

# How Pilgrimage Persists: Integrated Learning from the Camino de Santiago

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**Abstract:** This study examined how U.S. undergraduate university students who studied abroad in Spain integrated their learning one year after returning home to the United States. Using in-depth interviews with seven participants whose summer months included a 200-mile pilgrimage along the Camino de Santiago, I examine the interplay of pedagogy and community in prompting the retention of psychosocial benefits that endured after reentry into their former routines in the U.S. The sampling revealed that the pilgrimage produced learning outcomes that continued long after the students re-integrated to their campus environment. I suggest implications for pedagogical practice, including strategies for educators to encourage integrative learning along the Camino that persists well beyond the initial formative pilgrimage.

**Keywords:** Pilgrimage, integrative learning, higher education, university students, transformation.

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## *Cómo persiste la peregrinación: aprendizaje integrado en el Camino de Santiago*

**Resumen:** Este estudio examinó cómo los universitarios estadounidenses que estudiaron en España integraron su aprendizaje un año después de regresar a los Estados Unidos. Utilizando entrevistas en profundidad con siete participantes cuyos meses de verano incluyeron una peregrinación de 200 millas a lo largo del Camino de Santiago, examinó la interacción de la pedagogía y la comunidad para impulsar la retención de los beneficios psicosociales que perduraron después del reingreso a sus rutinas anteriores en los Estados Unidos. El muestreo reveló que la peregrinación produjo resultados de aprendizaje que continuaron mucho después de que los estudiantes se reintegraran al entorno del campus. Sugiero implicaciones para la práctica pedagógica, incluidas estrategias para

*que los educadores fomenten un aprendizaje integrador a lo largo del Camino que persista mucho más allá de la peregrinación formativa inicial.*

**Palabras clave:** Peregrinación, aprendizaje integrador, educación superior, estudiantes universitarios, transformación.

## Como persiste a peregrinación: aprendizaxe integrada no Camiño de Santiago

**Resumo:** Este estudo examinou como os universitarios estadounidenses que estudaron en España integraron a súa aprendizaxe un ano despois de regresar aos Estados Unidos. Utilizando entrevistas en profundidade con sete participantes cuxos meses de verán incluíron unha peregrinación de 200 millas ao longo do Camiño de Santiago, examinou a interacción da pedagogía e a comunidade para impulsar a retención dos beneficios psicosociais que perduraron logo do reingreso ás súas rutinas anteriores nos Estados Unidos. A mostraxe revelou que a peregrinación produciu resultados de aprendizaxe que continuaron moito despois de que os estudantes se reintegrasen á contorna do campus. Suxiro implicacións para a práctica pedagóxica, incluídas estratexias para que os educadores fomenten unha aprendizaxe integradora ao longo do Camiño que persista moito máis alá da peregrinación formativa inicial.

**Palabras clave:** Peregrinación, aprendizaxe integradora, educación superior, estudantes universitarios, transformación.

### *How Pilgrimage Persists: Integrated Learning from the Camino de Santiago*

“Stronger. Thriving. Confidence. Coherency. Open. Intention. Known.” These are the words that seven American university students 19-22 years of age used to describe how they felt different one year after a pilgrimage trek on the Camino de Santiago. This study abroad program in Spain continued to resonate with students, and I wanted to find out why and how the learning from their pilgrimage persisted. The primary objective of this study was to learn about the ways in which undergraduate students connect what they learned during a five-week study abroad program on the Camino de Santiago to learning in other areas their lives, one year after their time abroad.

Pilgrimages are often named by the destination at which pilgrims arrive, suggesting that the arrival is both the culmination and the conclusion of a journey. Greenia<sup>1</sup> defined pilgrimage as the act of “travel for transformation,” an experience

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<sup>1</sup> Greenia, G., “What is pilgrimage?”, *International Journal of Religious Tourism and Pilgrimage*, 6, 2, (2018), p. 9, <https://arrow.tudublin.ie/ijrtp/vol6/iss2/3>

which is characterized by both the destination, and the act of travelling itself. As such, the pilgrimage encompasses both participating in the journey and arriving at the destination. The learning derived from a pilgrimage – the transformation that Greenia described – often unfolds long after the destination is reached, the program concluded, the setting only a memory of a foreign land. Further, Greenia<sup>2</sup> claimed that “The experience of pilgrimage is seen in advance as capable of creating an enduring memory one returns to in later life” and that “There is an active will to build a memory hoard ... and not just of places and meals and companions, but of having participated in rites that recover, enact and propel intuitions of the transcendent into future time”<sup>3</sup>. University undergraduates from the U.S. often identify study abroad as contexts for integrated learning<sup>4</sup>.

Study abroad by American students more than tripled in the 25 years prior to 2020. The number of university-aged students participating in international experiences reached an all-time high prior to the COVID-19 pandemic; 347,099 students received academic credit for study abroad in 2018-19, an increase of 14% in just five years since 2013-14.<sup>5</sup> Numbers are slowly rebounding from a pandemic low of just 14,549 students in 2020-21. Although a growing number of students participate in study abroad, many struggle with reentry upon their return to their home campuses.<sup>6</sup> With increasing numbers of undergraduates engaging in international academic work, it is imperative to better understand how students connect, apply, and synthesize learning from study abroad, and how university educators may facilitate students’ integration of learning. With these trends in mind, the main research questions for this study include:

2 *Ibidem*, p. 10

3 *Ibidem*, p. 11

4 Barber, J. P., “Integration of learning: A grounded theory analysis of college students’ learning”, *American Educational Research Journal*, 49, 3 (2012), pp. 590-617, <https://doi.org/10.3102/0002831212437854>. Barber, J. P. “Integration of learning model: How college students integrate learning”, in P. L. Eddy (ed.), *New Directions for Higher Education: No. 165. Connecting learning across the institution*, 2014, pp. 7-17. Jossey-Bass. <https://doi.org/10.1002/he.20079>. Barber, J. P. *Facilitating the integration of learning: Five research-based practices to help college students connect learning across disciplines and lived experience*, Routledge, 2020. Niehaus, E.; Holder, C.; Rivera, M.; García, C. E.; Woodman, T. C. & Dierberger, J., “Exploring integrative learning in service-based alternative breaks”, *Journal of Higher Education*, 88, 6 (2017), pp. 922-946, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00221546.2017.1313086>; Rowan-Kenyon, H. T. & Niehaus, E. K., “One year later: The influence of short-term study abroad experiences on students”, *Journal of Student Affairs Research and Practice*, 48, 2 (2011), pp. 213-228, <http://doi.org/10.2202/1949-6605.6213>

