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Study Abroad in a (Post-)Pandemic World: Our New Normal and Some Reasons for Optimism

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We report on a survey study of a group of U.S. students studying abroad in 22 different countries in the fall of 2021 and spring of 2022 ($N = 261$), as universities around the world began returning to in-person instruction but where a good deal of instruction was still conducted online or in some hybrid modality and where a range of COVID-19 restrictions were still in place. The anonymous online survey asked the students to estimate their concerns about the pandemic and study abroad prior to departure, gauge the level of COVID-19 restrictions in their study-abroad location, and then report on the impact of the pandemic on their learning, academic performance, and social interactions while abroad. Additionally, for those who were abroad for the purpose of improving or learning a language other than English, the survey had respondents share their perceptions of how the pandemic impacted their language learning. The survey also asked the students to elaborate on strategies or resources used to cope with the (negative) effects of the pandemic. The quantitative results show that pandemic-related restrictions were significantly associated with students' learning overall, language learning, academic performance, and social interactions, and that the students reported the greatest impact on social interactions compared with other aspects of the study-abroad experience. The data also suggest that the greater the percentage of instruction the students had in online or hybrid modalities, the greater the impact on their learning overall. The qualitative data triangulated with the quantitative data to show that the respondents reporting greater COVID-19 restrictions and a higher percentage of online or hybrid instruction experienced greater stress, anxiety, and difficulties with learning, socializing, and engaging with the culture abroad. Language learners in online classes reported feeling less motivated and having difficulties focusing; those who were in in-person classes reported comprehension and communication difficulties due to mask rules. That said, some respondents reported reaping benefits from more online and hybrid instruction. And many of the respondents shared strategies that mitigated their difficulties which give reason for optimism about ongoing pandemic-related restrictions and the increasing ubiquity of online and hybrid instructions during study abroad. We then sketch the contours of what appears to be the new normal in study abroad and some implications for study-abroad programs and educators indicated by these findings. Limitations of the study and directions for further research are presented.

MOVING BEYOND THE ANECDOTAL

The COVID-19 pandemic has affected nearly every person on the planet in some way, including, of course, U.S. university students studying abroad. Prior to the pandemic, easy mobility was largely a given for many, with study-abroad participation continually on the rise from the late 1980s until 2020 (IIE, 2021). And while in-person study abroad has begun to rebound since (Martel & Baer, 2022), study abroad providers, educators, and, of course, students appear to be faced with a “new normal” due in part to the ongoing pandemic and the prospect of outbreaks of new strains of COVID-19 or entirely new viruses that affect both students’ decision to study abroad, and importantly, the nature and quality of the experience when they do go abroad (Swanson & Duncan, 2021). As stakeholders of a large university-run study-abroad provider with programs in around 40 countries around the world, we have dealt with many of the negative impacts of the pandemic on students, helping them as best we could to have the most successful and rewarding study-abroad experience possible. In our day-to-day interactions with them, we became aware of some of the stresses, anxieties, and difficulties that many were having, including those related to taking many of their courses remotely from their rooms. At the same time, we also heard from many students about successes and effective strategies many had developed to cope with things like COVID-19 restrictions (or the absence of them), contracting the virus and quarantining, learning through online instruction even if living in the host country, or connecting with people socially and engaging in intercultural learning and communication despite increased difficulties brought on or aggravated by the pandemic.

Yet any insights gained through working and communicating with our students were necessarily limited, and anecdotal; we thus desired to understand those experiences and strategies more systematically. Specifically, we were equally concerned with the impact of the pandemic on students’ academic and social and/or intercultural experiences while abroad, and importantly, how they have come to terms with difficulties brought about or aggravated by pandemic-related factors. And for students who went abroad in order to learn or improve in a language other than English, we were also interested in how the pandemic had/has affected this experience. In the following section, then, we first offer a brief review of some of the scholarly literature on how various aspects of study abroad have been affected by the pandemic, with the aim of locating our treatment in that body of scholarship and orient our research questions, which derive from these anecdotal areas of concern. In the Methods section, we describe the study we designed and the ways we analyzed the data. Our results and analyses are then presented. In the Discussion section, we consider ways that our findings help us identify some of the changed contours of study abroad for the foreseeable future, and also, some programmatic and educational implications of what we have learned. In the Conclusion, we articulate the study’s limitations and directions for further research.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Reviewing the scholarship on the impact of the pandemic on study abroad is challenging, in part because the focus areas of its contributors vary so greatly – for better or worse, no specific strand of this research has yet emerged – and, in part, because we are still *in* the pandemic. Additionally, the academic fields interested in exploring aspects of the pandemic’s impact range widely. In our review of recent work, though, we identified two general areas of focus that relate to our concerns, as outlined in the introduction above, in undertaking this project. In the main, already in 2020 and throughout 2021, scholars were concerned with the immediate and dramatic effects

of the widespread cancellations of programs around the world, chronicling and analyzing what happened in specific institutions or countries in the immediate aftermath of the shutdown in spring 2020. These studies often attempted to gauge students' intention to study abroad, currently and in the future. Pedersen et al. (2021) gathered and analyzed qualitative data from 593 students from multiple U.S. institutions who were abroad in 12 different countries when the pandemic began, exploring how those students reported the pandemic's impact on their study-abroad experiences. Their qualitative analysis revealed an array of students' negative experiences and emotions, identifying sources of stress and anxiety throughout the spring of 2020, though they also detail some respondent's positive experiences, such as appreciation for the perspectives gained while abroad despite the pandemic, increased mindfulness, self-reflection, and personal growth, such as learning to be flexible, resourceful, and adaptable in new situations (p. 81). Some students also reported their intention to return abroad later (p. 82); and while most of the respondents detailed how the pandemic negatively affected personal relationships of all sorts, some reported feeling closer to other study-abroad students due to the shared experience (p. 82). This study did not, however, focus on the students' learning or academic performance per se, nor centrally with their social and cultural experiences, beyond detailing many students' feelings of missing out on such experiences.

Swanson and Duncan (2021) likewise surveyed students at their university (Purdue), in order to understand the implications of the COVID-19 pandemic on the future of study abroad participation, "and by extension, the continued globalization efforts by universities" (p. 38). Their survey was administered to students enrolled in the university's upcoming study abroad programs, those who were participating in programs at that time, and who had expressed interest in participating in study-abroad in the future. They received and analyzed roughly 700 survey responses from a pool of approximately 2,500 students. Not surprisingly, their analysis uncovered a range of concerns and anxieties, and widespread cancellations apparently did affect many students' intentions to study abroad (those who were not already abroad), but interestingly, most factors affecting students' intentions, they concluded, come under the heading of "traditional" factors, such as financial concerns or time-to-degree. Yet because the authors unfortunately do not explicate research questions or a stated goal beyond "examining the implications of the COVID-19 pandemic on the future of study abroad participation" (pp. 37-38), and because of the heterogeneous make-up of the convenience sample, such predictions remain elusive. And ultimately, the study is not so much about indications for the future as providing a useful chronicling of the impact of COVID-19 at the time of the survey.

