued when travelling--e.g., international airfare, lodging, transportation, food, and other

items while abroad--combined with the fact that over half of adolescents live in poverty (United States Census Bureau, 2017), make easy work to conclude that money is associated with who does and does not have international experiences, privileging the wealthy.

In sooth, participants in my study came from a range of backgrounds and were diverse in other ways as well. Three were White, two were Black, and two were Latinx. Six were female, and one was male. Some had financial worries, but then some described their families as wealthier than others. Five took advanced-level classes or qualified for associate degree-level courses at the local technical college, but two had IEPs and took Academic Support classes to supplement their learning. Their living arrangements varied also, with one staying with a host family, one staying with an aunt and uncle, one living with her single mother, one in an intergenerational household, and three in nuclear families with both parents and siblings. Although all participants were multilingual, four learned English as their second language and three were native English speakers. They harbored different values as well, as attitudes toward LGBTQ+ issues exemplified; one participant identified as gay, two challenged sex and gender binaries, two condemned homosexuality altogether as anti-Biblical or unnatural, and two did not address the topic. One participant said she would vote for Trump if she could, but others made statements in alignment with liberal views. Career goals varied too, with participants wanting to pursue physical therapy, science, nursing, international trade, legal, and education careers. Their reasons for international travel differed also, with two in the US for education, two having gone abroad for religious reasons, two who traveled to visit family still living abroad, and one who is an immigrant. The only outlier, a variable shared by all participants aside from travel abroad, were that all identified as Christian. The aforementioned demographics go to show that adolescents with international

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experiences are more diverse than some prior research may make one think.  The diverseness

of adolescents with international experiences, both in this study and by other measures, thus

provides an important counternarrative to problematize assumptions about who typically has

international travel experience.

Considering counternarratives evokes the critical lens used as this study's

theoretical framework.  Frequently a method employed by critical race theorists and

researchers for social justice, counternarratives are "a method of telling the stories of

those people whose experiences are not often told" and "a tool for exposing, analyzing,

and challenging the majoritarian stories of racial privilege" (Solorzano and Yosso, 2002,

p. 32).   They have many functions, including that they "challenge the perceived wisdom

of those at society's center by providing a context to understand and transform

established belief systems" and "can open new windows into the reality of those at the

margins of society by showing possibilities beyond the ones they live" (Solorzano and

Yosso, 2002, p. 36).

The narrative all-too-often told about the benefits of international experiences has

centered around the White college undergraduate studying abroad, and the research on

study abroad outcomes primarily contains data from this demographic.  Some researchers

have attempted to explore study abroad using counterstory methodology focusing on

underrepresented groups (Chang, 2017), or they have written specifically about the

experiences of these groups, namely African Americans, even though they comprise among

the lowest percent of matriculates (Acquaye and Crewe; Clark, Clark, Lee, Qu, Schwartz,

and Burke, 2014; Dinani, 2019; Evans, 2009; Ewing and Grady, 2006; Lu, Reddick, Dean,

and Pacero, 2015; Ramanathan and Creigs, 1999; Timm, 2016; Yamikowski, Russo, and

Clar-Adedoyin, 2003). Providing positive accounts of non-White populations benefitting from travel abroad is in any case important. The dominance of research on Whites who travel conveys that only Whites do travel or that only they can travel, which of course is not true and part of what counternarratives, including this dissertation, aim to rectify.

Counternarratives affirm underrepresented groups. As was purported by Chang (2017), Cook and Dixson (2012), Ladson-Billings (2009) and Milner (2007), researchers need to disrupt deficit notions of difference, which requires providing counternarratives. This meant recognizing and reconceptualizing the international experiences of sometimes-marginalized groups like immigrants, refugees, and other transnationals as valuable in the same way that we have so highly valued the international experiences provided to wealthy Whites via study abroad and for-profit teen travel providers. International experiences cannot be an asset for the latter if they are not also perceived as assets for the former. Travel cannot be viewed as a deficit for immigrants and transnationals but an asset for wealthy, White college students. As I argued earlier, most travel is good travel. Affirming the experiences of all adolescents who have traveled internationally, which I have done in this dissertation, especially those sometimes marginalized for other reasons (e.g., language, religion), is the very definition of a counternarrative that dismantles negative stereotypes and perceptions of underrepresented groups. This dissertation has painted all adolescents with international experiences as highly literate and their experiences as assets.

The importance of an affirmative, asset-view approach brings me to the final point of this fourth insight. Assuming the previous insights are true--that international experiences in any form have similar outcomes, that the literacies of adolescents with international experiences are advantageous, and that travel positively impacts literacies--

and assuming that international experiences are common among adolescents, they represent a latent reservoir of literacies that teachers can tap. International experiences are common and they are leverageable for literacies as funds of knowledge.

## Summary of Insights

To review, three new insights emerged in the findings from my study. International experiences have inherent benefits, including an impact on literacies, despite the length and circumstances of travel. Evidence of positive, advantageous impacts of international experiences on literacies is readily available. Lastly, international experiences are more common among adolescents than stakeholders realize, they provide a counternarrative that contradicts misconceptions about who travels and why, and they reveal latent yet easily leverageable funds of knowledge for many adolescents' literacies.

CHAPTER 7

IMPLICATIONS

Herein this chapter, I extrapolate my findings' and insights' implications for

teachers, researchers, and other education stakeholders. As I considered what was meant

by the term "implications" and what should be discussed in this section of the dissertation, I

recalled my experiences as a reader of scholarly research. As a research consumer, I crave

actionable steps, applicable suggestions, practical advice, and the like. The findings

certainly matter, but I strongly admire those who can convey, in simple terms, what real

teachers, researchers, and stakeholders can actually do now that the researcher has found

what he or she has found. A researcher should be able to tell the audience clearly and

concisely what should be done as a result of the findings. Thus, in what follows, in as

practically-minded terms as possible, I delineate what my study implies.

**Implications For High School ELA Teachers**

The implications of this study's findings to classroom teachers is grounded upon

three premises. First, among the most striking findings of this study was how widespread

abroad experiences were for adolescents, certainly more common than I had erroneously

anticipated. Second, as Skerrett and Bomer (2011, 2013) suggested, literal borderzones

that transnational adolescents transverse are analogous to the metaphorical borders

present in most adolescents--that is, all individuals, not just those from immigrant,

transnational, and multilinguistic backgrounds, pass through figurative borderzones

everyday--and thus all students can potentially benefit from instructional practices that

recruit their borderzone experiences "where languages and lifeworlds converge" (Skerrett and Bomer, 2013, p. 335). Finally, my findings about the literacies of adolescents with international experiences overlapped with much of what the literature said about adolescents' literacies in general, meaning my study confirmed what is known to be good for adolescents literacies in general, whether or not a teen as traveled abroad. Crafted with these premises in mind and grounded in my data, several suggestions for what teachers can do to facilitate the impact of international experiences are enumerated below. The three premises explain why my findings are highly applicable and likely effective for teaching not only adolescents who have traveled but any adolescent who may travel.