5 Institute for International Education (IIE), *Open doors 2022*, 2022, retrieved from <https://opendoorsdata.org/> Institute for Pilgrimage Studies (2023). “Events & symposium”, retrieved from <https://www.wm.edu/sites/pilgrimage/annualsymposium/>

6 Jones, S. R.; Rowan-Kenyon, H. T.; Ireland, S. M.; Niehaus, E. & Skendall, K. C., “The meaning students make as participants in short-term immersion programs”, *Journal of College Student Development*, 53, 2 (2012), pp. 201-220, <https://doi.org/10.1353/csd.2012.0026>. Wielkiewicz, R. M., & Turkowski, L. W., “Reentry issues upon returning from study abroad programs”, *Journal of College Student Development*, 51, 6 (2010), pp. 649–664. <https://doi.org/10.1353/csd.2010.0015>

- a. How do undergraduates integrate learning from a study abroad pilgrimage experience into their personal lives (rather than as accelerated academic achievement), one year after the time abroad?
- b. What role, if any, did the sense of community (*communitas*) developed during a study abroad pilgrimage experience play in how students integrated their learning?

The context for this research was a study abroad program in Santiago de Compostela, Spain for university students at William & Mary, a four-year, selective university in Virginia with high research activity and an enrollment of approximately 7,000 undergraduate students. The program took place over the course of five weeks in May and June 2017. Seven undergraduate students enrolled in the program and represented enrollment in a variety of academic disciplines. Two faculty members from William & Mary, including the author, led the program.

Students earned seven academic credits for participating in the program for three courses, taught by the faculty directors: an orientation course on pilgrimage (one credit) before leaving for Spain, an on-site course on identity and pilgrimage (three credits), and a course on Spanish regional and national identity (three credits). This study program was interdisciplinary in nature, and there was no language requirement. William & Mary is a public university, and the study abroad program did not have a religious component, although some students identified as Catholic, Christian, or noted a generalized spiritual motivation for participation.

Students lived and took classes in Santiago for the first segment of the program, spent the next 15 days walking on the Camino de Santiago pilgrimage route, while continuing academic courses, and concluded the program with an additional week in Santiago to finish coursework. The students and faculty members walked the French route of the Camino de Santiago approximately 320 kilometers (200 miles) from Léon to Santiago de Compostela. Students and faculty stayed with other pilgrims in local *albergues* along the route and walked approximately 24 kilometers (15 miles) per day.

### ***The Camino de Santiago***

The Camino de Santiago is a network of pilgrimage routes across Europe, leading to the destination of the Cathedral de Santiago, where the remains of St. James the Apostle are believed to be buried. St. James, also known as Santiago, was one of the twelve closest disciples of Jesus Christ, and the first records of pilgrims traveling to his burial site go back to the ninth century. Over the millennia, interest in pilgrim numbers have fluctuated, with the most recent resurgence beginning in the 1980s. In 2019 alone, 347,578 pilgrims registered their journey with the official Pilgrim's Reception Office, a record high just before the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic.<sup>7</sup>

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7 Pilgrim's Reception Office, 2023. Statistics, retrieved from <https://oficinadelperegrino.com/en/statistics/>

More specifically, study abroad programs that include pilgrimage have grown in popularity in recent decades.<sup>8</sup>

Although the Camino de Santiago is firmly rooted in Roman Catholic tradition and practice, not all who participate as pilgrims identify as Catholics, Christians, or have a religious motivation for walking to Santiago. In 2019, 40% of pilgrims noted a solely religious reason for their pilgrimage, 49% listed spiritual and other personal reasons, and 11% reported no religious motivation.<sup>9</sup>

## Literature Review

### University Student Learning

The primary conceptual framework for this study is integration of learning<sup>10</sup>, a highly desirable outcome of higher education, distinguished by the ability to draw connections among disparate information and meaningfully synthesize concepts<sup>11</sup>. Over the past quarter century, there has been an increasing demand in American society for university graduates to master a fluid ability to make connections among life experiences, academic studies, and their accumulated knowledge base<sup>12</sup>. Barber<sup>13</sup> defined this notion as follows:

Integration of learning is the demonstrated ability to connect, apply, and/or synthesize information coherently from disparate contexts and perspectives, and make use of these new insights in multiple contexts.

8 Boone, B. I., *Teaching along the way: An ethnographic study of faculty growth and sensemaking on the Camino de Santiago*, Doctoral dissertation, William & Mary, 2019, <http://dx.doi.org/10.25774/w4-drs8-nx23>. Barlar, S. H., "Experiences along the Camino de Santiago", in *The Routledge Handbook of Religious and Spiritual Tourism* (D. H. Olsen & D. J. Timothy, Eds.), Routledge, 2021, pp. 254-265, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429201011>

9 Pilgrim's Reception Office, 2023. Statistics, retrieved from <https://oficinadelperegrino.com/en/statistics/>

10 Barber, J. P., "Integration of learning: A grounded theory...", *op. cit.* Barber, J. P. *Facilitating the integration of learning...*, *op. cit.*, 2020.

11 Barber, J. P., "Integration of learning: A grounded theory...", *op. cit.* Barber, J. P. "Integration of learning model...", *op. cit.* Barber, J. P. *Facilitating the integration of learning...*, *op. cit.* King, P. M.; Kendall Brown, M.; Lindsay, N. K., & Van Hecke, J. R., "Liberal arts student learning outcomes: An integrated perspective", *About Campus*, 12, 4 (2007), pp. 2-9, <https://doi.org/10.1002/abc.222>

12 AAC&U. *Greater expectations: A new vision for learning as a nation goes to college*, 2002, author, retrieved from <http://www.greaterexpectations.org/>. AAC&U. *College learning for the new global century*, 2007, author, retrieved from [https://www.aacu.org/sites/default/files/files/LEAP/GlobalCentury\\_final.pdf](https://www.aacu.org/sites/default/files/files/LEAP/GlobalCentury_final.pdf). AAC&U, & Carnegie Foundation, *A statement on integrative learning*, 2004, authors. ACPA, *The student learning imperative*, ACPA-College Student Educators International, 1994. Joint Task Force on Student Learning, *Powerful partnerships: A shared responsibility for learning*, 1998, retrieved from <http://www.myacpa.org/pub/documents/taskforce.pdf>. Keeling, R. P., ed., *Learning reconsidered: A campus-wide focus on the student experience*. National Association of Student Personnel Administrators and American College Personnel Association, 2004. Lumina Foundation, *The degree qualifications profile (DQP)*, Indianapolis, 2014, in author, retrieved from [http://degreeprofile.org/press\\_four/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/DQP-web-download.pdf](http://degreeprofile.org/press_four/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/DQP-web-download.pdf).