Similarly, but with greater fine-grained analysis as a PhD dissertation project, Ard (2021) carried out a mixed methods study of students from the researcher's institution (University of South Alabama) who were studying abroad when the pandemic began, those who were planning to study abroad but whose programs cancelled, or those who were applying to study abroad later in 2020 or 2021, with 84 students responding to a survey and 10 sitting for semi-structured interviews. Ard identified numerous factors affecting students' intent to study abroad that resonate with past research, but which were clearly aggravated or amplified by the pandemic. Interestingly, Ard found no significant difference in intent factors between those who were abroad at the time of the study and those who were applying to study abroad. Yet she found stronger predictive factors among those applying to study abroad later, in 2021, than in 2020. Additionally, in contrast to past studies of student intent to study abroad, financial concerns were not as prominent, or statistically significant, among her participants. Like Swanson and Duncan's study, one must note that the researcher has captured students' experiences, attitudes and emotions amid the pandemic, as programs were being canceled,

students recalled back to the U.S., and overall uncertainty prevailed in almost all study-abroad programs in the U.S., as elsewhere in the world.

Basterretxea Santiso and Sanz (2022) were also interested in how the pandemic had affected students' motivation or intention to study abroad. Curiously, however, they surveyed students who had already studied abroad, attempting to tease out changes in their decision-making processes prior to and during the pandemic. Adapting Anderson and Lawton's (2015) Motivation to Study Abroad questionnaire, in 2021 they surveyed 83 students, but added items related, among other things, to health factors. They found that the students' overall motivations and factors affecting decision-making were not affected by the pandemic, even if their awareness of health concerns did increase.

In our review, we were unable to unearth scholarship focusing on study-abroad students' learning through hybrid or online instruction, but we did identify a second focus, namely the overall shift in 2020 and 2021 to the increased use of online media and communications, which included what was sometimes labeled "virtual study abroad." This essentially means having students participate in international instruction in some form while remaining in their home countries, such as through telecollaboration or courses created abroad for use by students remaining at home (e.g., Kautz, 2021; Liu & Shirley, 2021; Wirtz, 2022). Brandauer et al. (2021) offer one of the most optimistic versions of this, detailing a multi-institutional, multidisciplinary, and multimodal open-access summer course entitled "The Interdependence: Global Solidarity and Local Action Toolkit," intended to respond to the curtailment of international student mobility and counter xenophobia and nationalism internationally. One must note, however, that this and similar projects were never intended to replace study abroad, rather merely mitigate the immediate crisis. And ultimately, we found no scholarship examining the role or impact of hybrid or online instruction *during* study abroad since the onset of the pandemic, though some scholars have (likely correctly) predicted that online and hybrid instruction will become much more the norm for all students for the foreseeable future (Chan et al., 2022). A survey recently conducted by the non-profit organization Institute of International Education found that about a quarter of reporting colleges and universities are providing both in-person and online study abroad programs in fall 2022 and spring 2023 (Martel & Baer, 2022).

To our knowledge, no studies have yet specifically focused on students' learning and social or intercultural experiences while abroad following the resumption of programs, nor are there studies looking at language learning as an aspect or goal of study abroad. We are aware that this may simply be due to our timing, and we look forward to further studies with these focus areas to emerge in the near future.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

In light of these previous studies' emphasis on understanding the impact on students during the worst of the pandemic, and because those studies were often concerned with gauging or predicting student motivation or intent to study abroad rather than centrally on their learning, language learning, academic performance, or social or intercultural experiences – factors that we had become aware of anecdotally as our programs resumed this past academic year – we concluded that it would be helpful to investigate the pandemic's impact on those aspects of students' experiences *while abroad* after programs had begun to operate somewhat normally again. As mentioned earlier, we also were interested in learning how students have sought to mitigate difficulties brought about or aggravated by pandemic-related factors, which is only

cursorily addressed in the literature to date. Therefore, we designed a survey with the express purpose of exploring these issues, guided by the following research questions:

1. How has the pandemic impacted students' *learning* and *academic performance* during study abroad?
 - a. For those who went abroad in order to learn/improve in a language other than English: How has the pandemic impacted students' *language learning* during study abroad?
2. How has the pandemic impacted students' *social interactions* or *experiences* during study abroad?
3. What *strategies* did students employ, or resources did they avail themselves of, in order to deal with the (negative) impacts of the pandemic?

METHODS

Sample

The population under investigation included roughly 1,700 students studying abroad in 27 different countries in year-length, semester, or quarter-term programs administered in the 2021-2022 academic year by the University of California (UC), a large public university system in the western U.S. Of the participants, 261 students (15%) completed the survey. Table 1 displays the gender/sex, geographic region, and program duration distribution for both the survey sample and the UC study abroad program population. Gender identity per respondent was not addressed by the survey; the program population could only be defined by the sex of the participant. Since some students participated in multiple programs, geographic region and program duration can comprise more than one response or case per individual. This means that repeat participants may be answering about a term prior (e.g., summer 2021) to the values captured for the program population and may explain the discrepancy noted in short-term program duration. While the geographic region distribution is somewhat similar between sample and population, quarter-length program participation is overrepresented in the sample. Male student survey respondents appear underrepresented, but adequate gender representation is inconclusive without comparable gender identity data from the program population.

Table 1
Sample and Population Descriptives

	Survey Sample	Program Population
	<i>Per Respondent/ Participant</i>	
Gender (sample) or sex (population)		
Gender non-binary	4%	-
Female	77%	75%
Male	16%	22%
Not reported	2%	3%
	<i>Per Response/ Program Participation</i>	
Geographic region		
Asia	22%	24%
Central & South America	1%	1%
Europe	76%	73%
Middle East and North Africa	< 1%	1%

North America	1%	< 1%
Sub-Saharan Africa	-	< 1%
Program duration		
Short term (< 1 quarter)	< 1%	-
Semester	69%	79%
Quarter	20%	12%
Year	10%	9%

Survey

Because our particular research questions did not warrant replicating or adapting surveys of past studies, such as those exploring student motivations to study abroad or those that sought to detail the immediate impacts of the pandemic in 2020 and 2021, we designed a new cross-sectional survey using Qualtrics, driven by our research questions, also in consultation with Emily Graham and Shannon Krahn at the UC Education Abroad Program. Because of our sensitivity to students' busy schedules and what we had recognized as some amount of survey fatigue among students in general and our study abroad students in particular, we aimed to keep the survey as short as possible, also in the hope of eliciting as many written responses as possible to our open-ended items. We developed 15 survey items about the students' study-abroad program experience and the COVID-19 pandemic's impact on that experience; two additional items for only those participants who had language learning as part of their program; and one gender identity question. Since the lead researcher plays an administrative role in the program and interacts with study-abroad participants, considerations of preserving respondent anonymity led to reducing personal identity questions to only gender.

