

Tensions, Transformations and Travel: Comparative Narratives of ‘Becoming’ a Cosmopolitan Educator through an Overseas Study Tour in Singapore

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ABSTRACT

This paper discusses the dynamic and complex dimensions of ‘becoming’ a cosmopolitan teacher educator through an overseas study tour. It employs autobiography as a research method to interpret the experiences of an overseas study tour, and how it has engaged the teacher educators in self-reflexivity of their negotiation of multiple identities: academic, personal and cultural. Our self-narratives reveal how becoming cosmopolitan educators is not only intimately linked to the process of re-construction of oneself as a reflexive person. The process can also be conflicting and unsettling because of how we were positioned by our pre-service teachers. It concludes by highlighting the conditions in which our multiple identities come into existence and how they shape our ways of becoming, and the need for teacher educators to engage in a continual process of professional development as cosmopolitan teacher educators.

Keywords: Asian-Australian academic, autobiography, cosmopolitan learning, reflexivity, study tours, transnational

INTRODUCTION

As the world becomes more globalized, an increasing number of universities are providing opportunities for students to undertake overseas study tours. The opportunity to travel and deepen intercultural understanding through study tours is particularly attractive to university students eager to embark on fresh challenges both in their professional and personal lives (Henderson, 2018). In view of the changing landscape of mobility and its nexus with higher education (Marginson, 2014), a number of empirical studies in the United Kingdom (e.g., Miller et al., 2015), United States (e.g., Perry, et al., 2016), and Australia (Bretag et al., 2014) have explored the experiences, interactions, needs and challenges that tertiary education students encounter in host countries through overseas study tours.

Hitherto within the field of teacher education, overseas study tours for pre-service teachers (PSTs) have also been regarded as producing new conditions and possibilities for identity re-construction (Henderson, 2018; Talbot & Thomas, 2019). For example, Henderson’s (2018) case-study of how ten Australian PSTs make sense of their study tour experience in Malaysia to become Asia literate beginning teachers, shapes up the background context of our paper. Drawing on Nussbaum’s view (1996) of an ethical education program that fosters cosmopolitan citizens, Henderson (2018) further highlighted the authentic interactions between the PSTs with the locals as significant, and argues that study tours can be seen as a pedagogical

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strategy to help develop future teachers to be culturally responsive. Similarly, Talbot and Thomas (2019) consider the notion of ‘epistemology of experience’ between the academic mentors who followed their PSTs and the assessment of the PSTs against the *Australian Professional Standards for Teachers* (AITSL, 2017). In their institutional ethnographic study of fifteen Australian PSTs (during a one-month overseas teaching placement in Indonesia), they raised critical questions about the ‘important positioning of place and experience’ and also the ‘affordances made available by experience in other “places” in helping the PSTs understand the relationships between theory and practice (p. 2).

In spite of the heterogeneity of the educational study tour contexts and conceptual tools, the majority of these qualitative studies have broadly classified overseas study tour as potentially problematic due to differences in expectations, intellectual and cultural traditions and educational provisions across cultures. As a consequence of such challenges, various support mechanisms have been put in place by universities, such as establishing programs to prepare students for overseas study tours and to foster the value of cosmopolitanism (Deardorff, 2004), as well as creating a culture that is responsive to the social and interpersonal dimensions of global inter-connectivity within a transnational space (Doerr, 2012). Despite this research, and the response from the academy, the experiences and identity formation of the teachers leading the study tours remains unknown. This paper responds to this gap by drawing on our self-narratives (as autobiographies and personal responses) in re-construing our experience of negotiating multiple identities as teacher educators in an overseas study tour. We come from Singapore-Chinese and Australian backgrounds and share common patterns in navigating cultural, academic and personal demands anchored in teacher education. However, our stories are unique.