13 Barber, J. P., "Integration of learning: A grounded theory...", *op. cit.*, p. 593.

This includes the ability to connect the domain of ideas and philosophies to the everyday experience, from one field of study or discipline to another, from the past to the present, between campus and community life, from one part to the whole, from the abstract to the concrete, among multiple identity roles—and vice versa.

Integration of learning describes the process by which individuals bring together experience, knowledge, and skills across contexts. Three major categories of integration of learning were identified in empirical research, listed here in order of increasing complexity: (a) Connection, the discovery of a similarity between ideas which themselves remain distinctive; (b) Application, the use of knowledge from one context in another; and (c) Synthesis, the creation of new knowledge by combining two or more insights.<sup>14</sup>

Niehaus, Holder, Rivera, Garcia, Woodman, and Dierberger<sup>15</sup> examined Barber's theory of integrative learning in the case of service-based alternative breaks from classroom- or laboratory-based study. They found that among their 38 student participants, all experienced some form of integration of learning in terms of their alternative breaks. This study involved in-depth follow-up interviews with participants 1.5 to 2.5 years after their alternative experiences. This study is particularly relevant because previous research found a temporal lag between learning experiences that prompted integration of learning, and students' ability to integrate<sup>16</sup>.

University educators, whether faculty or student affairs professionals, are in a unique position to facilitate integration of learning during study abroad. Student engagement in educational activities, including those that foster integration of learning, has been attributed to faculty involvement in those activities, suggesting that students generally do what faculty members emphasize and value.<sup>17</sup> Instructional faculty have unique influence to shape students' education through modeling practices that value integrative learning<sup>18</sup>. Kuh, Nelson Laird, and Umbach<sup>19</sup> found that students engaged

14 Barber, J. P., "Integration of learning: A grounded theory...", *op. cit.* Barber, J. P. *Facilitating the integration of learning...*, *op. cit.*, 2020.

15 Niehaus, E. *et al*, "Exploring integrative learning in service-based alternative breaks", *op. cit.*

16 Barber, J. P.; Bohon, L. L.; Feltman, L.; Stone, S. L. & Tarantino, K. L., *Perspectives on integration: Comparing views of undergraduates and educators on integrative learning experiences*, Paper presented at the Association for the Study of Higher Education Conference, Denver, CO (2015, November).

17 Kuh, G. D.; Nelson Laird, T. F. & Umbach, P. D., "Aligning faculty activities and student behavior: Realizing the promise of greater expectations", *Liberal Education*, 90, 4 (2004), retrieved from <http://www.aacu.org/liberaleducation/2004/fall>. Reason, R. D.; Cox, B. E.; Quaye, B. R. L. & Terenzini, P. T., Faculty and institutional factors that promote student encounters with difference in first-year courses. *The Review of Higher Education*, 33, 3 (2010), pp. 391-414, <https://doi.org/10.1353/rhe.0.0137>

18 Hovland, K.; Anderson, C. & Ferren, A., "Interrogating integrative learning", *Peer Review*, 16, 4 (2015), retrieved from <http://www.aacu.org/peerreview/2014-2015/fall-winter/>. Newman, L. E.; Carpenter, S.; Grawe, N. & Jarret-McKinstry, S., "Creating a culture conducive to integrative learning", *Peer Review*, 16, 4 (2015), retrieved from <http://www.aacu.org/peerreview/2014-2015/fall-winter/>

19 Kuh, G. D.; Nelson Laird, T. F. & Umbach, P. D., "Aligning faculty activities and student behavior...", *op. cit.*

in faculty-led integrative learning when completing assignments that required using ideas from a variety of sources, including different perspectives in assignments or discussions, integrating ideas across courses, discussing course material outside of class, and synthesizing material and experiences into new ideas. Immersive study abroad lends itself to these forms of active and engaged learning.

### ***Communitas***

*Communitas* is a concept that has evolved over time and is the topic of discussion among pilgrimage researchers. Victor Turner<sup>20</sup> first introduced the concept in his ethnographic work and described *communitas* as “society as an unstructured or rudimentarily structured and relatively undifferentiated *comitatus*, community, or even communion of equal individuals who submit together to the general authority of the ritual elders.” In descriptions of pilgrimage, the term is often employed to describe the sense of quick and close kinship that emerges among individuals traveling together along the Camino de Santiago or another pilgrimage route. Turner and Turner<sup>21</sup> later described three distinct types of *communitas*: (a) *spontaneous, existential communitas*, which arises in the context of a ritual such as sacred travel, (b) *normative communitas*, which attempts to codify spontaneous *communitas* through rules and laws, and (c) *ideological communitas*, which seeks to establish a utopian society based upon memory of an experience of *communitas*.

This notion of pilgrimage giving rise to an egalitarian society absent of structure has been challenged. Eade and Sallnow<sup>22</sup> critiqued Turner and Turner’s model, stating that “a recurrent theme throughout the literature is the maintenance and, in many instances, the reinforcement of social boundaries and distinctions in the pilgrimage context, rather than their attenuation or dissolution.” For example, in the same volume, Eade<sup>23</sup> described the complex social structure in place surrounding the pilgrimage site in the town of Lourdes, France at the Sanctuary of Our Lady of Lourdes. Eade focused specifically on the contradictions/sorting by gender and the different roles and access of men and women that perpetuated Catholic practices from the nineteenth century.

Coleman<sup>24</sup> described *communitas* as a trope that oversimplified the complex interplay of individuals and social status during pilgrimage. He noted that

Yet even as the image of *communitas* spoke to numerous disciplines and extended its reach into discussions of many human activities,

20 Turner, V., *The ritual process: Structure and anti-structure*, Aldine Publishing, 1969, p. 96.

21 Turner, V. & Turner, E., *Images and pilgrimage in Christian culture: Anthropological perspectives*, Columbia University Press, 1978.