We then piloted the survey with five UC students who had studied abroad or were scheduled to study abroad. Cognitive interviews were conducted with each pilot participant through video conferencing. During the cognitive interviews, the interviewer used verbal probing techniques (Beatty & Willis, 2007), through which participants were prompted to answer the survey question as though they were abroad for the fall or spring semester and then to respond to further scripted and unscripted probing questions for more specific information. The feedback informed revision of some of the items (see Appendix for full final survey).

After confirming the exempt status of our study with the relevant IRB offices due to the de-identified nature of the data and minimal risk to participants, toward the end of the spring semester 2022 we sent out a recruitment email to all students in the program. As an incentive to engage with the study, the recruitment email invited all students in the program, regardless of whether they completed the survey, to enter an opportunity drawing to receive one of 10 \$25 gift cards for an online retailer. The survey was open for 14 days, and we sent two additional reminders about the survey by email.

Measures

To address our research questions about the different aspects of the study abroad experience during the 2021-2022 year, we examined four dependent variables in our quantitative analyses: the degree of impact the COVID-19 pandemic had on (a) *learning overall*, (b) *language learning*, (c) *academic performance*, and (d) *social interactions*, measured as four separate items with a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 ("not at all impacted") to 5 ("seriously impacted"). The

language learning item was only administered to respondents who indicated they took at least one language course abroad.

We suspected that respondent ratings on these dimensions of the study abroad experience were shaped by their perceptions of the pandemic and its restrictions. Therefore, we incorporated four independent variables in our quantitative analyses:

- *Restriction level* item about the perceived level of COVID-19-related restrictions throughout their study abroad term. The item is measured on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (“no restrictions at all in place”) to 5 (“rigorous restrictions in place”).
- *Predeparture concern* item regarding the level of concern the student had about studying abroad during the pandemic before they embarked on their program, with values ranging from 1 (“not at all concerned”) to 5 (“highly concerned”).
- *Online/hybrid course modality* as a dichotomous variable indicating at least 50% of the respondent’s course load was delivered in an online or hybrid format. This variable was calculated using a survey item soliciting the number of courses taught entirely online, entirely in person, in one format and switched to another, or in multiple formats simultaneously (with the last two formats coded as “hybrid” in the analysis).
- *Online/hybrid language course modality* as a similar variable to the previous course modality variable, except applied only to language courses and asked of respondents who took one or more language courses.

Our quantitative investigation was complemented by a qualitative analysis of responses to two open-ended questions that further described the role of the pandemic in the student experience abroad as well as shed light on the strategies or resources students used to mitigate pandemic-related challenges:

- *How has the pandemic impacted your learning experiences, and what actions have you taken or resources have you relied upon to reduce the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on your learning experience?*
- *How do you think your experiences during study abroad would have been different had there been no COVID-19 pandemic and its restrictions?*

Analysis

Using the quantitative data, we first sought to understand differences in responses among the impact ratings of the four study abroad dimensions. We began by using SPSS 28 and applied the Friedman test to compare rankings of the three study abroad dimensions for which we had data from approximately the entire sample: *learning overall*, *academic performance*, and *social interactions*. Following a significant Friedman test result, post-hoc comparisons using Wilcoxon signed ranks tests were conducted afterward to identify specific differences between the three study abroad dimensions. A Bonferroni correction was applied to the interpretation of the post-hoc results. These procedures were then replicated among the subset of respondents who indicated they had taken at least one language course while abroad, this time including the fourth study abroad dimension of *language learning* while abroad. Post-hoc tests compared how the impact ratings of each study abroad dimension ranked against each other.

A series of four ordinal logistic regression analyses were used to determine separately the relationship between each impact rating and the possible three explanatory variables of that impact (i.e., *online/hybrid course modality*, *predeparture concern*, and *restriction level*). Although ordinal in nature, the *predeparture concern* and *restriction level* predictors were treated as continuous rather than recoded as a set of binary variables, so that we could retain the ordered information in these two independent variables. These items also did not deviate considerably from a normal distribution. We found the ordinal regression models met the assumption of proportional odds, and no multicollinearity was detected.

Only three responses (1.15%) of the total sample had missing values in the independent or dependent variables for the quantitative analyses. We make the reasonable assumption that the small number of missing values are missing completely at random and does not warrant imputation or other methods of handling missing data (Pigott, 2001). In our Friedman test and ordinal regressions, we excluded, listwise, responses with missing values. Pairwise deletions were employed for post-hoc pairwise comparisons.

For the qualitative analysis of the two open-ended questions, we sought to probe the specific ways pandemic-related restrictions shaped study abroad and any adaptive approaches students used to navigate their experience. Our analysis integrated both deductive and inductive processes. For the first item on the impact of the pandemic, we generated a coding system using the qualitative data analysis tool in Dedoose, identifying comments that appeared to speak to our areas of concern and research questions. That is, we first used a framework to code responses for relevance to learning overall, language learning, online and hybrid learning, social interactions, as well as strategies or resources to support their experience abroad. We also coded those same statements based on participant perspectives (Bradley et al., 2007); while not wishing to oversimplify the students' often nuanced responses reflecting a complex range of emotions and experiences, in fact we were able to label most of the responses in terms of describing "positive" or "negative" impacts on learning, language learning, and experiences with online or hybrid instruction. While familiarizing ourselves with the prose responses, we recognized emergent themes that were not explicitly prompted in the survey question, and we coded for those themes. For the second item, we similarly coded for overall themes addressed, also with the aim of answering our research questions and contextualizing the numerical data. Once coded, we applied the coding system in the Qualtrics Text iQ tool and merged the qualitative findings with the quantitative ratings to triangulate the data in SPSS. Since this study is largely exploratory, the researchers did not employ typical procedures for increasing reliability in qualitative research (e.g., multiple researchers independently coding the data and then reaching agreement on codes), instead working on parts of the analysis in succession.

RESULTS

Quantitative Findings

To address our research questions about the impact of the pandemic, we first compared respondent ratings of the pandemic's impact on the three study-abroad dimensions of *learning*, *academic performance*, and *social interactions*. The descriptive statistics presented in Table 2 demonstrate that most responses were concentrated at the lower end of the scale for *language learning*, *academic performance*, and for *learning overall* (though a little less so) compared with the ratings of pandemic impact on *social interactions*.