**Advocate for Expanded Access to International Experiences**

Assuming my findings are true, that a complementary connection between travel abroad and literacies exists, the logical conclusion is that providing these opportunities to more students, especially those who could not otherwise afford them, is a step in the right direction. Teachers can organize international field trips through providers such as EF Tours, Passports, and other for-profit companies and conduct fundraisers to reduce the out-of-pocket costs. Teachers could encourage students to apply for summer trips through for-profit providers such National Geographic Student Expeditions and raise funds to provide needs-based scholarships to participate. Teachers can also encourage students to apply for one of the handful of grant-funded abroad programs for adolescents such as the Congress-Bundestag Youth Exchange, Kennedy-Lugar Youth Exchange and Study Abroad, or National Security Language Initiative for Youth available through the US Department of State's Bureau of Education and Cultural Affairs.

Additionally, teachers can model their own wanderlust and curiosity about the world and establish their classrooms as affinity spaces for wanderlusters.  This may motivate students to pursue travel on their own, such as participating in a church mission trip, hosting or becoming a foreign exchange student, taking a gap year to travel, participating in BirthRight if qualifying, joining the military or PeaceCorps after graduation, et al., but of course financial resources may play a major role in who can access many of these experiences. However, in developing a classroom of wanderlust, teachers could encourage students to manage travel less expensively by traveling by car or staying with relatives.

**Promote A Globally-Situated Reconceptualization of Literacies**

Teachers can facilitate the impact that international experiences have on literacies by reconceptualizing and redefining literacies in ways that match the reality of adolescents' globally situated literacies and the way they use a linguistic repertoire to communicate.  My findings showed that adolescents with international experiences defined literacies in broad, utilitarian ways as a function of their travel and that they defined languages as one piece in a larger communication puzzle. Teachers' definitions of literacies and languages need to catch up.

Teachers can begin with a simple shift in their mindsets by challenging literacy norms. The data in this study showed that adolescents' literacies were very encompassing. Based on this finding, teachers may want to expand their own definitions of literacies to match modern-day students.  Teachers limit students by limiting their definition of literacies. I suggest that teachers expand their definitions so they can expand their students' potentials for successes.

Teachers need to embrace a more inclusive definitions of language as well. Text speak, emojis, sign language, scientific nomenclature, slang, and so forth are also

languages. Many teachers, especially ELA teachers, forget that AAVE is a language. In concurrence with abundant scholarly work, they need to recognize that AAVE is an actual language with its own linguistic rules for vocabulary, semantics, pronunciation, pragmatics, phonology, grammar, and syntax (Boutte, 2015; Delpit, 2006).

Persisting definitions of literacies and languages in in-school settings is likely derived from standards. The pressure to teach skills-based literacies assessed by standardized tests pervades popular pedagogy often to the exclusion of authentic tasks and blinds students to the real reasons they need literacies in their actual lives. The emphasis on testing affects how teachers define literacies and language. Redefining literacies and language inclusively and in the plural expands not only what and how English teachers can teach but also the ways in which adolescents can be successful. Unfortunately, until the standardized tests go away, teachers will always likely feel pressured to teach literacies and languages as defined normatively and traditionally as skills, but if teachers can at least reconceptualize that actual literacies and languages go far beyond skills, they are moving in the right direction. Furthermore, as Urbanski (2005) observed: "If we teach students to think … all of the assessment stuff takes care of itself…. We simply teach [what we want] and let it go. And then we help our students to realize that tests are important and that they should do their best. Tests are not problem if [teachers] have created a culture of learning" (pp. 20-21). Making literacies about more than skills and tests does not prevent adolescents' abilities to do well on tests; quite conversely, because they are engaged in authentic, utilitarian, real-world literacies, the skills will come.

Within the move away from standards- and skills-based definitions and towards reconceptualizations of literacies, the utilitarian and generative potentials of literacies and

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language ought to be emphasized. My findings revealed that adolescents who have traveled abroad were attuned to the uses of being literate. Therefore, teachers could help them and all adolescents recognize the utilitarian and generative potentials of literacies as well. Teens with international experiences appear to recognize literacies' utilities and doing so connects with their being highly literate; thus, one could hypothesize that these teens' recognition of literacies uses underwrites their motivations to be literate. If teachers want to motivate students, they could do so by emphasizing literacies' utilities. Teachers should especially reconceptualize literacies curricula in ways that opportune generative experiences (Ashton-Warner, 1968; Freire, 1968/2018; Katz, 2020) wherein the utilities of literacies are imagined by the adolescents rather than externally prescribed to them. Regarding key vocabularies, Ashton-Warner (1963) condemned "imposed vocabulary" (p. 40). She taught her students to read by teaching them how to spell words that they wanted to know how to spell. Her work may inspire those who teach adolescents, for one example, to generate their own vocabularies rather than memorize a preset list of words from workbook series. Emphasizing literacies' utilities in general is important, but having students generate their own reasons to use literacies is even more crucial, and such strategies hearken to what NLS scholars emphasized about socially meaningful literacies (Gee, 1990, 2010; Scribner and Cole, 1981; Street, 1984, 2003). Utility-oriented, generative literacies have the added potential to empower and liberate adolescents if they are marginalized or oppressed. "Liberating actions," wrote Friere (1968/2018), "must correspond...to the generative themes" (p. 102).

Reconceptualizing literacies and language should also involve redefining these as parts in a linguistic repertoire (Blommaert, 2010). The participants in my study used a

variety of literacies and languages as part of a larger, holistic linguistic repertoire for communication. Lali's and Yarelis's use of "Spanglish," wherein they used multiple languages as part of a single communications system, was most evident of repertoires in the data; but, really, any time participants employed multilingual practices—be it translanguaging (Canagarajah, 2011) codeswitching (Baker, 2011; Martinez, 2010; Young, 2009), codemeshing (Phillips, 2020, February 3), language brokering (López, Lezama, and Heredia, 2019), or otherwise—they showed "super-diverse" and "complex" literacies including "concrete accents, language varieties, registers, genres, modalities such as writing--ways of using languages in particularly communicative settings and spheres of life" (Blommaert, 2010, p. 102).

A globally-situated reconceptualization of literacies would also require a reconceptualization of travel itself. Travel would have to be viewed as having benefits beyond an acquisition of superficial new experiences. If students are to believe that travel impacts literacies they would have first to be open to the idea generally that international experiences can be enlightening and liberating and good for them.