22 Eade, J. & Sallnow, M. J. (eds.), *Contesting the sacred: The anthology of Christian pilgrimage*, Wipf & Stock, 1991, p. 5.

23 *Idem*.

24 Coleman, S., *Powers of pilgrimage: Religion in a world of movement*. New York University Press, 2022. <https://doi.org/10.18574/nyu/9780814717288.001.0001>



ranging from sacred travel to rock concerts, it also limited understandings of the scope, influence, and complexity of social and material articulations associated with pilgrimage.<sup>25</sup>

Despite the ongoing debate over the theoretical concept, the term *communitas* is often invoked in student study abroad programs to describe the sense of solidarity experienced as a pilgrim sharing meals, lodging, joy, and pain with others along the journey.<sup>26</sup>

### Methods

The methodology of this study was qualitative, working within a constructivist framework. I sought to understand students' personal/individual viewpoints and how they made meaning of their identities, relationships, and the world around them<sup>27</sup>. I recognize the role that I had as a researcher using constructivist methodology and acknowledged how my own background and subjectivities shaped my interpretations of the data<sup>28</sup>.

I conducted individual, semi-structured interviews with all seven undergraduates who participated in the study abroad program in Spain, which included a 200-mile pilgrimage. The interview protocol was developed based on a review of the literature on study abroad experiences, pilgrimage, and Barber's<sup>29</sup> conceptualization of integrative learning. The protocol consisted of five main topics: (a) informed consent/building rapport; (b) reentry process; (c) salient lessons remembered; (d) *communitas*; and (e) exemplary practices and conditions. Based on my research questions and constructivist approach to the problem, this study had elements of both phenomenology (understanding the essence of the study abroad experience) and ethnography (describing and interpreting the culture of pilgrimage).<sup>30</sup> All names listed in this article are pseudonyms chosen by the students themselves.

25 *Ibidem*, p. 58.

26 Barlar, S. H., "Experiences along the Camino de Santiago", *op. cit.* Boone, B. I. & Barber, J. P., "This is the way: Faculty on the Camino de Santiago", in J. Bloechl & A. Brouillette (eds.), *Pilgrimage as spiritual practice: A handbook for teachers and guides*, Fortress Press, 2022, pp. 181-200, <https://scholarworks.wm.edu/educationbookchapters/56>

27 Baxter Magolda, M. B., *Authoring your life: Developing an internal voice to navigate life's challenges*, Stylus Publishing, 2009.

28 Creswell, J. W., *Educational research: Planning, conducting, and evaluating quantitative and qualitative research* (4<sup>th</sup> ed.), Pearson Education, 2012.

29 Barber, J. P., "Integration of learning: A grounded theory...", *op. cit.* Barber, J. P., *Facilitating the integration of learning...*, *op. cit.*

30 Creswell, J. W., *Educational research: Planning...*, *op. cit.*



### ***Positionality***

Positionality refers to a researcher's background, identity, and worldview, and thus the "position" that they take toward the research process<sup>31</sup>. Savin-Baden and Major<sup>32</sup> stated that positionality "reflects the position that the researcher has chosen to adopt within a given research study." My own characteristics, including my personal and professional history, contributed to my interest in this topic and the choices regarding methodology.

I am a White, male faculty member from the United States who teaches in a School of Education. I identify as Roman Catholic and attended Catholic schools for my K-12 education. I teach primarily in an academic program that prepares graduate students for work in higher education institutions, and my research focuses on student development and integrative learning. Since my teaching was primarily with graduate students, I did not teach any of the students who participated in this program and study again, which provided distance from any educational power dynamic between myself and the participants.

My background and experiences also influenced the ways that I collected and analyzed the data for this study. These characteristics led to my interest in co-leading the study abroad program in Santiago de Compostela, and to this research opportunity/protocol. I have worked with university students for over 25 years and am very comfortable in conversation with students. I believe strongly in the value of qualitative research for examining and documenting the intricacies of how learning happens, including the practices and conditions that contribute to student outcomes.

### ***Limitations***

The findings from this study are specific to the experiences of these seven U.S. students and are not generalizable to other populations. The experience of these students was also indicative of a specific moment in time in 2017. This experience was pre-pandemic, at a time when there was little to no concern about social distancing or interacting with large groups of strangers in often confined living situations. The impact of COVID-19 altered the circumstances of subsequent pilgrimages, and the sociohistorical context of later samples.

### ***Data Sources and Analysis***

To summarize my earlier statements, the sample for this study included seven undergraduate students who enrolled in a five-week study abroad experience in Spain

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31 Darwin Holmes, A. G., "Researcher positionality - A consideration of its influence and place in qualitative research - A new researcher guide", *Shanlax International Journal of Education*, 8, 4 (2020), pp. 1-10, <https://doi.org/10.34293/education.v8i4.3232>

32 Savin-Baden, M. & Major, C. H., *Qualitative research: The essential guide to theory and practice*, Routledge, 2013, p. 71.

in Summer 2017. These students were interviewed in Fall 2018, one year after their study abroad experience. The interviews focused on the impact that the study abroad experience had one year later.

Interviews lasted approximately 60-90 minutes and were transcribed verbatim, resulting in 123 pages of typed text. Once transcribed, I conducted a theme analysis<sup>33</sup> to identify common elements across the conversations. I began with a line-by-line read of each interview, and highlighted passages that focused on integration of learning, as well as key experiences about the pilgrimage trek that remained relevant a year after returning home to the U.S.

### *Findings*

All seven university students who took part in the study abroad program consented to the follow-up interviews. Even after a year, each was able to discuss detailed examples of how they integrated learning from their study abroad to their academic and personal lives upon their return.

One example illustrates the characteristic expressiveness of the participants. Matthew, a junior, shared how he used course concepts related to national identity(ies) learned in Spain to make sense of regional and national politics at home:

[I learned] ... how to pull national context out of things and how to really examine that in a lens because I'd done a little bit of anthropology before, but having that critical discourse about what it means to [have a] national [identity] and how that form of identity came into existence and how it currently impacts things was something that I do find valuable. Especially as I look at national discourse these days about where politics is going. ... And that's something that I found surprisingly valuable and important as far as being able to examine my own life as well as try to make sense of what's going on.

This student went on to discuss how notions of regional identity influenced the way he made sense of the 2017 White supremacist rallies in his hometown of Charlottesville, Virginia, USA after returning from study abroad.