Table 2
Descriptive Statistics for Dependent Variables

	Not at all impacted	Slightly impacted	Somewhat impacted	Moderately impacted	Seriously impacted	N
Learning overall	24%	28%	24%	16%	7%	261
Language learning	35%	30%	19%	9%	7%	175
Academic performance	35%	28%	18%	13%	5%	260
Social interactions	15%	21%	26%	23%	15%	260

Insights gathered from the descriptive findings were substantiated statistically. The Friedman test results indicated a significant difference in ratings of the pandemic's impact on those three study-abroad dimensions ($\chi^2(2) = 105.16, p < .001, N = 259$). Post-hoc results revealed that ratings of the impact on *social interactions* were significantly higher than that on *learning overall* ($Z = -6.22, p < .001, N = 260$). Further, respondents also reported a significantly larger impact on *learning overall* than on *academic performance* ($Z = -4.68, p < .001, N = 260$).

When we incorporated the *language learning* dimension into our comparison among the subset of respondents who took at least one language course while abroad, we found an overall significant difference among ratings of the four study-abroad dimensions ($\chi^2(2) = 101.59, p < .001, N = 174$). Follow-up pairwise comparisons showed that respondents perceived significantly greater impact on *social interactions* than on *learning overall* ($Z = -5.51, p < .001, N = 175$) as well as greater impact on *learning overall* than on *language learning* ($Z = -3.80, p < .001, N = 175$) and *academic performance* ($Z = -4.19, p < .001, N = 174$). No significant difference was detected between the perceived impact on *language learning* and *academic performance*.

To understand how pandemic restriction levels, preexisting concerns about the pandemic, and course modality relate to the four dependents variables, we estimated separate ordinal regression models for each outcome. Table 3 captures descriptive statistics for the key independent variables, showing that 45% of respondents experienced at least half of their courses as online or hybrid modalities and 33% of relevant respondents experienced at least half of their language courses as online or hybrid. Students' predeparture concern and perceived pandemic restriction levels, on average, tended to cluster around the midpoint of the Likert scale, resulting in a mean of 3.36 and 3.23, respectively.

Table 3
Descriptive Statistics for Independent Variables

	M	SD	N
Online/hybrid course modality	0.45	0.49	260
Online/hybrid language course modality	0.33	0.47	171
Predeparture concern	3.36	1.17	260
Restriction level	3.23	1.09	261

Coefficient estimates for all four ordinal regression models indicated that course modality was a significant predictor for *learning overall* only. Online/hybrid course modality was positively associated with greater perceived impact on *learning overall* during the study abroad term. More specifically, we interpreted the reported proportional odds ratio to mean that for respondents who indicated their courses were at least 50% online or hybrid, their odds of answering high impact on learning over the combined other levels of impact were 2.35 times greater than for those whose courses were mostly in-person, controlling for other independent variables. The coefficient for online/hybrid course modality and online/hybrid language course modality approached significance in regression models predicting *social interactions* ($p = .06$) and *language learning* ($p = .07$), respectively.

Predeparture concern and restriction levels were significantly and positively related to impact ratings on all study-abroad dimensions. As shown in the odds ratios, the strength of these relationships was most pronounced in the model predicting *language learning*. For every one-level increase in perceived pandemic restrictions and predeparture concern, the likelihood of the impact on language learning increases by a magnitude of 2.21 and 1.54, respectively. By comparison, these two predictors, though significant, were least impactful in the model predicting *academic performance*, where the odds were raised by a factor of 1.51 and 1.24, respectively. Coefficient estimates, standard errors, and proportional odds ratios of the independent variables for each ordinal regression model are reported in Table 4.

Table 4
Four Ordinal Regression Models Predicting Impact on Study Abroad Dimensions

Dependent variable	Independent variable	Estimate	Standard Error	Odds	N
Learning overall	Online/hybrid course modality	0.86***	0.24	2.35	259
	Predeparture concern	0.41***	0.10	1.50	
	Restriction level	0.54***	0.11	1.71	
Language learning	Online/hybrid language course modality	0.58	0.31	1.78	171
	Predeparture concern	0.43**	0.13	1.54	
	Restriction level	0.80***	0.16	2.21	
Academic performance	Online/hybrid course modality	0.38	0.24	1.47	258
	Predeparture concern	0.21*	0.10	1.24	
	Restriction level	0.42***	0.11	1.51	
Social interactions	Online/hybrid course modality	0.46	0.24	1.58	258
	Predeparture concern	0.32**	0.10	1.37	
	Restriction level	0.70***	0.12	2.00	

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

Prose Response Findings

As described earlier in Methods, our survey also included two open-ended textual response items. By and large, the qualitative data align with and confirm the primary results of our quantitative analyses, at least regarding reported COVID-19 restrictions and the delivery of the courses. Few comments were made about our other significant variable, predeparture concerns. Across the 182 responses to the first open-ended question, we noted that the students in locations with few or no COVID-19 restrictions gave voice to fewer negative experiences or feelings. Drawing together prose with quantitative responses, we found that respondents who remarked that the pandemic had little to no impact on learning, on average, reported lower *restriction level*, *online/hybrid course modality*, and *online/hybrid language modality* ratings ($M = 2.79, 0.30, 0.21$, respectively) than those of the overall sample. Such prose responses also corresponded to lower average levels of predeparture concern ($M = 3.07$) than for all respondents.

By contrast, the great preponderance of responses to the prose items reveals overall negative experiences, feelings such as stress, anxiety, or isolation, and difficulties such as trouble staying focused in class that appear to be related to COVID-19-related restrictions in place or the nature of online instruction while abroad. In fact, negative prose responses tended to be associated with higher mean ratings in *restriction level*, *online/hybrid course modality*, *online/hybrid language modality*, and *predeparture concern* ($M = 3.54, 0.61, 0.45, 3.56$, respectively) than the survey sample averages. To be sure, some of the difficulties and negative experiences, particularly those related to having online or hybrid classes instead of in-person classes – and of those, especially language classes – likely do not differ markedly from those experienced by students in the U.S. on their home campuses (e.g., Frazier et al., 2021; Ruiz-Alonso-Bartol et al., 2021; for a more positive take on the effects of online education during the pandemic, see Toader et al., 2021), yet it does appear that the foreign environment resulted in experiences unique to study abroad.

Our coding system allowed us to extract a more meaningful explanation of how pandemic restrictions and the online or hybrid course format could adversely affect *learning overall* and *social interactions* while, in some cases, supporting the study-abroad experience within the same individuals or their peers. We categorized the responses as presented in Table 5, accompanied by what we judged to be poignant representative examples. We should note that the examples with more positive valence here represent a much larger percentage of those responses than those with negative valence; nearly all of the ‘positive’ comments among the 182 responses are shared in Tables 5 and 6.

Table 5
Examples of Students’ Comments on the Impact of the Pandemic

Minimal or no impact of the pandemic	
I don’t think the pandemic impacted my learning experience much abroad.	
The pandemic impacted my experience less than I was expecting.	
Impact of the pandemic on...	
...Learning	
<i>Positive</i>	<i>Negative</i>
The pandemic has personally made me more willing to step outside of my comfort zone and interact with others in a language I’m still	The pandemic has impacted every part of the experience, perhaps most of all my learning experience.