To conclude, I refer again to my findings. Therein, I attributed participants' broad definitions of and keenness to the utilities of literacies and languages as a function of their international experiences. Travel, I argued, broadened their understanding of the world, including their understanding of literacies and languages, especially their utilitarian and generative potentials and the unique way travel allows literacies to be globally situated. Based on these findings, I now suggest that teachers embrace and promote these reconceptualizations of literacies as marketing and motivational appeals to adolescents.

**Create Opportunities for Travel to be Fodder for Literacies**

Teachers can increase the impact of travel on literacies by providing opportunities for students to write, speak, research, and share about their international experiences. My data showed that adolescents' travel provided fodder for literacies. For example, in Emma's case, exposure to foreign religions caused her to read and learn about them. Lali described how her travels gave her something to talk about with her friends. In Kwento's case, a field trip to NASA sparked his interest in reading about science and space, and furthermore, he talked to his friends about his school trips from Nigeria to the US, too. Greta's travel exposed to her differences between Germany and the US and awoke her to injustices in education about which she voiced concerns.

Whether providing fodder for reading and researching interests, for topics of conversation with friends, or for speaking out against injustices, international experiences seem to feed the literacies of adolescents, thereby strengthening them. The students in my study appeared inspired by their travels and motivated to engage in various literacies as a result. By providing students opportunities to speak and write about their international experiences, classroom teachers can engage students because they are rooting literacies in something known to stimulate their literacies. Students with international experiences want to share their stories but perhaps do not feel welcome to do so; said simply, we as English teachers must welcome their stories because the literacies engaged by sharing them are profound.

**Connect In-School Literacies with Out-of-School International Experiences**

As both prior research (e.g., Nagle and Stooke, 2016) and my data showed, students' literacies thrived extracurricularly but were often inconsistent with the expectations of or unobservable by classroom teachers. Therefore, teachers must adopt

strategies that allow their students to harness their out-of-school literacies in ways that affect what they are asked to do in school. As predominately out-of-school activities, both literacies and travel nonetheless provide rich funds of knowledge that connect or add to in-school instruction. Teachers can facilitate the impact of travel on literacies by providing opportunities for these dual extracurricular activities to have relevance in the ELA classroom.

Skerrett and Bomer (2011) provided insight about this strategy. They emphasized "the importance of teachers valuing, affirming, and leveraging the commitments that youth hold for their out-of-school literacies to enhance their in-school literacy engagement and success" (p. 1275). They remarked about one teacher they observed whose pedagogical practices rested on the creation of a curriculum that scaffolded students' apprehension and application of their outside literacies to the cognitive work of the official curriculum:

> In attempting to harness unofficial literacies to official ones, perhaps hybrid approaches … that permit the creation of connections, comparisons, metaphors, and analogies are more useful than approaching students with school demands without first acknowledging their competence at so many literacy practices. By first affirming students' literate identities and inviting and legitimating their outside-school literacies and lives in the classroom, the teacher capitalized on students' existing foundation of literacy achievement and skills on which to build her curriculum. (Skerrett and Bomer, 2011, pp. 1275-1276)

If teachers can ascertain her students' out-of-school literacies, they can find the common denominator between those literacies and what she is asking her students to do. The same is true for international experiences. This strategy builds confidence and capacity

by creating familiarity between what students know they can do and what they are required to do in school.

**Provide Fictional Worlds as Neutral Meeting Ground for Understanding the Real World**

Quite immediate to my role as a classroom ELA teacher is what my study suggested about the types of books which could be effective to use to help adolescents grapple with diversity around the world, whether they have traveled abroad or not. These books were revealed to be speculative and dystopian fiction. My study found that adolescents were highly attracted to these genres. Virginia articulated the connection. She said that this genre is "more relevant to us" because it reflects the consequences of what current societies are doing wrong like "isolating themselves" and "trying not to think about how their actions impact others."

Teachers may want to leverage adolescents' attraction to novels set in fictional worlds and places. The data that adolescents who had international experiences were drawn to novels set in fictional rather than factual worlds were contrary to what I suspected. Participants cited fantasy, dystopian, and science fiction texts--both print and non-print--as among their favorite genres. Again, in a study aiming to describe the literacies of adolescents with international experiences, I suspected responses to identify world literature as perhaps among their reading interests, but such was not the case. Why?

Broaching this topic have been Ames (2013) and García (2017), and their work appears promising. As Ames (2013) wrote, adolescents' attraction to speculative fiction genres, particularly dystopian literature, reflects that they are "actually quite interested in [global] topics, although they often turn to the safe confines of fiction to wrestle with

them" (p. 3). My study revealed that adolescents with international experiences were attracted to this genre, which is known to help teens relate local with global topics. Therefore, if teens cannot travel, a good alternative for helping them explore global issues may not be through world literature but through speculative, dystopian, and science fiction genres. This suggestion runs counter to prior research (Bernstein, 2013; Kalman and Woods, 2019; Kerschner, 2002; Qureshi, 2006) suggesting world literature is effective for helping teens grapple with global issues.

**Use Travel Metaphors**

Teachers can further facilitate the impact of travel on literacies by using travel metaphors to explain other concepts, such as literacies. Travel, especially when metaphorized as border-crossing, is an important metaphor. Travel is a literal border-crossing, like crossing a bridge. Literacies and adolescents itself are also like border-crossings. Explaining them as such could benefit adolescents.

Adding insight to the idea that adolescence is a border-crossing experience were Skerrett and Bomer (2013), whose findings also have clear implications for teachers. They studied transnational youth whose language practices were "hybrid zones of possibility between cultural practices" and whose adolescence constituted an "in-betweenness" (p. 317). The youth traversed literal borderzones, but more poignant were the metaphorical borderzones crossed. They crossed linguistic borders and generated hybrid social languages that involved language brokering rather than code-switching. They crossed between secular worlds and religious commitments, between in-school and outside-school lifeworlds, between the living and spiritual worlds, between oral and literate modes of language, between visual and audio and printed media, between genres, between personal

life and public performance, and between emotional states. Skerrett and Bomer (2013) concluded that teachers should provide opportunities for adolescents to leverage their literal and figurative border-crossing experiences in literacies instruction. Students with and without international experiences have border-crossing experiences.

Adding more insight to the idea of literacies as border-crossings, Alexander, Lunsford, and Whithaus (2020) emphasized the "wayfinding" nature of literacies. In their essay, they meditated on the use of geographic metaphors in scholarly writing to conceptualize the ways in which young people engage in writing. They favored "wayfinding," which captured "thinking about writing and literacy that place[s] an emphasis on the complex and recursive movement in and out of different territories, realms, spaces, and spheres of writing ecologies…. Wayfinding is a searching, but also a doing—a working, creating, and discovering process" (p. 121). Conceiving of writing as wayfinding includes and examines writing for purposes beyond those defined by education or employment systems and highlights the potential transience of the contexts in which people write to focus more on their fluid ability to move not only among those contexts but also to find their own niches (Alexander, Lunsford, and Whithaus, 2020).