The paper begins by addressing the notion of cosmopolitan identity formation within the context of transnational mobility. Next, we each present our autobiographical narratives as cosmopolitan teacher educators. The first narrative addresses the process of becoming a cosmopolitan “Asian-Australian” teacher educator, straddling between Singapore (birth country) and Australia (host country), around the negotiation of plural identities: as a transnational migrant and intercultural teacher educator. The second narrative reflects on the negotiation process of becoming a cosmopolitan “Australian-Asian” teacher educator, shifting from Caucasian-Australian English language teacher educator, to the unstable and contested identity of ‘knower’ of Singapore, and cosmopolitan educator more generally. We then draw on three ‘formative events’ from the study tour to individually examine and critically reflect on how that event shaped our identities as cosmopolitan educators. In light of this critical analysis of our reflective autobiographical accounts (both as autobiographies and as first-person recounts of the same formative event), we further examine the concept of cosmopolitan learning and its implications for overseas study tours, with a particular focus on Singapore as a site for future educational research.

COSMOPOLITAN LEARNING AND IDENTITY-FORMATION IN AN AGE OF TRANSNATIONAL MOBILITY

One way of conceptualizing and analyzing the study tour experience is through the concept of ‘cosmopolitan learning’ (Rizvi, 2009; Soong, 2020). We recognize that the notion of ‘cosmopolitan’ is highly contested. On the one hand, it invokes an image of a state of being elite and non-ordinary. On the other hand, the term is used synonymously as a form of identity; one that is impacted by the entangled experiences of intercultural contact and transnationality. It is the latter definition that this paper will employ in understanding how the formation of a ‘cosmopolitan’ identity for teacher educators is impacted by a

study tour experience. The aspiration to become cosmopolitan is shaped and re-shaped by a range of factors, including the institutional responses to the conditions of globalization in facilitating students to develop an intercultural understanding and knowledge of multiple cultural values, life histories and professional goals. During overseas study tours, these factors can often contradict or harmonize, causing fragmented identities (Santoro, 2014).

While varied definitions and approaches have been developed within the research that links overseas student mobility to cosmopolitanism (e.g., Sidhu & Dall'Alba, 2012; Yang et al., 2018), we take a position of cosmopolitanism that is inseparable from a transformative potential which involves community participation and a mode of learning that Rizvi (2009) has identified. Underlying this mode of learning is how individuals are conceived to be subjects with agency or individuals with capacities to make choices for resisting particular social conditions, or re-appropriating one's positioning, in order to organize their sense of place and value in the fluid social world (Isin, 2009). In this paper, we extend on Rizvi's notion of cosmopolitan learning to consider how an overseas study tour experience can assist teacher educators develop cosmopolitan teacher educator identities.

According to Rizvi (2009), cosmopolitan learning involves cultivating a set of epistemic virtues that promote a different perspective of understanding or knowing. Such cosmopolitan learning, which is paradoxically different from neo-liberal policies of cultivating talents to suit its global knowledge economy, should be the premise for developing dispositions which are worthy for preparing our future educators to be culturally responsive and globally minded. However, how study tours organizers can develop such virtues can be ambivalent. Furthermore, in the context of study tours, such human mobility echoes the conditions that Rizvi (2009) outlines as necessary for cosmopolitan possibilities, and they are mainly in two parts: empirical and normative. First, within the empirical practice, it relates to learning about how global processes are creating conditions that are changing our identities and affecting our communities. Second, as for normative practice, it involves asking and understanding how the different effects and forms of global shifts (which can be highly differentiated) are contributing to the production and reproduction of those conditions, and consequently leading to social inequalities. The ultimate goal for such learning is to 'develop an alternative imaginary of global connectivity ... which views all of the world's diverse people and communities as part of the same moral universe' (Rizvi, 2009, p. 266). This goal does not mean the rejection of local knowledge or issues. Instead, produced by global flows and networks, the term 'cosmopolitan learning' identifies the dynamic context of social and cultural exchanges that influence how individuals develop an 'openness' to generate new forms of critical knowledge (Appiah, 2006). A form of knowledge that places the nature of transnational mobility experience is at its core. By reconfiguring cosmopolitan learning through the transnational lens, it helps to first make sense of the notion of *trans* that precedes the term *nation*. This *trans* concept pays close attention to the complexities on migrants' mutual adaptations to both home and host societies. Marked by a quality of openness and acceptance of differences in adapting to a globalizing world, we argue that it is this kind of transnational mobility that ties with 'cosmopolitan learning'. Our paper draws on this by analyzing the dynamic lived realities that shape and reshape identity formation of ourselves (the authors) as cosmopolitan teacher educators.