<p>learning because I've gotten so tired of being cooped up and was looking forward to being out and about and making new friends again. It's encouraged me to be more outspoken in my classes as well.</p> <p>Fortunately, most professors were very responsive to emails, which I have been told was not the case in France before.</p>	<p>Not being in a class environment has had little impact on my academic performance however my learning experience has suffered. Having little to no interaction with classmates makes for a pretty lonely study abroad experience and hampers collaborative work such as group projects.</p> <p>The pandemic which has led all of my classes to be online has drastically changed my learning experience as I never got to experience how classes would be in Korea in person, especially language classes which benefit greatly from in person instruction.</p>
<p>...Social interactions and (inter)cultural experiences</p>	
<p><i>Positive</i></p>	<p><i>Negative</i></p>
<p>It gave me more time to immerse myself in the city, as classes were taught either asynchronously or remote.</p> <p>The pandemic has personally made me more willing to step outside of my comfort zone and interact with others in a language I'm still learning because I've gotten so tired of being cooped up and was looking forward to being out and about and making new friends again.</p> <p>i liked being able to travel or take class at a cafe rather than being tied down to just the university.</p>	<p>The pandemic created a lack of community within the international students and within the students of the school as well.</p> <p>I was hoping to have a more immersive cultural experience partly by learning amongst and interacting more with native students, but the pandemic has made this almost impossible.</p> <p>I think the part that was impacted the most was being able to experience sitting inside a ... lecture hall and meeting other local students and international students.</p>

On the negative side, the examples in Table 5, which are similar to many others' comments not included here, revolve around the impact of instruction delivered entirely or partly online, and sometimes relatedly, the feelings of disconnect or lack of community students experienced. Many students also commented on missing out on cultural experiences and interacting with "natives". On the positive side, some students did express that their study abroad experience helped them move beyond the restrictions they had been living with previously, and/or that they saw their time abroad as a challenge they faced and benefited from, to "step outside my comfort zone," arguably something study-abroad administrators and educators hope their students will do.

We received a large number of responses that spoke directly to the impact of online or hybrid instruction, though we did not specifically ask about them in this section of the survey. This suggests that respondents perceived them as central to the overall impact of the pandemic

on learning and social interactions. Table 6 offers several illustrative examples, which echo many of the well-known benefits as well as pitfalls of online/hybrid university education (Maatuk et al., 2022; Tavares, 2021). On the positive side, some students saw online instruction while abroad liberating, in that they could learn at their own pace, or attend lectures “from anywhere” allowing for more travel than entirely in-person instruction would have permitted. One student called attention to the inclusive and social-justice dimension of online instruction, allowing for students with “disabilities and disorders to have the additional space and time,” foster their “health and wellbeing,” and, without a commute to the university, grant “more time to sleep and eat.”

As mentioned, the negative comments about online and hybrid instruction outweighed these few insightful positive comments, which, as our selected examples illustrate, revolved primarily around effects on motivation, students’ ability to focus, and social and cultural engagement. One student noted the increased difficulty in creating a “separation between home and school life” which made it “harder to focus” on classes.

Regarding online versus in-person instruction, while not included in Table 6, it is worth including the comment of one respondent who reported the inverse difficulty to many of her/his/their compatriots:

I took in person exams abroad for the first time in 2 years which was incredibly anxiety inducing. I studied the best I could and performed well but the transition of online to in person teaching being in an entirely new school setting was nerve wracking and came with challenges.

Table 6
Examples of Students’ Comments on Online or Hybrid Instruction

Experiences related to online or hybrid instruction	
<i>Positive</i>	<i>Negative</i>
<p>it ... gave me a bit more freedom in learning the course subjects at my own pace</p> <p>...being able to watch lectures from anywhere allowed me to travel more and experience Europe more than I would have if lectures were in person...</p> <p>I found that I thrive with mostly asynchronous classes that have one or two meetings virtually a week. ... Hybridized and fully online learning is, when done right, much more justice-oriented because it’s more inclusive, it allows those of us with neurological and psychological disabilities and disorders to have the additional space and time we need ... so that we can not only perform better academically but also care better for our own health and wellbeing. ... Removing commutes from our schedules</p>	<p>I wasn’t as motivated to get involved in my studies while abroad because going to class was just getting on my laptop.</p> <p>hard to engage with professors and students through a virtual environment. i rarely got to go to campus so it felt like i was just living abroad instead of studying</p> <p>it is harder to learn online/asynchronously (lack of motivation to succeed) and harder to form study groups.</p> <p>Being completely online made it more difficult for me to create a separation between my home and school life because there is no physical distance between them, which makes it harder to focus when classes are online.</p>

<p>meant that we had more time to sleep and eat...</p>	<p>Due to the pandemic, most if not all courses have been online, making it difficult to have in-person interactions with my classmates and other native Koreans.</p>
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Of course, it was not only online or hybrid instruction that appears to have caused students difficulties or stress. Many of the comments students made on language learning referred to difficulties engaging in in-person language learning and communication while masked, as exemplified in Table 7. The comments on this topic also referenced the challenges of using the language socially and engaging with speakers of the language, whether “native speakers” or other international students, in addition to commonly heard complaints about learning a language online.

Table 7
Examples of Students’ Comments on Language Instruction or Learning

<p>Impact on language learning</p>
<p>Masks in in-person classes</p>
<p>It’s more difficult to learn a new language when you can’t see how your teacher’s lips are moving through a mask.</p>
<p>It was significantly harder to understand what everyone was saying with a mask on. I had to rely on French classmates’ notes when I couldn’t understand the muffled speech.</p>
<p>I did not realize how mask would make it noticeably more difficult to understand my professors who were speaking in a different language as their speech was somewhat muffled and I could not read their lips.</p>
<p>Using the language in day-to-day interactions</p>
<p>I have had more limited spontaneous interactions with people in Spanish (ex: I when ordering food). This means that I haven’t practiced Spanish as much as I thought I would be while studying abroad, despite taking a bunch of classes in the language.</p>
<p>It has ... made it harder to develop language by meeting Korean students as clubs were limited and classes were online.</p>
<p>in the beginning a lot was closed or restricted limiting my overall interactions with people of different nationalities and ability to practice a different language with natives.</p>
<p>Learning a language online</p>
<p>...harder to understand professors and students talking in another language over zoom</p>
<p>learning online was only pretty difficult when it came to the language portion, though i will say i liked being able to travel or take class at a cafe rather than being tied down to just the university.</p>
<p>Because all of my courses were online and my courses had been online before this I was used to online learning however, when it came to language learning it was much harder to be able to pick up on it.</p>

Finally, while most of our respondents did not specifically reference their emotional state (and we did not ask them to), in fact many did comment on it. A few examples are presented in Table 8. Unfortunately, almost all references to feelings were negative, referencing anxiety or stress, fatigue or exhaustion, lack of motivation, or loneliness or isolation, particularly in terms of feeling connected to/disconnected from fellow students, their professors/instructors, and people in the community in general. From these responses alone we are unable to determine how pervasive these feelings were for our students while abroad, but even these comments cause concern for those of us involved closely with study-abroad students; they also echo findings of studies done during the pandemic that revealed widespread malaise among university students (e.g., Frazier et al., 2021; Weber et al., 2022).