Using metaphors in general, as Lakoff and Johnson (2008) implied, has the potential to be a profound pedagogical strategy. Using metaphors allows teachers to explain unfamiliar concepts in familiar ways; explaining adolescence and literacies is no exception. The metaphorical explanations, especially for literacies, could provide clarity about why adolescents need literacies and motivate them to be literate. Using travel, which adolescents increasingly seem to have experienced, as the basis for explaining other concepts related to literacies represents a direct tie between travel and literacies. Teachers can facilitate the

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impact of travel on literacies by using travel metaphors, with which adolescents with international experiences would be familiar, to explain other, more complicated concepts.

**Create Opportunities for Hearing and Listening**

Data in this study revealed that adolescents with international experiences are exposed to settings in which they hear multiple languages spoken, and they were most effective in their own speaking as a literacy and source of data collection. Because they were so proficient in literacies and languages, the implication is that the an aural immersion component acquired through travel and other practices may be crucial in developing the positive literacies adolescents in this study were found to have. My suggestion for teachers based on this finding is that they create opportunities for aural immersion in a variety of ways.

First and foremost, adolescents should be provided opportunities to hear a variety of languages and dialects spoken. Virginia said she watched movies in French with her family. This is a form of immersion. She is immersing herself—even if just for an hour or two—in another language. Other participants had more direct opportunities for immersion. Greta was immersing herself in English as a result of being in the US as foreign exchange student from Germany. Same with Kwento. Lali and Yarelis spoke Spanish at home and English at school, thus providing opportunities for immersion in two languages. The connection between aural immersion and multiple language acquisition, and the benefits of multilingualism for cognition, employability, and other outcomes, leads me to suggest that fostering opportunities for students to be immersed in other languages is a sound, progressive pedagogical strategy.

Secondly, and just in general, let adolescents talk. The adolescents with international experiences in this study were naturally inclined and drawn to speaking and to literacies that employed conversation and discussion. Let them talk. The lesson from this

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finding is that teachers may reach and engage these and all students better if they appeal to their proclivities in this regard.  My findings about adolescents who have traveled abroad reminds teachers that adolescents are naturally drawn towards sharing their ideas orally rather than on paper.  Moreover, talking necessitates listening.

If talking is to be embraced by high school ELA teachers, however, they must let it exist for its own sake.  Having the mindset that talking about literature will improve students' performance on a standardized test is misguided and counterproductive. New Literacy Studies enhanced our understanding of the interrelationship between the written and spoken word but condemned efforts to use the latter as a means to the former (Hibbin, 2016). Spoken language needs to be "explicitly unattached to literacy-based outcomes" when encouraged in school because "attachment of a written outcome affects the way that spoken language practice is engaged with in the classroom" (Hibbin, 2016, p. 52). Teachers who embrace talking as a literacy need to value it for its own sake.

Teachers could also value talking because it allows students a chance to communicate in the way they have been doing the longest.  In other words, talk for the sake of talking, but also embrace talk as primary discourse (Gee, 1989, 2001). Let students talk the way they want to talk, within reason.  We need to allow students to speak in their primary discourses rather than always impose upon them a secondary discourse that does not come naturally to them and makes it difficult for them to convey their knowledge.

Scholars have been saying for decades about students, whether or not they have traveled abroad, that we need to "let them talk" (Feeley, 1955; Lippard, 1932; Mason and Galloway, 2012; Wright, 2016). Forcing adolescents to convey knowledge and

understanding solely through the written word has the potential to skew teachers' perceptions of their competence.  Talking and discussion allow adolescents to think collaboratively with peers, debate controversial issues and hear others' perspectives, to ask questions, and to articulate their learning. Let them talk; we as teachers will be amazed what knowledge they can convey.

## Implications For Researchers

In a similar vein with which I approached the implications for teachers by trying to craft tangible and applicable pieces of advice, so do I approach this section on implications for researchers, and to begin here is a simple suggestion. Given the complementary connection between travel and literacies this study has established and given the connection's implication that providing international experiences to a larger number of students has the potential to impact their literacies, future researchers may want to test the impact.  This study was descriptive and not meant to explain or test the effect of anything. however, based on this study, other researchers may want to go down that kind of path.  In the same way that they have for years measured outcomes by comparing pre- and post-sojourn assessments, these researchers could design similar studies geared around literacies.  The hypothesis implied by this study that travel impacts literacies warrants further research into the impacts.

Future researchers may also want to consider reviewing specific programs, especially those that exist to provide travel opportunities to teens for free.  Several grant-based programs exist to provide travel abroad to adolescents who otherwise could not afford it; review of these programs is warranted. One particular program, provided through DCPS, is "the nation's first fully-funded K-12 study abroad program…, [it] helps ensure

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that our global citizens have access to global experiences, and [it] works to make travel the expectation rather than the exception for all students" (DCPS, n.d., para 1). While in-house reports have been produced about the number of students served and their demographics, the program's curricular connections, destination countries, participants' responses to survey items regarding program outcomes, and how they performed on AP Foregin Language exams, to date no comprehensive, third-party review of the program exists from an academic, scholarly perspective. Unless reviews of specific programs like DCPS Study Abroad can show more definitively evidence of their impact, particularly with regards to academic outcomes, advocates will struggle to gain buy-in from policymakers and funding gatekeepers. Future researchers should review the DCPS Study Abroad program, particularly its alignment with academic outcomes and literacies.

I encourage researchers to study the impact of travel abroad on adolescents' literacies beyond transnational contexts. Numerous reasons exist for why a teenager may have traveled to foreign countries, and so a wider range of these experiences needs to be examined. There is no shortage of opportunities for teens to travel, and as this study found, many have traveled abroad. Ample opportunities exist in the non-profit but especially for-profit space, as a quick perusal of websites like GoAbroad.com and TravelForTeens.com make clear. Teens may also have traveled for parents' job, for vacation, to visit family who live abroad, for a mission trip, and so much more. An array of international experiences exist as potential sources of impact on literacies.

More research should examine the impact of travel on specifically adolescents. Whether or not these studies examine literacies, the general outcomes of travel on adolescents needs to be investigated more thoroughly. Some studies do exist that address

travel abroad in secondary school contexts or to measure the impact of travel on adolescents (Armstrong, 1982; Duerden, Layland, Petriello, Stronza, Dunn, and Adams, 2018; Clark, Clark, Lee, Qu, Schwartz, and Burke, 2014; Hai, 2001; Ming, 2001; Monaghan and Hartmann, 2014; Ramanathan and Creigs, 1999; Richer and Shirota, 2010; Yakimowski, Russo, Clark-Adedoyin, 2003; World Tourism Organization, 2016). However, I feel not enough is known. In order to advocate for increasing equity in access to abroad experiences for teens, we need to know as much as possible about their impact on specifically this age group.