Based on Egan-Robertson (1998), identity is viewed as a developmental process, posited as unfixed, fluid, co-constructed and reconstructed over time. Identity is also impacted by various social and cultural factors (such as race, gender, and social status) which are context specific (Alsup, 2006). In such a condition, this leads us to the question of how features of teacher identity, in particular teacher educator

identity, are variously formed over time and space (Boei et al., 2015; Beijaard et al., 2004). In closely reflecting on and examining our personal experiences and identity change, we argue that our distinct past experiences of transnationality are powerful because they are representational of our ‘knowing’ in shaping our identities of becoming cosmopolitan educators. By writing our autobiographies, we consider identity growth as grounded in history and memory (Walker, 2001) with prior personal understandings and concerns that are being enacted in multiple, often conflicting, representations of otherness. In this sense, how we interpret the present and the future is influenced by us questioning certain core values resulting from differentiated subjectivity, agency and power.

Before proceeding to our autobiographies, it is important to briefly outline the study tour itself. The Singapore study tour comprised twelve high-achieving third year pre-service teachers from one Australian university, and two academic study tour leaders (authors of this paper). Funded by Australian New Colombo Plan, the tour was motivated by the Australian Curriculum’s Cross-Curriculum Priority – Asia and Australia’s Engagement with Asia (Australian Curriculum, 2016), and centered around three key objectives: 1. to experience World Englishes (specifically Singapore English) and Singaporean literature; 2. to experience world-leading pre-service teacher (PST) training; and, 3. to experience Singapore culture.

AUTOBIOGRAPHY AS A RESEARCH METHOD IN TEACHER EDUCATION

The use of autobiography as a research method has become more recognized in social science research over the past two decades (Soong et al., 2015; Coffey, 2004; Tenni et al., 2003). Coffey describes autobiography as ‘the telling and documenting of one’s own life’ (p.1) and its focus is to capture invisible or hidden voices (Coffey, 2004). Such approach enables us to provide an account of our experiences and present our self-narratives as a method of data collection and analysis. The focus of autobiography, in this paper, is to provide an account of key episodes of our experiences that help us make sense of the complexities of an overseas study tour as teacher educators. This means that the research approach we are undertaking is reflexive and involving self-observation within a social and cultural world on which we straddle.

We believe our autobiographies impact on how we re-create our identity through intercultural overseas study tours and how we engage in our own cosmopolitan identity trajectories. In order to unpack how we re-construe the factors shaping our own identity formation as cosmopolitan educators, we have drawn on the concept of professional self-narratives from Sachs (2001). Sachs (2001) argues ‘teachers themselves construct these self-narratives, and they relate to their social, political and professional agendas... These self-narratives provide a glue for a collective professional identity’ (pp. 157-158). In reflecting on our own experiences of transnationality, we have engaged in self-reflexivity and moved beyond our own comfort zones to write about ‘rich, full accounts’ of our own past and present which may include self-doubts, contradictions and complexities (Tenni et al., 2003, p. 2). In doing so, we too connect our reflective autobiographical narratives with the ‘contextual’ and ‘personal’, the ‘internal’ and ‘external’, and the ‘individual’ and ‘collective’ factors that Sachs (2001) refers to.

In terms of data generation and collection, we draw on our engagements with the PSTs, and each other, from ‘dawn to dusk’. We would informally debrief with each other at the end of each day (typically verbally, but also often recorded through digital communication). We also organized a formal focus group debrief with our PSTs on the last day in Singapore, which was recorded and transcribed. Upon our return to Australia, we met twice in each other’s office to reflect on the study tour. After our second meeting we

decided to frame the experiences of the study tour, our individual histories, and our respective roles as teacher educators, as a research problem. Following Talbot and Thomas (2019), we identified three key 'places' of experience as field of transformational formative events: the classroom, the home, and a public place (public transport). Rather than simply reflecting on those formative events, we also want to consider the multiple layers of our self-narratives as parts of the internal relations of the field. This is where we found the lens of 'cosmopolitan learning' (Rizvi, 2009) significant in recognizing the space we are working in and with. In so doing, we have weaved how our perceived cosmopolitan identity reformation is framed within various kinds of connections within the global teacher education landscape.