Table 8
Examples of Students' Comments about (Negative) Feelings

Feelings/experiences of...
...Anxiety
[The pandemic] gives you a layer of anxiety on top of just your day to day studying and socializing
It was also incredibly stressful to have COVID and have to miss 2 weeks of class and fall behind.
The only issue I had abroad was health anxiety by being around people who came to class sick.
...Fatigue/exhaustion
It is exhausting trying to keep myself adequately updated about the changing regulations around COVID-19, travel restrictions, academic requirements, etc... and it takes a toll on my mental and emotional health, which then takes a toll on my physical wellbeing and ultimately impacts my school performance.
suffered physical and mental exhaustion from over exertion
...Lack of motivation
it is very difficult to get to know my classmates and find motivation
I feel unmotivated.
I really struggle with motivation when it comes to online learning
...Loneliness or isolation
I've been some of the most depressed and isolated that I have ever been in my entire life.
The main impact always circles back to social isolation. I am a very shy person so online classes just exaggerate all of my non social tendencies and force me into a cycle of staying alone and convincing myself it is better than being apart of the world.

Despite the copious reports of negative experiences and feelings, because we prompted the respondents to also share what actions they had taken or resources they had relied upon to reduce the impact of the pandemic on their learning experiences, some of the

negative experiences were obviously mitigated by the students’ own actions. Many of the students’ comments did not speak directly to learning rather to our other area of interest, their social and cultural interactions and experiences. Some of the most compelling examples are presented in Table 9. A few students reported engaging in purposeful social activity as a means of countering pandemic-related restrictions and limitations, whether meeting with friends, joining a club or organization, or communicating with people back home. Others made sure to communicate outside of class time with their professors or classmates. And many of our students also made use of digital communication such as “student-run zoom events” and chat spaces to communicate and connect but also to succeed in their courses.

Table 9
Examples of Students’ Responses Regarding Strategies or Resources to Reduce the (Negative) Impact of the Pandemic

Coping strategies, resources, or actions
<i>Purposely/ purposefully seeking out cultural experiences and social interactions</i>
To help reduce the impact of the pandemic, I now make sure I do not overwork myself and take breaks when I absolutely need to. While abroad, I also frequently met with my friends to socialize and do various activities to ensure I still get some form of social interaction; I also call with my friends back home to have any discussions of what were on our thoughts.
I have made it a point to have more meetings with classmates, instructors, and peers I’m working with (in academic and extracurricular settings) to maintain healthy communication practices.
I have signed up for several opportunities such as dance groups, mentor groups, buddy exchanges, and just hanging out with other peers studying abroad.
i joined some clubs in order to meet a couple locals which was nice.
I have tried to become involved in mentor and language exchange programs that allowed for me to still interact with native Koreans though to practice my Korean and learn more about the culture.
<i>Communication with faculty members and fellow students</i>
To improve my learning experience I reached out to professors through email if I had any questions.
I spoke to all of my professors about the issue and they were patient and kind allowing me to ask them questions during office hours, so that I would not be behind.
I have been reaching out to my instructors and fellow students to try and form a community and to get help with my course questions.
<i>Participation in online study and communication</i>
I’ve tried finding my own peace by doing things alone, but when I am in need of conversation, there are many online platforms and open establishments to make small talk.

I have relied a lot on KakaoTalk chats of exchange students to find people to talk to and ask questions. There are many chats including ones for each class.

I relied on student-run zoom events

Trying to connect with other students through zoom and learn together in order to simulate an in class social setting.

I have relied on Teams meetings and more online correspondences to connect with lecturers and students.

In drafting the survey, while we were unsure about how our students' responses to our question about what would have been different had there been no pandemic would contribute to addressing our research questions, we felt it was worth asking, as it might prompt further reflection about their experiences. While piloting the survey, participant comments about this item sensitized the researchers to the social challenges, limitations in travel, reduced flexibility in program selection, and additional predeparture preparation necessary during the pandemic. Not surprisingly, of the 195 responses, many referred to missed opportunities for travel or mobility in the region they visited. Other than this, we found that the comments echoed the earlier prose responses about, in particular, missed opportunities to meet people and engage socially. Indeed, the responses to this item extend our definition of *social interaction*, for disruptions beyond the learning context reflected heavily in the responses to the first prose item.

Regarding affect and emotion, numerous students also specifically stated that they would have felt less stressed about travel to and from the country, mobility in their study-abroad location, various aspects of their classes, or avoiding contracting the virus themselves.

Interestingly, two of the students felt they were able to experience their study-abroad location more "authentically" because the pandemic meant fewer tourists there:

Had there been no pandemic, there would be more tourists and the experience would be far less enjoyable. I got to see many major landmarks and cities without any crowds.

I enjoyed seeing less crowds everywhere so it was nice to see the country in an almost pure form.

Finally, in terms of academic performance, several students attributed the pandemic to delays in their time to degree or otherwise held up their academic progress.

DISCUSSION

Summary of Findings

To examine the effect that the COVID-19 pandemic had on the four dimensions of the study abroad experience, our quantitative analyses first explored the differences in students' pandemic impact ratings. Students reported that the greatest impact of the COVID-19 pandemic was on their *social interactions* while abroad, followed by their *learning overall*, and finally by their *academic performance*. These results were similar for the smaller group of respondents who were learning or improving a language other than English abroad. Comparisons among that subset revealed that they felt most affected in their *social interactions*, less so in their *learning*

overall, and least affected by the pandemic in their *language learning* and *academic performance*. Our regression analyses then determined which factors were related to these four study-abroad dimensions. Unsurprisingly, students' concerns about the pandemic before going abroad and their perceptions about the severity of COVID-19 restrictions in their study-abroad location were significantly predictive of how they rated the pandemic's impact across the study-abroad dimensions, most notably in *language learning*. The more concerned they were predeparture and the more stringent the restrictions, the greater the effect of the pandemic on their experience. Interestingly, when we controlled for the effects of predeparture concern and the restriction level, course modality was only a significant predictor for ratings of impact on *learning overall*. Students who had at least half or more of their course load taught online or in the hybrid format were more likely than those students with a majority in-person experience to report higher impact on *learning overall*. Course modality was only marginally predictive of impact on *language learning* and *social interactions* and had no significant bearing on *academic performance*.