Researchers need to seek greater understanding of racial disparities in literacies and travel abroad also. This study provided an important counternarrative about who has travel abroad experience and who does not and conflicted with what prior research suggests about White people constituting the largest majority of sojourners. The nearly non-existent rates of Black matriculates in study abroad programs combined with the alleged gap in achievement among Black adolescents' literacies deserves attention. Only about 5% of those who study abroad are Black (Institute of International Education, 2018), and Black students scored lower than any other demographic on the most recent NAEP Reading assessment (US Department of Education, 2019). Conversely, 70% of college study abroad matriculates are White and the second highest-scoring group on the NAEP Reading test were also White (Institute of International Education, 2018; US Department of Education, 2019). While these data cited herein reports on two different age groups-- college students and eighth graders--higher rates of travel among Whites and lower rates among Blacks parallels better reading performance among Whites and and lower reading performance among Blacks and thus continues to beg the question whether a connection between travel and literacies exists. A critical race theory lens may be appropriate for

examining these discrepancies, and I encourage scholars like Johnstone, Smith, and Malmgren (2020), who researched populations that have been historically under-represented in study abroad, and Perkins (2020), who promoted an anti-deficit perspective on study abroad participation among students of color, to continue their work.

In general, researchers need to study the impact of study abroad on specific populations. Research on the benefits of travel may be skewed due to a non-diverse range of participants. As the study abroad data showed, for example, participants tend not to be people of color (Goldoni, 2017; Institute of International Education, 2018; Simon and Ainsworth, 2012; Timm, 2016; World Tourism Organization, 2019). In other words, what we assume are benefits of study abroad have been ascertained from predominately White, female sojourners. Travel may impact other demographics differently, so these demographics need to be studied.

Yet, since White females comprise such large demographic in study abroad and tourism, understanding why this is so may be of concern to researchers. While not related to travel and literacies per se, this study has renewed my own interest in the phenomenon of female sojourners. This gender overwhelmingly dominates college study abroad programs (Institute of International Education, 2018). That six of the seven participants in my study were also female again makes me wonder whether there is anything noteworthy about this coincidence. Researchers such Twombly, Salisbury, Tumanut, and Klute (2012) have delineated people's reasons for participating in study abroad programs and identified patterns in gender. Shirley (2006) addressed the issue of low rates of males studying abroad, but her paper focused more on improving how programs are marketed to males given their underrepresentation than understanding the phenomenon of the male versus female traveler. Tompkins, Cook, Miller, and LePeau

(2017) also made conclusions about why may participate in study abroad programs less frequently. Beyond those just mentioned, I could find very little scholarship that specifically addressed why so many more females, specifically White females, are seemingly drawn to the travel abroad compared to males.

Although this paper purports that physical travel is best, research on vicarious travel is still needed, now more than ever, especially in an era of pandemics, travel bans, and environmental crises. A variety of vicarious international experiences--e.g., globalizing education, researching the world, reading literature from around the world, taking virtual field trips, establishing international penpalships, taking local field trips in lieu of travel abroad--exist and are purported by the literature to be best practices (Asia Society, 2018; Singmaster, 2020), but I encourage future researchers to investigate which of these methods most closely mimics and produces outcomes closest to those provided by literal travel abroad.

Researchers may also want to investigate the power of local travel and field trips. Going anywhere different than one's immediate surroundings, even if geographically nearby, can be as eye-, mind-, and heart-opening as travel to another country. A deep dive within can be just as expansive as a surface-level distance.

**Implications For Other Stakeholders**

The term stakeholders could refer to anyone with a vested interest in the academic sphere. Besides those who work in school buildings or in research institutions, the term typically denotes community members, policymakers, lawmakers, and people who control funding streams. The critical perspectives which formed the theoretical framework for this study are most evident in how I though about what the findings of this study implies for these stakeholders.

I first encourage stakeholders to disrupt inequities in who has access to international experiences by providing funding for these opportunities. Similar to what I wrote about encouraging teachers to sponsor and/or school districts to fully fund international field trips, if the implication is that these trips have outcomes that include an impact on literacies, something the nation has a longstanding mission to improve (US Department of Education, 2018), then travel opportunities need to be provided more equitably to more of the population. Yes, I argued that my study presented an important counterstory about the frequency of abroad experiences among adolescents that contradicted my preconceived notion about the demography of who experiences trips abroad, but I am sure there remain inequities, not necessarily among race or nationality lines but certainly regarding SES status.

Stakeholders should acknowledge which groups are most underserved, which based on data that is available I would hypothesize are US-born, monolingual, males from low-SES statuses is southern states (Institute of International Education, 2008; NAFSA: Association of International Educators, n.d.). Then, make sure that those groups desire abroad experiences--that is, per Friere's (1968/2018) ideas about generative themes, advocates of travel must promote its benefits but be careful not to superimpose their wanderlust onto others in ways that discount their wishes and autonomy--and then take measures to remedy the inequities. Lowering the cost of domestic and international airfare, expanding grant-funded programs like the Kennedy-Lugar Youth Exchange and Study (YES) Program, creating fully-funded high school abroad programs à la DCPS are some of many ways lack of wealth could be minimized as a barrier to travel. Otherwise, travel has the potential to become yet another means by which the rich get educationally, morally, civically, multiculturally richer, and the poor stay poor. In this light, access to

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travel abroad becomes a social justice issue. Stakeholders can play a role in making access to travel more equitable.

Nonprofit organizations represent powerful funding streams as well. In fact, the DCPS Study Abroad programs is funded not through taxpayer dollars but through a local non-profit organization (City News Editor, 2016, January 29). I encourage other non-profit organizations to follow suit, if not at the same scale of the DC Public Education Fund, who contributed a reported $2.87 million (City News Editor, 2016, January 29), then perhaps by providing scholarships to students to participate in trips provided through for-profit youth travel providers.

On a similar note, stakeholders should support teachers who want to sponsor international field trips, especially ELA and foreign language teachers. Many teachers may hesitate to sponsor such trips. Aside from the obvious financial barriers, reasons could be bureaucratic red tape, liability concerns, US State Department travel advisories, lack of board approval, and lack of willingness to devote spare time to planning these trips. So, despite the increasing popularity of travel overall, fewer opportunities through public high schools appear available. Administrators, parents, and school boards need to value international field trips, support teachers willing to organize them, and incentivize them to do so.

Stakeholders could better position themselves to support international field trips if their curricular standards and goals aligned with the outcomes of travel abroad; such realignment would also need to reconceptualize literacies standards in terms more similar to what NLS scholars and this study have argued about their nature, however. In other words, it is not enough to create standards ripe with pro-global education verbiage, in part based on the argument that travel impacts literacies, if literacies themselves remain

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reductively defined as skills detached from social significance rather than modalities, languages, domains, and practices deeply integrated in adolescents' real lives.