Soong's Self-Narrative

Before I migrated to Australia with my husband and young daughter, I have been living in Singapore for almost three decades and taught in Singapore schools for a decade. My migratory experiences of becoming an academic began when I was awarded an Australian Postgraduate Award to complete a doctorate degree. In my research, I investigated the transitioning experiences of a cohort of international pre-service teachers undertaking postgraduate teacher education degrees with an intention to remain in Australia upon graduation. During the period of time, as a PhD student, I have learned to understand my worldview from a hybrid position. I understand that my journey of becoming an Asian-Australian academic will inherently be marked by a process of mediating different identities that are associated with my multiple experiences (Sears, 2011, p.71) including being a daughter, migrant mother, an Australian migrant-student, and an intercultural scholar. Thus, my engagement in an overseas study tour back to my home country, Singapore, entails a dynamic interplay of challenges, self-reconstruction, self-formation and identity re-definition (Soong et al. 2015, 2016).

The sub-identities as a daughter, migrant, and teacher educator have become core aspects of my academic, intercultural and personal development of becoming a cosmopolitan educator. I have been grappling with issues pertaining to my personal identity, professional identity, relationships with 'the other' (as compared with kinship), and the meaning of transformative learning as a process rather than an endpoint to a learning journey. For me, going back to be a 'visitor' of my country of birth feels very strange. I find myself constantly trying to negotiate who I have become whenever I return to be with my family in Singapore.

Because of the constant socio-political and cultural fluxes in Singapore, I feel like a stranger in my hometown each time I go back to visit my family. Whilst I am pleased that my parents and siblings are living in a secure and thriving Singapore, in a deep sense, I find myself fluctuating within the transnational lifeworld of mobility between Australia and Singapore. As a first-generation Australian migrant, my mind and body are presently in Australia; but my heart is still connected to Singapore because of my emotional connections with family. I am very grateful to both my home and adopted countries for giving me opportunities to grow, learn and become an active contributor to both societies. For me, my process of becoming a cosmopolitan teacher educator in Australia is intertwined with my own transnational relations and experience of 'living-in-between'. Still, through the migratory process and experience as a migrant mother, I have gained freedom of mind to imagine what a future might hold for my children living in a globalizing world. Is this what it means to live in a world of transnational mobility? Is this what it feels to be living 'in-betweenness' of nostalgia and fantasy, or past and present, of here and there (Soong, 2016)? Is this what I will continue to experience from a hybrid position as long as I am a cosmopolitan teacher educator?

Caldwell's Self-Narrative

I began working as a lecturer in pre-service teacher education in my early-twenties and have remained in the sector for the last fifteen years. As a linguist, my discipline area in pre-service teacher education has focused primarily on English Language and Literacy. With the exception of my formative two-year Assistant Professor post at the National Institute of Education (NIE) in Singapore, all of my tertiary level teaching and research has been in Australian Universities.

My two-year tenure in Singapore was both challenging and rewarding. It was the first time I had lived overseas. I was accompanied by my former partner who came to Singapore without employment. I ultimately chose Singapore as a destination because they were the only institute to offer me a position so soon after graduating with my PhD. In this way, I am forever grateful to NIE for providing 'a start' to my academic career. There were however many challenges over that two-year tenure. These challenges were both personal and professional. On a personal level, there were extended periods of separation between myself (in Singapore) and my partner (in Australia). On a professional level, I was battling a post-thesis depression, in an unfamiliar working culture that fostered 'output' through a mantra of individualism, competitiveness, and performance bonuses. At the same time, Singapore was home. And it was a transformative space. I relished the various hybrid, cosmopolitan spaces and identities that Singapore affords. I lived in a traditional shop house. I dined in international restaurants, and regularly ate local hawker food. I attended local Singapore-Malay weddings and multi-million dollar corporate events. I learned to speak, and teach, Singapore English. I travelled widely in the South-East Asia region. I continued to consume Australian sports and American television. And I developed and maintained strong relationships with academic colleagues from Singapore and around the world. In short, I lived and performed a cosmopolitan identity, both personally and professionally. After completing two years of a three-year contract, I resigned from NIE, and my partner and I returned to Australia, where I took up a post at the University of South Australia (UniSA) in 2014.