Our qualitative data largely confirmed our quantitative findings, in that social interactions of various sorts, such as with professors, fellow students, friends, or family, as well as cultural or intercultural communication and experiences, featured prominently in students' reported impact of the pandemic, alongside effects on aspects of learning and course work. Interestingly, reported impact was not only negative in nature, though the preponderance of comments demonstrated negative valence. Positive effects for some students included a greater appreciation of studying abroad overall, or some of the benefits afforded by having classes online.

The prose responses also illuminated some possible reasons for the weaker or nonsignificant links between online or hybrid course modality and language learning, academic performance, and social and cultural experiences found in the quantitative results. Social interactions span experiences inside and outside of academic environments, so course modality naturally matters less. Students recognize the social component in formal learning environments, as many of the prose examples highlighted the ability or inability to communicate and interact with professors and peers in-person within classroom settings. But the prose responses also emphasized students' disappointment with missed opportunities to build community and make friends beyond (online or hybrid) classroom spaces. Course modality having only a marginally significant predictive relationship with impact on language learning may be attributed to the overall challenge students had navigating restrictions abroad even in face-to-face classroom settings. Students acknowledged that mask-wearing and limitations on group activities, while appreciated for minimizing the spread of disease, can interfere with their ability to acquire or improve language skills. Moreover, for those students who studied in a location with fewer restrictions than their home campus, in-person learning and exam sessions can feel jarring and require some adjustment.

Indications for a “New Normal” for Study Abroad

While our findings must be taken with caution (see limitations described below in our Conclusion), our survey study offers some indications of what the “new normal” for study abroad might be, at least for the foreseeable future. At its core, studying abroad during and in the aftermath of the global COVID-19 pandemic is about a range of restrictions to mobility. Physical mobility is the most obvious impact, both internationally but also regionally and locally, as many of our respondents observed. Sociolinguist Jan Blommaert (2022) observed that for “hypermobile elites”, which would include many U.S. university students, the

loss of access to erstwhile self-evident forms of mobility, ranging...all the way from air travel...to even visits to our neighborhood supermarkets or family members came as a terrific shock and wake-up call A world of severely restricted mobility is an ordeal, something we can only experience in terms of loss and restriction, even punishment (p. 272).

Restrictions to mobility will likely continue to be imposed at times, and in different places, at least until this pandemic has receded, though experts have indicated that we should expect new epidemics and pandemics to emerge, and many of these restrictions will indeed feel like “punishment” for students who have worked hard to spend part of their university time abroad.

Yet as part of the impact of the pandemic on study abroad we would also include in social mobility what we might call “intercultural mobility”. Engaging with new people in a new place, and with new cultural norms, has always been challenging, even emotionally fraught, for newcomers such as study-abroad students, due in part to the relative brevity of their sojourns as well as the day-to-day challenges of acquiring new linguistic, pragmatic, and sociocultural ways of being. Yet prior to the pandemic those very challenges were considered a “normal” part of the experience. The anxieties caused or exacerbated by the pandemic understandably hold the potential to make all aspects of this endeavor even more difficult for many students, as our findings indicate, for many of them offered insightful comments on impacts to their social and cultural experiences while abroad due to or aggravated by the pandemic.

Part and parcel of these sorts of mobility are also, of course, modes of learning and “being” abroad that seem new, for the taken-for-granted in-person learning experience likewise always involved physical mobility, to and from and within the classroom with other people. Prior to the pandemic, online or hybrid learning in a university setting was most often a choice, and arguably few students going abroad did or would have opted for it, if this had even been the norm. Yet going forward, diverse forms of instructional delivery likely will be more common, just as they are already on campuses around the U.S. (Galvin Teich, 2022; Lu, 2022), and students studying abroad may or may not have a choice about it. Thus, one indication is that many students should expect to engage in academic activity of all sorts from their computers or smartphones, whether in their own rooms, cafés, libraries, or other places. In this regard, mobility itself for study abroad may need to be conceptualized differently than to date.

Regarding language learning abroad, our findings confirm an understandable and widespread dislike of in-person instruction while masked. The students’ complaints about muffled words and obstructed faces and especially the mouths of the teacher and other speakers reflect the extent to which language learning truly is an embodied and deeply subjective experience embedded within the physical environment in which language is used and learned (Kramsch, 2009). Assuming ongoing phases of mask requirements, the indication is that study abroad students will have to find ways to compensate for or counter this aspect of in-person instruction, just as they must do so for the problematic aspects of online language instruction, such as difficulty comprehending language and communicating in a videoconference environment. Finally, if health risks and concerns continue to be more prominent both at home and abroad, then the many comments our students made about difficulties meeting new people and using the new language in their everyday lives represents another aspect of our changed study abroad reality.

Yet as we have also presented, our respondents themselves have pointed toward some of the means of mitigating the potentially deleterious aspects of our new normal. Many of our respondents engaged in a range of activities for coping with the restrictions and stresses caused or aggravated by the pandemic, including communicating well with their professors, getting to know classmates, joining local clubs and organizations, and joining online communities within

and beyond their courses. These have, of course, always been effective strategies for study abroad students, but they seem to take on greater urgency in light of the changes of recent years. They give us reason for optimism that our students will fare well if they take any or perhaps all of these actions while abroad. We would also note that a few students among our sample seemed to thrive because of or despite the restrictions. And at the very least, after several years now of living with the pandemic, many students seem to regard the limitations as “normal” anyway.

Our findings point toward a few implications for study abroad administrators and educators involved with study abroad students. By and large, they could all be called ‘reality check’ implications. They include study abroad stakeholders tuning into the prominence our students gave to social interactions and cultural experiences and concerns about learning, raising students’ awareness of the new realities of diverse instructional delivery modes abroad, and fluctuating and often unclear health-related restrictions. And for those learning or improving a language, actions by educators could include seeking alternative equipment and instructional aids. Emerging scholarship on mask-wearing indicates that our students’ observations are not just perceptions of difficulty, rather that they reflect real impediments (Georgiou, 2022; Lee & Hart, 2022), and some scholars suggest ideas to mitigate those challenges, including the use and availability of masks with transparent panels (Charney et al., 2021; see also Zwanziger, 2021), video recordings or streaming that capture close-up facial movements, and audio recordings that demonstrate unmasked speech (Lee & Hart, 2022). Administrators and educators should also foster strategies for learner autonomy and use of the language beyond the classroom. These factors should be considered through orientation sessions or predeparture seminars, as prompts for reflection and feedback during the study-abroad sojourn, and importantly, in some form of debriefing and guided reflection after students return to their home campuses. For if students are guided to reflect both on the nature of limitations or restrictions and their potential impact at various stages, then hopefully the negative sorts of effects our study has uncovered might be mitigated.