Aside from ensuring that standards explicitly include global education goals, stakeholders could expand global scholars programs, International Baccalaureate options, and the availability of foreign language instruction in schools. States like Illinois, for example, have initiated Global Scholars certificate program (Global Illinois, 2017), hundreds of schools worldwide offer IB despite its shortcomings (Resnick, 2012), many are "globalizing education" through the adoption of strategies promoted by agencies such as the Asia Society (2018), and programs for teachers to gain skills in teaching global competencies, such as the TGC Fulbright, are burgeoning. While such initiatives are not directly tied to international field trips, their existence establishes that exploring the world is of value and opens the door for teachers or schools who do eventually want to provide abroad experience to their students.

Lastly, in concurrence with many others (Strauss, 2014, October 30), I encourage ongoing reconsideration of the need for standardized tests that aim to measure literacies as one's ability to answer correctly multiple-choice questions about a passage one reads or to write a formulaic essay; not to mention, these tests are ripe with item, gender, curricular, cultural, and socioeconomic biases (Great School Partnerships, 2014). These tests reduce literacies to skills, which the NLS tradition adopted by a bulk of Language and Literacy scholars nearly ubiquitously problematizes (Carter, 2006). As Scribner and Cole (1981) famously wrote, "The kind of writing that goes on in school has a very special status. It generates products that meet teacher demands and academic requirements but may not fulfill any other immediate instrumental ends" (p. 135). Taking an Eisnerian approach,

standards are a help when treated as initiating directives but a hindrance when treated as dogma (Eisner, 1967/2013). If the only thing a teacher does is teach standards or by extension what is on a standardized test, anything that is not directly tied to a standard is less likely to be taught, which is further problematic. So many meaningful lessons, values, and proficiencies are being neglected because teachers cannot figure out how to correlate them to standards and tests. Standards and standardized tests result in a reduced curriculum and make teachers afraid to try innovative pedagogies. Despite likely having outcomes superseding what it means to do well on a test, pedagogical strategies that incorporate new literacies, global education, and international field trips too often get thrown to the wayside in teachers' pressure to teach to a test.

CHAPTER 8

CONCLUSION

In response to a local, national, and worldwide calls for adolescents' literacies and global competencies to be top caliber, in response to gaps in existing literature on the intersection of these variables, and in response to inequities observed, I conceived of this study. I supposed: Maybe travel positively impacts literacies and global competencies, maybe just enough literature existed to support such a claim, and maybe advocating for increased equity in access to travel for adolescents is a cause worthy of educators' attention. To examine these suppositions, which I recognized were really new ideas in my field, I knew this study would have to be preliminary and could not solve everything all at once. I determined that the first step in what I hope becomes a longer line of inquiry was to describe the literacies of adolescents with international experiences and, if enough data existed to support so, travel's impact. Thus I formulated a single question: How do international experiences impact literacies?

The answer was that five literacies were impacted by travel. However, more interesting were the new insights which emerged from this answer: (1) International experiences impact literacies despite the circumstances of travel because travel has inherent benefits. (2) International experiences impact literacies positively. (3) International experiences are becoming increasingly more common among adolescents and should thus be leveraged for classroom literacies instruction. Extrapolated from these findings were suggestions for educators to reconceptualize travel as beneficial beyond voyeurism and

accumulation of superficial experiences to include literacies; to reconceptualize literacies as utilitarian, generative, critical, cosmopolitan, and globally situated repertoires; to advocate for increased and equitable access to travel for teens or to create local and/or vicarious international experiences in lieu of literal travel abroad; to embrace speculative, dystopian, and fantasy fiction genres as neutral common ground for exploring global issues and connecting with others around the world; and so much more.  More details about my research process  and findings are expanded in recapitulation below.

A critical perspective provided the theoretical framework for this study. Critical perspectives shaped my attention to whether participants developed critical lenses and literacies themselves as a benefit or outcome of travel. Critical perspectives also explained why recognizing possible inequities in travel abroad access was of concern to me throughout this process. Ultimately, examining the impact of international experiences on adolescents' literacies with a critical perspective emphasized the liberating nature of travel and the role literacies play in these processes and how literacies facilitate the cultivation of critical and even cosmopolitan perspectives in return.  Travel enables adolescents to be critical because travel involves literacies.  If reading books makes a person book smarter, traveling is like learning to read the world; critical literacies apply to traditional texts and the text that is the world.

Critical perspectives also affected which bodies of research I was drawn to for finding answers about my research question.  I was drawn to prior research in three areas specifically.  The literature in NLS defined literacies as inclusive of skills but also modalities, languages, domains, and practices inextricable from the sociocultural contexts in which they occur. The literature on the impact of study abroad showed that literacies as

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an outcome had never been researched in isolation, but other outcomes adjacent to literacies in that research positioned this outcome as likely. Lastly, the literature on transnational youth provided a close analog in prior research to my line of inquiry; more specifically, it employed predominately NLS frameworks, it described how literacies manifested literally or metaphorically among border-crossing youth, and it proffered some explanations for how and why their literacies were impacted by travel. Taken collectively, these three areas--NLS research, study abroad research, and transnationalism research--predicted that the adolescent participants in my study would employ literacies that were multiplicitous, socially situated in a variety of contexts, predominately extracurricular, intertwined with identities, and bespeaking the benefits of travel. More importantly, this research validated my line of inquiry by providing just enough relevant research to ground my study but not too much so as to deem the study redundant. Furthermore, gaps in the research--e.g., the saturation of quantitative studies and predominance of college-age students as the population studied in study abroad research; the narrow scope of some existing research—made a qualitative study with adolescent participants even more compelling.

To investigate the impact of travel on their literacies, I selected case study and interview study methods, fitting for a researcher with an existential, interpretivist, and critical leanings. Data collected included writing samples and interviews from seven participants each attending the same public high school, one chosen for being representative of the US southeast region's adolescent population. Data analyses included coding, thematic analysis, and grounded theory which resulted in a thick description of travel's impact on adolescents' literacies and new insights into the nature of the impact.

Trustworthiness was pursued through analytic memo writing, explicit coding protocols, maintenance of an audit trail, data triangulation, reliability, acknowledgement of delimitations and limitations, and clarification of researcher biases and subjectivities. Ethics were pursued through the IRB process, storing of data in locked locations and password-protected devices, the use of pseudonyms and redaction of identifying information, and receipt of permission from site principal and participants' guardians.

In the data, I observed across adolescents with international experiences evidence of five traits about their literacies. Participants defined literacies in terms of their utilities rather than an autonomous set of skills. They were skillful and prolific speakers, even if they claimed to be shy, they huckstered the value of travel through their speaking, and they pointed to the importance of speaking and listening and to an aural immersion quality of travel with linguistic impact. They showed geolinguistic and geographic proficiencies. They showed emerging critical lenses and a potential for critical literacies. They showed markers of beginning to cultivate cosmopolitanism through literacies, of which environmentalism, music, attraction to fiction, and other globalizing connects were evidence. Participants' international experiences mediated and seemed to explain the existence of the traits.