My identity as a teacher educator transformed dramatically as a result of this two-year tenure in Singapore. It was only during early conversations with colleagues at UniSA that I became conscious of this transformation, and the capital it affords. I was appointed to an International Strategy group; I accompanied UniSA colleagues to a conference in Singapore; and I was encouraged to apply for this New Colombo Plan study tour to Singapore. Moreover, I bonded and collaborated with my colleague and co-author in a way that would not have been possible without this experience. Ultimately, I began to see myself as a 'knower' of Singapore, South-East Asia, and as a cosmopolitan teacher educator more generally. Put another way, I conceive of myself as an Australian-Asian educator, in a similar way to how my co-author conceives of herself as an Asian-Australian educator. However, as will be discussed below, this self-perception and identity performance, was, and continues to be, seriously challenged, re-imagined and re-configured following this study tour experience. To unpack this further, the following are three key events that happened during the study tour which we have reflected on, reveal how each event has established a deep imprint on our process of becoming cosmopolitan educators.

THE OVERSEAS STUDY TOUR: NAVIGATING RESISTANCES AND ENGAGEMENT BY THE AUSTRALIAN PRE-SERVICE TEACHERS

Formative Event 1: The Singapore English Classroom

The study tour comprised two workshops on the topic Singapore English. These workshops were prepared and delivered by the second author. Workshop one introduced the PSTs to World Englishes, while

the second workshop specifically focused on the sounds and words of Singapore English. These two workshops were especially interactive, with the PSTs listening to, practicing and experiencing Singapore English. A key aim here was to raise the PSTs' consciousness regarding the different types of Englishes around the world, and ultimately, for them to recognize and acknowledge these Englishes as legitimate forms of English that they will invariably encounter in their classrooms. The first author was in attendance, and an active participant in the workshops, often modeling particular sounds and pronunciations of Singapore English.

Soong's Reflections

Positioned near the back of the classroom, I listened with great respect and interest to the second author's ability to speak Singapore English, or 'Singlish', and observed how the class reacted and responded to him speaking 'differently' from his normal Australian accent. I did not expect to participate and model local Singaporean English. Yet, as the only native speaker of Singapore English in the room, it was inevitable that I would be called on. In hindsight, we both agree that my participation in these workshops was not productive because of how we were being represented by our PSTs.

I did not foresee that the PSTs would essentialize me as an 'expert' in Singapore English, and not the second author. At the same time, I was often corrected by the PSTs in casual conversation for not being able to speak standard Australian English. For instance, on one specific occasion, I was instructed by a PST to say the word 'film' in Australian English, and then repeat it back to the PST. I was shocked by this instruction. Especially because I did not make a point to correct the PSTs when they were interacting with local Singaporeans. I simply let them experience communicating and even experimenting what they could remember about Singapore English. I only came in to support or correct if they requested me to. Such choice is in line with Krashen's (1982) theory of 'affective filter hypothesis'. Essentially, the theory promotes the need to allow learners to practice a new language without fear of being wrong in order to feel positive and confident about acquiring a second language.

As a result, it appears we were unsuccessful in enabling the PSTs to recognize the plurality of Englishes: how one's proficiency to sound like a local should not be prescribed and categorized as un-Singaporean or un-Australian. It seems that a major contributing factor to this stems from the inclusion of my voice as the 'expert' in the classroom – the 'ideal' speaker of Singapore English. Despite our best attempts, this encouraged a binary of 'correct' and 'incorrect' language use: expert and novice. Rather than opening up the PSTs to the possibilities of diversity and fluidity across a single language, they took it as an opportunity to demonstrate knowledge/power over me with respect to my Australian identity, and essentialize my Singaporean identity.