Following sections organize findings into three main areas aligned with the interview protocol: (a) significant learning, (b) academic impact upon return, and (c) experiencing and retaining community and *communitas*.

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33 Braun, V., & Clarke, V., "Thematic analysis", in H. Cooper, P. M.; Camic, D. L.; Long, A. T.; Panter, D.; Rindskopf & K. J. Sher (eds.), *APA handbook of research methods in psychology, Vol. 2. Research designs: Quantitative, qualitative, neuropsychological, and biological*, American Psychological Association, 2012, pp. 57-71, <https://doi.org/10.1037/13620-004>

## *Significant Learning*

The interview prompt “What was the most significant thing that you learned from your experiences abroad and on the Camino?” elicited very detailed answers from students. Three principal themes emerged: confidence, course content knowledge, and the power of positive thinking.

### ***Confidence***

Several students reflected on the sense of confidence that they developed because of their participation in the program. Their feeling of accomplishment emerged from the physical and mental challenges of walking the pilgrimage route. Colton, a second-year student during the summer program, discussed his self-reliance regarding the physical challenges.

I was really impressed with myself and my body and how I was able to do the Camino. I was kind of nervous, like I don't know how I'm going to do, and then I felt like I performed really well. Not that it was something to perform well at, but that my body withstood it and was strong and was effective. That gave me a lot of self-confidence in my body.

Colton went on to explain that the initial sense of confidence gained in Spain continued to influence his self-esteem after the program and promoted a positive body image.

Alice, who was a third-year student before that summer, had a similar response regarding how the physical demands of the walking portion promoted her sense of assurance in her own body. She said that

...it was the hardest thing I've ever done, for a lot of reasons. Especially that first week of walking. But the feeling of triumph at the end, coming away with this understanding that, yeah, I mean it was the hardest thing I've ever done, but I did it. So I can do hard things.

Alice felt pain and injury during the initial days of trekking and she continued on despite these challenges. She explained later in the interview that this confidence was not limited to physical ability, but more broadly to her sense of identity and tackling complicated tasks. She explained,

I definitely do think that my sense of my personal identity is more defined than it was before. And I do think that I feel more confident in myself as a person, and in my ability to approach difficult things than I did before we walked (Fig. 1).

### ***Course Content Knowledge***

Students addressed the content knowledge they gained from the formal class settings, as well as from the experiential learning of walking the trails and living

in Spain for a month. They enrolled in two academic courses during their time abroad, one focused on personal identity development, and the other on regional identities and sociopolitical context of the areas along the Camino's French route from León to Santiago.

Jane shared that she often returned to what she learned in class about identity development. She said,

I think having the identity portion of the course really helped me think about that a little more than I might have. I think I would have eventually gotten there while walking and thinking on my own. Having identity as a focus in the course is definitely a big part of why that came to the forefront ... learning about theory related to identity, it's not something that you get a lot in schooling ... I go back and think about concepts of identity and identity formation.



Fig. 1: Morning walk between Rabanal del Camino and Molinaseca, just after passing the Cruz de Ferro. Photo: Courtesy of James Barber.

Alice discussed the relevance of learning about the places where the group traversed and overnighted during the program. She also learned about different political perspectives. She reflected,

... it helped me break down my sense of place, a little bit, into smaller pieces, I think. Because I'm not a huge fan of the political atmosphere that we live in right now [in the U.S.]. In terms of the country as a whole, I don't feel particularly connected, but I feel very connected to the town where I grew up in ... and to Williamsburg. And I feel like my understanding of how that sense of local place changes how I relate to the world. My understanding of that is more complex and better developed than it would have been otherwise. Because I can look at that more analytically than I would've been able to before.

### ***Power of Positive Thinking***

Finally, the power of positive thinking emerged as a dominant theme during the interviews. Several noted positivity as an important learning outcome of the program. Mary reflected on what she learned, sharing "the power of positive thinking about when you just feel dead and you don't want to walk anymore, but you have to keep walking. How powerful being positive could actually be." She recalled a particularly challenging day when she and others experienced discomfort and growing fatigue during the day's hike. She continued,

We just put on some music, and we decided, "Okay, even though our feet hurt, we're just going to dance." We just started dancing, and we walked two miles, and we didn't even realize how tired we were and how much our feet hurt. ... I think that just shows you can either think about how much your feet hurt and wallow in that, or just talk to yourself and decide, "Okay, I'm going to think about this differently."

### ***Academic Impact Upon Return***

Students discussed how their experience on the Camino affected their approach to academics in general once they returned to campus. There were three main themes in their responses: shifting perspective, post-travel curricular attitudes, and the importance of reflection.

#### ***Shifting Perspective***

The study abroad program in Santiago and actually walking the trails influenced how students approached their academic work afterwards. Students noted a re-balanced perspective away from grades awarded and external metrics in favor of

learning for personal interest and love of acquiring new knowledge. Mary shared her thoughts,

I'm telling myself, "Okay, learn to learn, not to learn for the grade."  
Which I felt like we were doing on the Camino the whole time, even when we had those projects. Two, it just makes me calmer thinking, "Okay, I'm just gonna learn this because I really want to learn," because I do love learning, but I often get caught up in the whole grade and the stress of classwork. I think it's helped me calm down in a way.

Matthew noted the influence of the pilgrimage experience on the way that he allocated his time. He explained, "In terms of how I did my work at home, it [the study abroad venture] definitely kind of affected the way that I choose to structure my work-life balance a little bit."

Students often referred to the structure of a day on the Camino as two days in one: the first part was the walking segment of the day. Our schedule generally started very early in the morning, sometimes before dawn to beat the summer heat, allowing us to arrive at our destination around lunchtime. The second part was time to relax, eat, and explore the town for the afternoon until bedtime. The opportunity (and perhaps expectation) to rest was a welcome invitation to slow down, a process that Shahjahan<sup>34</sup> described as "being at peace with 'not doing' or 'not being productive,' living in the present, and de-privileging the need for a result with the passage of time." This clear delineation of work and rest appealed to students and prompted conversation about the need for more dedicated relaxation time in their schedules back at home.

### ***Post-travel Curricular Attitudes***

The time spent in Santiago and on the Camino directly connected with some of the students' academic majors. These students were able to integrate academic content through the study abroad experience with the formal curriculum in their major or minor program of study. Colton shared, "It [the pilgrimage experience] just helped me fall in love with people even more, which I didn't think it was possible to fall in love with people even more, because I'm a sociology major." Mackenzie also described gaining content knowledge on the Camino that linked to her formal academic work through assignments in the program. She noted, "It taught me even more about the whole research experience, how to do a research project, how to make a survey and distribute it to people, collect data, analyze data, learn how to use data."