Three new insights emerged from these findings. Travel, first, regardless of the circumstances, has inherent benefits. The participants in my study had quite different international experiences, yet all seemed to have literacies comparably impacted by their travel. One logical conclusion is that the experience of travel abroad, regardless of the circumstances, can be impactful, not only for literacies but for other global competencies.

Secondly, travel indeed impacts literacies positively and advantageously. The participants in my study displayed literacies that are desirable for any adolescent to have. Third, travel is more common among adolescents than many teachers probably realize. The participants in my study were seven among many possible adolescents with international experiences at WHS.

The findings and insights revealed implications for teachers, researchers, and other stakeholders. Among the most important for teachers is to maintain an asset of view of travel experiences as funds of knowledge through which to bridge out-of-school with in-school literacies; for researchers, to maintain an ongoing critical look at issues of equity in travel abroad and to continue evaluating the outcomes of travel on adolescents' literacies; and for stakeholders, to support and fund travel opportunities for youth as an innovative pedagogical strategy to impact literacies.

Now having herein recapitulated this study, its key findings, its new insights, and its implications for parties with vested interest, I am still left wondering whether this study matters. In a world riddled with what my audience may consider far more pressing problems, focusing so much on travel for adolescents because it may impact their literacies could appear trite. Readers of this paper may also question the ethics of advocating for physical travel abroad rather than other global education pedagogies during a time when such travel is severely limited due to a global pandemic and other isolationist practices. Some readers may wonder why I advocate government spending in a time of austerity as well.

I cannot help but consider the unforeseen and unprecedented global pandemic not to mention racial justice renaissance of this year and a host of other "epic crises" (Brooks, 2020, June 25) as they loomed in the background of the final stages of this project. They pushed me to recalibrate its importance. Travel threatens the health of people and the earth,

and travelers often take from others without regard to its impact. Meanwhile, systemic, microaggressive, and overt discrimination seem to pervade. I found myself wondering: what does a study about the impact of travel and literacies really matter? A final meditation on my study as illuminated by the complex network of contemporary sociocultural issues concluded my dissertation process, but I ultimately concluded that international experiences for adolescents are worth advocating, especially today.

Potential skeptics may find solace in a cliché but poignant passage often cited by advocates of travel. An excerpt near the end of Mark Twain's famous travelogue of his journey through Europe and the Middle East reads:

> I have no fault to find with the manner in which our excursion was conducted. Its programme was faithfully carried out—a thing which surprised me, for great enterprises usually promise vastly more than they perform. It would be well if such an excursion could be gotten up every year and the system regularly inaugurated. Travel is fatal to prejudice, bigotry and narrow-mindedness, and many of our people need it sorely on these accounts. Broad, wholesome, charitable views of men and things can not be acquired by vegetating in one little corner of the earth all one's lifetime. (Twain, 1869, Conclusion, para. 3)

When I enumerate the sociocultural issues currently plaguing the nation and world--a global pandemic, systemic and microaggressive racism, looming economic recession, worsening wealth disparity, educational achievement gaps, climate change, religious intolerance, domestic and foreign terrorism, political bigotry, gender and LGBTQ+ discrimination, sexual harassment, hate groups and hate speech, wars, and so much more--I espy at their nexus people's inability to understand, listen to, and empathize with others

whose worldviews are different than their own.  Such is the very definition of narrow-mindedness, and as Twain said, travel is fatal to this.

Understanding others is essential for a better world, which requires literacies and listening, which requires being around others who have different views, which requires, or is at least aided by, travel beyond one's immediate surroundings.  Therefore, travel impacts literacies.  People should always feel free to disagree with each other, and disagreement is a necessary part of an important checks-and-balances paradigm in society wherein multiple voices and views are valued; but failure or refusal to listen to people with differing opinions becomes problematic, especially when people may become trapped in self-isolating, hyper-local "filter bubbles" (Pariser, 2011) without even the opportunity to hear others' views even if they wanted.  Sometimes, people have false views of others and their misconceptions may breed fear and intolerance. Travel bursts the bubble and forces people to listen, literally and metaphorically, to those who are different, often by placing a person in the position of a minority in a foreign context. Travel then creates awareness, understanding, empathy, and healthy argument which contributes to the overall betterment of societies and the world.  Literacies, especially reading the world and listening to others, are inextricable to these processes.

I hesitate to argue that providing adolescents the opportunity to travel will solve all of the world's problems, but I will conclude by arguing that providing youth with travel opportunities--internationally or locally, physically or virtually--would do more good than harm and that literacies are one of the good outcomes.

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# APPENDIX A

## IRB EXEMPTION LETTER

**UNIVERSITY OF**
**SOUTH CAROLINA**

OFFICE OF RESEARCH COMPLIANCE

**INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD FOR HUMAN RESEARCH**
**DECLARATION of NOT RESEARCH**

Caitlin Rasmussen
███████ Street
Columbia, SC 29205 USA

Re: **Pro00094846**

Dear Caitlin Rasmussen:

This is to certify that research study entitled *Literacies among Adolescents with International Experiences* was reviewed on **12/2/2019** by the Office of Research Compliance, which is an administrative office that supports the University of South Carolina Institutional Review Board (USC IRB). The Office of Research Compliance, on behalf of the Institutional Review Board, has determined that the referenced research study is not subject to the Protection of Human Subject Regulations in accordance with the Code of Federal Regulations 45 CFR 46 et. seq.

No further oversight by the USC IRB is required. However, the investigator should inform the Office of Research Compliance prior to making any substantive changes in the research methods, as this may alter the status of the project and require another review.

If you have questions, contact ████████████ at ████████████ or (803) ████████.

Sincerely,

████████████
ORC Assistant Director and IRB Manager

# APPENDIX B

## PRINCIPAL'S PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

January 6, 2020

███████████

I am very excited to share with you that I am officially a doctoral candidate in the Ph.D. in Teaching and Learning program at the University of South Carolina. As part of the degree's requirements, candidates must complete a dissertation based on original research. I have chosen to conduct my research on the literacies of adolescents with international travel experiences. This letter is my request for your permission to conduct this research over the course of the spring semester.

During this time, approximately five students will participate. I plan for each to complete a survey, two one-on-one interviews with me, a group interview, and submission of writing samples and social media posts. Students will have a chance to review the narrative I write about them for the dissertation if desired.

The study is being overseen by my advisor, Dr. Lucy Spence, and has undergone review through eIRB who have exempted the study from oversight because there is nearly no risk to participants and no treatment or experiment being applied to them. No instruction will be lost due data collection, and no data or identifying information (e.g. test scores) is requested or needed from the school, district, or state.