CONCLUSION

Our analysis was able to show that COVID-19-related restrictions and experiences affect learning and social life, that they can disrupt language learning both in-person and online, and they can evoke an array of potentially damaging emotions. We further showed that the widespread shift to online and hybrid instruction since the start of the pandemic, while also increasingly the norm at institutions of higher education around the world, has a potentially profound impact on our students’ study-abroad experience, and that this can be positive but more often appears to manifest in negative experiences.

Yet we hope that our readers will not construe our findings to mean that the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on students’ study abroad experience, and language learning as part of it, can or should be reduced to variables such as “learning,” “academic performance,” or “social interactions”. As an anonymous, online survey with relatively few items, we necessarily simplified the concepts and constructs of interest. Indeed, we did not define terms for the students; it was left to each person to respond based on one’s own understanding. Therefore, we are encouraged that our results, especially the prose responses, point toward far more complexity than our treatment permitted. While there are several compelling patterns across the responses, which we have presented here, in fact even this relatively small sample of study abroad students displayed remarkable heterogeneity in perceived “impact” of the pandemic. As a cross-sectional snapshot, the study also could not capture the dynamic nature

of all the students' experiences, even if a few of the respondents did detail changes from early to later in their time abroad. Thus, further studies would at the very least need to flesh out the scope and nature of "learning" and "social interactions" and then gather data on aspects of these, ideally using mixed methods and carried out longitudinally.

The study is also marked by several additional limitations. First is our sample size and the nature of the sample itself. While we received responses from an acceptable percentage of all of our students studying abroad (15%), a larger sample might have yielded greater insights into our research questions. The modest sample size and the resulting small cell sizes of some of the gender identity, geographic region, and program duration values limited our ability to control for the effects of these student- and program-related characteristics. And as a non-randomized convenience sample of our UC students, we also cannot make any claims to generalizability to the larger population of study abroad students in the U.S., or from other countries in the world. Additionally, as a voluntary and anonymous survey (irrespective of our retail gift card drawing as an incentive), it was also a self-selecting sample of those students who felt motivated enough and inclined to complete the survey. We did not receive responses, for instance, from students studying in some of the 27 countries in which the UC Education Abroad Program has study-abroad programs in the 2021-2022 academic year. Finally, as an anonymous survey we cannot verify the veracity of the students' responses based on the survey alone. Additionally, in the interest of keeping the survey as brief as possible, we did not gather more detailed demographic data, which might have influenced how we could analyze or interpret the results, factors such as ethnicity, linguistic and/or cultural background, or prior international or study abroad experience. Finally, our findings should be taken with caution due to potential researcher bias in how we posed the questions, which perhaps led students to think more about negative impacts of the pandemic.

Further study of the impacts of the unfortunately ongoing pandemic in many study abroad locations around the world should, of course, include interviews and focus groups that prompt students to give voice to their perceptions, concerns, and experiences while abroad. At the end of our survey, we asked respondents to share contact information if they were willing to participate in further study in this way, and we were excited to see that nearly half of the sample did so. Therefore, we will explore both the questions we posed in the survey but also additional ones. For example, study abroad is often promoted as (and often is) a personally transformative experience. We would like to ask students studying abroad now and in the near future to share the ways they see their experience as transformative, and how this relates to the pandemic, if at all.

Longitudinal case-study research of students abroad likewise should follow from our survey, and we hope that our findings can guide aspects of that ethnographic work. We can envision a series of semi-structured interviews with individual students at intervals from pre-departure through their return to their home campus (or wherever they are), accompanied by video/audio or text journals/blogs based on critical reflection prompts provided by researchers, informed by our survey results. Additionally, mixed-method empirical investigation would be needed of aspects of students' learning while abroad, and how these may be impacted by, among other things, masks in in-person instruction, health-related restrictions on mobility, percentage of instruction through online or hybrid modalities, or other areas found to impact students' study-abroad experience. The focus areas of such empirical work could include exploration of students' social networks while abroad (see Kenney Terry, this issue), aspects of formal language learning, development of pragmatic (see Morris, this issue), intercultural, or other sorts of competences, development of multiple literacies, or the complex roles played by students' emotional lives during study abroad.

We opened this article by asserting that the COVID-19 pandemic has affected nearly every person in the world, which of course includes U.S. university students studying abroad. Our study sought to capture and account for some aspects of the impact on that population. We hope that we have offered some useful insights and that our study will serve as a useful step in the scholarly investigation of our ‘new normal’ after the seismic upheavals in study abroad experienced in 2020 and 2021.

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APPENDIX

Survey Instrument

To which countries did you **apply** to study abroad? (Select all that apply.) [List of countries]
 In which country/countries are you studying abroad? (Select all that apply.) [List of countries]

For what length of time are you studying abroad? (Select all that apply.)

- Short term (less than one quarter)

- One quarter
- One semester
- Academic year

What are your main goals for studying abroad? (Select all that apply.)

- Getting a different perspective in my field of study
- Learning or improving your skills in a language other than English
- Experiencing other cultures
- Doing an internship abroad
- Doing a research project abroad
- Volunteering abroad
- Learning about my heritage
- Experiencing personal growth
- Expanding or improving career or postgraduate options
- Opportunity to travel
- Other (please specify)
- None of the above

In what language(s) is the coursework of your study abroad program? (Select all that apply.)

- English
- Language(s) of my host country
- Another language (not English nor a host country language; please specify)

How many language courses for the host-country language(s) have you taken while abroad?

- 0
- 1
- 2
- 3 or more

Throughout your time abroad, how many of your courses were taught in the following formats?

Entirely online: _____

Entirely in person: _____

In one format initially and switched to another: _____

In multiple formats simultaneously: _____

Throughout your time abroad, how many of your host-country **language** courses were taught in the following formats?

Entire online: _____

Entirely in person: _____

In one format initially and switched to another: _____

In multiple formats simultaneously: _____

Prior to departure, how concerned were you about studying abroad due to the COVID-19 pandemic?

- Not at all concerned
- Slightly concerned
- Somewhat concerned
- Moderately concerned
- Highly concerned

How would you characterize the COVID-19-related restrictions at your host institution or program throughout the time you have been studying abroad?

- No restrictions at all in place
- Minor restrictions in place
- Some restrictions in place
- Moderate restrictions in place
- Rigorous restrictions in place

During your study abroad term, how seriously has the COVID-19 pandemic impacted the following?

	Not at all impacted	Slightly impacted	Somewhat impacted	Moderately impacted	Seriously impacted
My language learning abroad	•	•	•	•	•
My learning while abroad	•	•	•	•	•
My academic performance abroad	•	•	•	•	•
My social interactions abroad	•	•	•	•	•

How has the pandemic impacted your learning experience? What actions have you taken or resources have you relied upon to reduce the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on your learning experience?

How do you think your experience during study abroad would have been different had there been no COVID-19 pandemic and its restrictions?

What is your gender identity? (No response required.)

- Female
- Male
- Trans female/trans woman
- Trans male/trans man
- Gender queer/gender non-binary
- Different identity
- Decline to state