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34 Shahjahan, R. A., "Being 'lazy' and slowing down: Toward decolonizing time, our body, and pedagogy", *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, 47, 5 (2014), pp. 488-501 (esp. p. 489), <http://doi.org/10.1080/00131857.2014.880645>



### ***Importance of Reflection***

Students gained an appreciation for the process of reflection, stepping back from the learning activity and considering processes and perspectives. Several assignments incorporated intentional reflection and required students to create written assessments that they submitted to faculty. Time was built into our program schedule for this type of self-aware writing. Jane explained, “I think the reflection, like the process of reflection that I learned in Spain and writing the reflection pieces that we had to, that helped me. This year would have not been manageable without reflection.” She explained that her first year in graduate school (immediately after the Camino program) was quite challenging and she relied on the reflection skills that she learned in the program.

### *Experiencing and Retaining Community and Communitas*

Students universally shared that they felt a sense of community during their experience in Spain and along the Camino, both within our university group and among the larger community of pilgrims. There were specific shared spaces that students noted as beneficial to building community within our small group. When staying in Santiago, students and faculty lived in a pilgrim’s hotel near the Cathedral de Santiago. Mary talked about how time spent together in a lounge on their hotel floor that they used for a study room was important to her. She explained, “All of us working together on our projects and knowing that at least we’ll be in that room and we’d just be able to chat and talk about our projects and talk about what inspired us, but then also talk about just whatever.” Colton talked about establishing a sense of community with specific others in the group immediately in our *albergue* on the first night of the pilgrimage. He recalled,

It was just like that night, that day, and then that night. I remember laughing a lot before we went to sleep. It was really quick. That was how I felt a big sense of community. I was just like, I don’t know, having a lot of jokes, and then also looking out for one another.

The proximity of students to one another throughout the program clearly contributed to the sense of community within our university group.

Students also described a sense of community with other pilgrims on the Camino who were not from our university or nation. Matthew described a spiritual connection to those walking the Camino for religious reasons. He explained,

There’s a Catholic sense of community because that was a huge part of the pilgrimage ... having these regular reminders of that, in the churches, in the people who were regularly praying and stopped along the way.



So, that was another sense in which I was able to identify with what was essentially sort of a foreign culture, but the commonality existed there.

While Matthew focused on the religious connection to other pilgrims, Jane focused on the common physical experiences. She described the camaraderie with others who shared the exertion of walking long distances on the Camino. She shared,

Also, a sense of community in that there was certain trials that everyone knew, everyone shared. Like, if you were lagging, everyone understood, “Oh, you must have had a hard day yesterday.” Or, “You must have some blisters working there,” or you were really deep in a certain thought of yours. Everyone knew that.

Jane and Matthew illustrated the close ties that students developed with fellow pilgrims through common spiritual and physical experiences. Although students did not know these other pilgrims prior to the study abroad program, they quickly learned how easily shared experiences forged community.

### ***Humanizing Professors***

Students felt a shift in the typical social frameworks and the relationships between students and faculty during their time walking on the Camino. They reported a strong sense of community with other students, with fellow pilgrims, and with their professors. A defining characteristic of *communitas* is the elimination of traditional social structures to create a community in which all individuals are equal. Although there was not a complete elimination of the roles of faculty and student that rose to the level of erasing the power differential and responsibilities, the experience humanized professors in the eyes of students. Mary noted,

I’m not, I think, as afraid to ask questions or ask the same question multiple times if I don’t get it the first time. Things like that. I think the Camino contributed to that because it in a way, it humanized you guys, like you guys have your lives outside of being our professors.

Mackenzie also spoke about the humanization of the professors to the students as a result of the experience, explaining,

I feel like that kind of reminds you that professors are also people ... I enjoy spending time going to office hours and connecting with professors, and I almost wish I had the Camino experience a little bit earlier to realize that.

As with the community built among the students, shared experience between the faculty and students accelerated the spirit of *communitas* in our group, most closely aligned with Turner and Turner’s spontaneous, *existential communitas*. For example, the professors stayed in the same hostel accommodations (*albergues*) as the students and awoke just as early to begin the day’s walk together. Jane recalled,



Fig. 2: Albergue life accelerated some elements of *communitas* among faculty and students. Photo: Courtesy of James Barber.

“when I saw you and John waking up at five a.m. with us, it was like, ‘Oh, okay. They are not just going off and doing something [else].” Matthew also recalled the shared experiences among faculty and students on the Camino, and reflected on how those situations for him, caused a change in the social structure that added friendship to the relationship he had with faculty. He explained,

You showered next to each other, you’re poking at your blisters in the same room, one of us is on the top bunk, you know. ...We were sharing a common experience and therefore that kind of overrode what else was there. So, yeah, I ended up being friends with both of the faculty members who I went with which is not something that I say about most of my classes. I don’t come out with friends (Fig. 2).

Students clearly felt a strong sense of belonging during their experience in Spain and walking the Camino. There were notable elements of social structure that remained intact, even when shared experiences were considered. The roles of professor and student, though perhaps blurred in our context, did not fall away. These findings supported the critiques of *communitas* from Eade and Sallnow<sup>35</sup>,

35 Eade, J. & Sallnow, M. J. (eds.), *Contesting the sacred: The anthology of Christian pilgrimage*, op. cit.

Coleman<sup>36</sup>, and others. Above all, the close human relationships with others on the same journey were meaningful and made a lasting impression on students but did not rise to the level of *communitas* as conceptualized by Turner.<sup>37</sup>

## Discussion

The findings from the in-depth interviews highlight five principles that helped the pilgrimage experience remain alive for students upon their return home: (a) Embedding Lessons Learned, (b) Sustaining Relationships, (c) Structured Revisitation, (d) Academic Connection, and (e) From Bounded to Unbounded Social/Academic Frameworks. In the next section, I will detail these five principles and explain how they influenced students' learning over time.

### ***Embedding Lessons Learned***

Students discussed their desire to integrate learning from the Camino into their everyday life back at home in the United States. The lessons learned over the course of their pilgrimage and the larger study abroad experience were meaningful for the students, particularly those related to identity and self-knowledge. Habits such as positive thinking, self-confidence, religious traditions, or limiting the use of technology became important fixtures in students' daily routines. Alice shared in her interview that she learned "I can do hard things," and planned to approach future challenges with this attitude in mind.