I have prepared a letter for parents to sign and plan to send that home by the end of the month. The letter provides transparency regarding the purpose of my study, ensures how students' confidentiality will be maintained, and notifies of potential risks albeit minimal.

I am really looking forward to conducting this study and thank you in advance for your permission.

Sincerely,

Caitlin Rasmussen, B.A., M.Ed.
English Teacher
████████High School

Principal's Signature: _____

APPENDIX C

INVITATION LETTER TO PARTICIPANTS & INITIAL QUESTIONNAIRE

January 15, 2020

Greetings!

In addition to being ███████████████, I am also a graduate student in the College of Education at the University of South Carolina. I am conducting a research study as part of the requirements for a Ph.D. in Teaching and Learning, and I would like to invite you to participate.

I am studying the literacies of adolescents who have international travel experiences. If you decide to participate, you will be asked to complete a questionnaire, two individual interviews, and group interview and to submit some samples of writing and social media posts.

You will be asked questions about your literacies and international experiences. You do not have to answer any questions that you do not wish to answer. The interviews will take place in my classroom or a mutually agreed upon time and place, and should last about 30 minutes. The interviews will be audio recorded so that I can accurately transcribe what is discussed. The recordings and transcripts will only be reviewed by me and possibly my adviser. If desired, you will have the opportunity to review transcripts and write-ups of your data.

Participation is confidential. Once in my possession, participants' data will be kept in a secure location. All identifying information will be redacted. The results of the study may be published or presented at professional meetings, but your identity will never be revealed. Only I and the other participants will know.

Digital documents with identifying information will be kept through a password-protected Google account (███████████@gmail.com). Participants are encouraged but not required to use this address to communicate with me and to use their own personal email address rather than their school-issued one; students may communicate with teacher using ████████ accounts (███████████), but these are less secure. Text messages regarding interview times, locations, etc. may take place with participants via ███████, and ████████████ may be used to sign up students for ILT for interviews; both of these systems are secure.

In the group interview, others in the group will hear what you say, and it is possible that they could tell someone else. Because we will be talking in a group, we cannot promise

that what you say will remain completely private, but we will ask that you and all other group members respect the privacy of everyone in the group.

I will be happy to answer any questions you have about the study. You may contact me at either email listed above or my faculty advisor, Dr. Lucy Spence, at spence2@sc.email.sc.edu. ████████, principal of ████████
████████, is also aware of this study.

Thank you for your consideration. If you would like to participate, please open the

attached survey packet and begin completing the materials. When you are done, please

bring them back to me in my classroom.


With kind regards,

Caitlin Rasmussen



**Initial Questionnaire**


Student Name: _____

Pseudonym (leave blank): _____

Date of Birth: _____

**Contact Info**

   Student's personal email: _____
   Student's phone #: _____
   Parent's email: _____
   Parent's phone #: _____

2nd semester schedule:

   1st block: _____   Room #: _____
   2nd block: _____   Room #: _____
   HR: _____   Room #: _____
   3rd block: _____   Room #: _____
   4th block: _____   Room #: _____

Best time to meet (check one):

       ___ 1st block       ___ HR       ___after school

Do you wish to proof interview transcripts and/or write-ups of data prior to study's completion?
       ___ yes       ___ no       ___ not sure

**Signatures**

Please complete the attached questionnaire and return to Mrs. Rasmussen as soon as possible; submit the additional requested documents (writing sample, social media screenshots) at your earliest convenience. Sign below to acknowledge the terms of this study outlined in the invitation letter and to assure that all information and documents provided for this study are your own, are honest, and are accurate representations of yourself. Please return to me as soon as possible.

Student signature: _____ Date: _____

Parent signature: _____ Date: _____

Directions - Please answer the following questions accurately, completely, and as much or little as you wish. There is no such thing as a wrong answer. Use the space provided, use loose-leaf paper, or type your responses if desired.

Describe yourself. Tell me anything you want.

Please list the names of the countries outside the US where you have been, year you traveled, and length of time you were there.

Describe your travel experiences.

Describe your reading habits (what you read, how often, where, attitudes towards reading, strengths/weaknesses, etc.).

Describe your writing habits (what you write, how often, where, attitudes towards writing, strengths/weaknesses, etc.).

Describe what you talk about with your friends.

Describe what you listen to.

Describe what you watch.

What do you care about?

Describe yourself as a student and learner.

What does the word "literacy" mean to you?

Why is literacy important?

**Writing Sample** - Please attach to this questionnaire or provide later (hard copy or via email) a typed piece of writing of your choice (e.g. essay for English class, short story, fan fiction, poetry collection, letter/email, or other).   The writing should have been written within the last 6 months, completed AFTER travel, and be a minimum of 1 page.

Please check the applicable box below.

___ I am attaching the writing sample here.

___ I am submitting the writing sample later.

**Social Media Screenshots** - Please attach to this questionnaire or provide later (hard copy or via email) five screenshots of social media posts. These can be from Facebook, Instagram, SnapChat, Twitter, TikTok, Tumbler, iMessage, group chat, or other.   The screenshots should be school-appropriate and include captions/comments, if possible.  Handles/screen names/phone numbers will not be shared; feel free to redact them yourself prior to submission.

Please check the applicable box below.

___ I am attaching the social media screenshots here.
___ I am submitting the social media screenshots later.

APPENDIX D

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Participant: _____

Date: _____

Location: _____

Introductions:
        Tell about me
        Identify research interests

Permissions:
        Can I record, etc.

Prompts:
        Tell me about yourself.
        Describe your international experiences.
        What does the word "literacies" mean to you?
        Describe your reading habits.  What? When? Where? How? Why?
        Describe your writing habits.  What? When? Where? How? Why?
        What kinds of videos, movies, and TV shows do you watch?
        What do you talk about with your friends?
        What social justice issues do you care about?
        What global issues do you care about?
        What are your goals in life?
        Talk about how your international experiences shape or have been shaped by your international experiences.
        Other items TBD based on initial survey responses.

APPENDIX E

FOLLOW-UP QUESTIONNAIRE

# Final Questions for Mrs. R's Participants

Please answer honestly and completely. The more you write, the more I have to work with.
* Required

1.  Write your initials here. *

    _____

2.  Tell me how you are feeling since the COVID 19 outbreak. You can write your response as a poem, journal entry, in any other mode you desire, or just answer to the question. *

3.  In light of COVID 19, describe your current attitudes towards international travel. *

4.  Tell me about your literacies while you've been at home. *

    Who, what, where, when, why, and how have you been reading, writing, speaking, listening, and viewing? What modes (text, print, non-print, social media, blogging, fanfiction, photography, horoscopes, news, YouTube, art, specific websites you check, etc.). Try to be a specific as possible.

5.  Use the space below to tell me anything else you want about your literacies or travel or that you think would be important for my study. *

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