The group norms about technology use evolved organically and were not formal policies. Although most of the students and faculty had personal mobile smart phones, not everyone had cellular service in Spain, which meant that they could only use their device when they could access Wi-Fi. The university provided each student with a local mobile phone with service in Spain that students could use to contact one another and faculty, but these phones were rarely used. The majority of our group refrained from using their phones during the day while walking the Camino, and connected to Wi-Fi when the day's destination was reached. This behavior prioritized conversation and contemplation while walking.

One of the participants in this study, Jane, explained how she avoided the distraction of her mobile phone during the pilgrimage and focused on in-person interaction instead. She remembered,

The Camino was essentially like two weeks when you didn't have to connect with anyone outside of who you were with. I didn't have to be

36 Coleman, S., *Powers of pilgrimage...*, *op. cit.*

37 Turner, V., *The ritual process: Structure and anti-structure*, *op. cit.*

on my phone. I didn't have to be there. I was always pretty good about, like, setting the phone aside and not being distracted by it. I think I've been even more so after.

As evidenced by Jane's statement that she maintained her practice of setting her phone aside even after her Camino experience, students embedded these new habits into their old lives. Jenkins<sup>38</sup> documented a similar practice among the families she studied along the Camino. She found that the discipline that families created by limiting extraneous technologies often extended to their return home in an effort to rekindle and foster the togetherness and spiritual intimacy from the Camino experience.

### ***Sustaining Relationships***

The relationships that formed on this study abroad trip in some ways fit with Victor Turner's<sup>39</sup> conceptualization of *communitas* in ritual. The shared experience of walking the Camino together broke down some of the existing social structures brought from our home campus such as class year, major, and faculty/student roles. For the two weeks that we walked on the Camino, and to a lesser extent during the periods we stayed in Santiago, the students and faculty in the program stayed in the same accommodations, ate meals together, and tended to one another's physical and mental health. This sense of *communitas* fostered close relationships that students wanted to continue after the program ended. They noted several examples of how they intentionally sustained these relationships in person and virtually a year after the experience had ended.

The sense of *communitas* formed a foundation for future relationships with others, especially faculty members and others in authority. One student mentioned he began to see faculty as "real people" during the pilgrimage program. Boone wrote about the experiences of faculty members leading students on the Camino and found similar sentiments among his sample of professors. Faculty members enjoyed the sense of *communitas* that developed on their pilgrimages. Boone noted,

Faculty members acting as program directors face a significant challenge in embracing the *communitas* of pilgrimage while maintaining a relationship with students that respects the tradition and hierarchy of the professor/student dynamic. ...this engagement is a significant departure from the traditional faculty role.<sup>40</sup>

The strongest relationships were in-group relationships among the students and faculty from our own university. Although we met many fellow pilgrims from all

38 Jenkins, K. E., *Walking the way together: How families connect on the Camino de Santiago*, Oxford University Press, 2021.

39 Turner, V., *The ritual process: Structure and anti-structure*, op. cit.

40 Boone, B. I., *Teaching along the way: An ethnographic study...*, op. cit., pp. 9-10.

over the globe, and several individuals in our group formed quick friendships with others on the Camino, these out-group relationships were not sustained. It's not clear why this is. The anticipation of our group returning together to our university campus facilitated planned and unplanned opportunities for our physical paths to cross, but with the ubiquitous nature of e-mail, social media, and video conferencing, it would not be difficult to maintain communication with someone not from our university.

### ***Structured Revisitation***

One of the things that was helpful for students in integrating their learning upon return were structured opportunities to revisit their experience. Creating intentional opportunities to reconnect with others from the program and asking students to articulate what they garnered from their time away promoted integration. In the year between the pilgrimage experience and the interview students were invited to participate in two events. There was an academic symposium on our campus, sponsored by the William & Mary Institute for Pilgrimage Studies, which all students were invited to attend and present their final portfolios. All seven agreed to participate in this follow-up study. The symposium presentation and the research interview provided structured opportunities for students to revisit core take-aways and describe them to peers. This structured revisitation created a venue to give voice to their gains after time had passed. In the case of the Symposium, four months had passed, and over a year had passed before this study's interviews.

Their commitment to the research protocol was distinct from social opportunities such as a reunion dinner or chance meeting because it required recovery of faded impressions and assessing them in hindsight. This sort of metacognition is rare in study abroad experiences because students and faculty alike often disengage once the formal structure of the program is over, the final assignment is submitted, and grades are awarded.

### ***Academic Connection***

The design and academic content of the program mattered to students and prompted integration of learning. It was interdisciplinary and not connected to any specific major. There was no foreign language requirement, and coursework could fulfill general education requirements. It was essential that the content and coursework was immersive, meaningful and rigorous and allowed students to link to their major discipline and transition to undergraduate research upon their return.

The final portfolio assignment documented mastery across constituent components (the three academic courses, the 200-mile pilgrimage, and an immersion in life in Spain). We encouraged students to find consilience with their broader academic interests and perhaps intended research or career aspirations. These bridges pointed students toward larger contexts of the summer event and on to the rest of their university content areas.



One student carried a number of stones to be left at various places while walking on the Camino, a common practice of pilgrims to symbolize transformation by shedding inner weight representing hardships overcome, hope, endurance, or faith. She created unique symbols for each rock to represent different elements of life and identity, and documented each stone's placement with a photograph and journal entry that became the framework of her final portfolio (Fig. 3).



Fig. 3: One student designed a project to commemorate their personal transformation by leaving symbolic stones along the Camino. Photo: Courtesy of James Barber, Student Photo.

### ***From Bounded to Unbounded Social/Academic Frameworks***

The final principle that emerged from the student interviews was the notion that the study abroad and pilgrimage experience transformed from a study abroad experience bounded by time, location and academic credits earned. Once the participant has moved beyond the scheduled timeframe, returned home, and received academic credit, the experience away is tightly bracketed by those circumstances and given closure.

Several students in this pilgrimage program characterized their framing of this program as unbounded, continuing to unfold even after their return. The sense of liminality – that lingering over a threshold that Turner<sup>41</sup> emphasized as a distinctive characteristic of pilgrimage – may have quietly asserted itself in this situation. Adopting an implicit identity as a pilgrim with its generalized ideals of behavior and role playing apparently intimated and initiated a sense of *communitas* among the group, breaking down social structures common in campus life and fomenting a liminal space where students could reconsider multiple possible futures and effortlessly “try them on for size.” Perspectives were broadened in terms of cultural performance extending to self-esteem and identity.

Students gained a new, expanded perspective as we traveled in the ways we used our bodies to make the journey, and in how they assigned themselves fresh realizations of selfhood. Along the Camino, we typically walked through two or three residential settings each day, observing a slice of daily life in small rural villages and larger urban centers. These built environments were in most cases starkly different from students’ hometowns and challenged them to think about the impact of local, regional, and national influences beyond the routines and expectations of their accustomed domestic and social surroundings. This sense of “unbounded experience,” unframed and porous, now in enduring dialogue with every new exposure life in university and beyond would present, engendered feelings of freedom about who they were and how their personal identity might evolve and adapt.

### *Implications for Practice*

The findings from this study highlight five ways in which educators, including university faculty members, pilgrimage guides, or religious leaders, may augment their practices to encourage learning along the Camino that will persist after the initial journey is complete.

**Advocate for religious pluralism.** Students in this study continued using what they learned during their pilgrimage study abroad program in large part because

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41 Turner, V., *The ritual process: Structure and anti-structure*, op. cit.



this program was interdisciplinary and non-sectarian. These characteristics allowed for a wide variety of personal and academic backgrounds to fully engage. In a setting heavy with historical and cultural ties to Catholicism, it is vital to be explicit about openness to those who don't ascribe to the Roman Catholic or any faith community. This approach to pluralism is a core tenet of Small's<sup>42</sup> Critical Religious Pluralism Theory (CRPT). She noted that "at the individual level, CRPT advocates for a pluralistic inclusion of all religious, secular, and spiritual identities, recognizing the liberatory potential of these identities on people's lives"<sup>43</sup>. Learned content and values persist when students connect their multiple and alternating identities to what they are studying. Sacred travel such as on the Camino de Santiago must be a welcoming place for non-Christian and non-religious individuals.

**Schedule time for reflection and conversation.** Critical reflection is an important tool in higher education<sup>44</sup>, and reflection is a foundation for integration of learning<sup>45</sup>. Self-assessment was a prime condition for a pilgrimage experience to yield enduring benefits for the students in this study. It often happened through deep conversation with others while walking along the Camino. Prayer, meditation, and journaling were also common forms of self-directed deliberation. Educators who are planning pilgrimage experiences should be sure to build time into the daily schedule for unmoderated reflection, and open-ended conversation with companions. These programmed pauses should be framed as a core component, not an optional filler for those interested. We make time for what we value, and it is essential that inner processes and vocal exchanges have dedicated time in pilgrimage programs.

**Inspire a sense of wonder.** Students in this study gained a sense of wonder, even awe, through their pilgrimage experience. For some, it was prompted by seeing a new culture and perspective of the world. For others, it was a heightened sense of spirituality or a connection to something larger than themselves. Still others were in awe of their own bodies for making the 200-mile trek during the program. This sense of delighted surprise often kept students returning to the learning initiated by the curricular program and it continued to evolve long after the students reached the physical destination of their pilgrimage in the city of Santiago and later returned to the U.S.

**Design academic coursework that requires integration.** Conceptualize your program from the beginning as a learning experience that will continue long after the program itself concludes. Explain to students early in the program that you intend for them to

42 Small, J., *Critical religious pluralism in higher education: A social justice framework to support religious diversity*, Routledge, 2020.

43 *Ibidem*, p. 62.

44 Ash, S. L. & Clayton, P. H., "Generating, deepening, and documenting learning: The power of critical reflection in applied learning", *Journal of Applied Learning in Higher Education* 1, (2009), pp. 25-48, <https://hdl.handle.net/1805/4579>

45 Barber, J. P., "Integration of learning: A grounded theory...", *op. cit.* Barber, J. P., *Facilitating the integration of learning...*, *op. cit.*



Fig. 4: Upon completion of their pilgrimage from León to Santiago de Compostela, the William & Mary group attended the Pilgrim's Mass and saw the *Botafumeiro*. Photo: Courtesy of James Barber.

integrate what they learn in along the landscapes of pilgrimage with their academic majors and anticipated career paths and invite them to verbalize those connections aloud and in writing. If possible, include structured revisitation in six months, a year, or more to support students in bridging their pilgrimage and their life back at home.

The last implication for practice is a question for fellow educators: what long term role do you have in helping students to integrate term-limited content? That is, how do you help pilgrimage persist? Creating opportunities for structured revision is a role well-suited for an educator who strives to be a life mentor. The faculty member or fieldwork leader is uniquely positioned to convene activities and gatherings that bring former participants together without expectations clouded by looming grades or evaluations to revisit and retell accounts of gaining unanticipated life perspectives.

### *Conclusion*

This study was transdisciplinary and transnational, weaving existing scholarship on pilgrimage from anthropology, sociology, kinesiology and religious studies with educational research related to teaching, learning and assessment. The number of American undergraduate students engaging in academic experiences abroad was at an all-time high prior to the COVID-19 pandemic and is quickly rebounding. This study employed an established conceptualization of integrated learning<sup>46</sup> to investigate the ways in which students think about their study abroad experiences one year after returning home.

As American university students participate in more international and cross-cultural experiences, it is vital for educators to be ready to help students to connect, apply, and synthesize what they learn in study abroad experiences with knowledge and skills learned in other contexts in their lives. These undergraduates need to hone their integrative skills so their international experiences are not compartmentalized – “bracketed off” as mere odd departures from normal life – upon reentry to American culture and the peculiar culture of their home campuses.

The enduring effects of pilgrimage persisted long after these seven students reached their trekking destination in the Plaza del Obradoiro and gazed up at the Cathedral de Santiago (which was surrounded by scaffolding in 2017). One year later, they felt that they were stronger, thriving, more confident, coherent, open, intentional, and known by themselves and others. As a result of the shared experience, both in the university program and in the larger landscape of Spain as a foreign country, they developed a sense of bonded community that lingered after the program. This resulted in a change in the ways they regarded relationships with peers and faculty who took no part in the Camino venture. The learning achieved during their pilgrimage continued to unfold as they connected, applied, and synthesized

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46 *Idem.*

new insights with their existing academic discipline, intended career plans, and day-to-day life in their home country.

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