Caldwell's reflections

This context was very familiar to me: teaching World Englishes and Singapore English. As always, in line with my linguistic values, the workshops were *not* presented as an opportunity to essentialize and parody Singapore English. In fact, the point was made very clearly that we were legitimizing Singapore English, and other varieties of English. The PSTs were seeing, tasting, smelling, and hearing Singapore. This was an opportunity to 'speak' Singapore. For the most part, the PSTs were engaged in the session, practicing Singapore sounds and words both in the class and then occasionally in authentic communicative contexts. However, there were two moments where I observed a resistance from the students regarding my knowledge of Singapore English, and at the same time, a promotion of (and ultimately essentialization) of the first author's knowledge of Singapore English.

I read the students a picture book in Singapore English. Again, this was mostly well received, including the first author admiring my (relative) level of expertise in Singapore English. However, there were several ‘calls’ from the PSTs for the first author to read the text instead of the second author. On another occasion I had to leave the room, and the first author took the students through some words in Singapore English. Upon my return, there was a marked increase in their levels of engagement and enthusiasm when the first author was teaching Singapore English.

These responses are indicative of the kind of resistance and rejection I felt from the PSTs with respect to my attempts at presenting, modeling and performing a Singaporean identity. Of course, from the first author’s perspective, these responses are equally confronting and containing: presenting her as the quintessential Singaporean. Despite the fact that I am a linguist, who is expert in Singapore English (and had literally taught this topic to *Singaporean* University students two years prior at the same institution), the PSTs seemingly wanted an ‘authentic’ native speaker experience to consume, rather than a model of cosmopolitanism that they could learn from, and ultimately enact and embody in the future.

Formative Event 2: A Home Visit

Part of the study tour is to provide PSTs with local experiences which the first author prepared and led. As such, the study tour would include a visit to local suburbs, schools and to the home of the first author’s family. The aim is to increase the PSTs’ awareness of the different lived realities of local Singaporeans. We first brought the PSTs to the first author’s parents’ home – a traditional old housing apartment, which the first author lived in for twenty-five years. The first author’s Chinese-Singaporean parents who are in the age range between early to mid-eighties, speak Mandarin, Hakka (dialect) and a bit of colloquial Singaporean English. They were looking forward to hosting and interacting with the Australian PSTs.

Soong’s Reflections

I know my parents were very excited to meet their new guests; they created an atmosphere of warmth and hospitality. However, I immediately felt a sense of helplessness not knowing if the PSTs would further define me as a Singaporean, as opposed to an Australian with a Singaporean root. The PSTs observed me how I spoke with my parents (in Mandarin), and how I translated and code-switched within the third space of communication. Yet, whilst this was happening, I sensed being ‘pushed’ into a space where the PSTs would not be able to accept my current identity of an Asian-Australian educator. I acknowledged they were genuinely grateful for the opportunity to see my parents and where I grew up in. But that was where their understanding of my identity ended.

Caldwell’s Reflections

Despite having extensive experiences with many Singaporeans of various ages and social class, I was very conscious of the personal nature of our visit to the first author’s home. I had multiple roles to play – a colleague and friend to the first author (my relationship as a colleague, but also as a friend visiting her parent’s home for the first time); a guest to the first author’s parents (a professional relationship between myself and the first author’s parents, but also as a non-Singaporean entering their home); and a teacher to the PSTs (a model of cosmopolitanism; demonstrating appropriate behavior when visiting a home in a new cultural context). I had a very special formative experience with first author’s father, whom, after I admired his biography of Lee Kuan Yew, and much to my surprise, very kindly offered it to me as a gift. As a friend to the first author, guest of her parents, and teacher to the PSTs, this was an extremely important intercultural exchange for me to have, particularly as a model to the PSTs. On another family occasion, the first author’s relatives commented on how ‘Singaporean’ I presented to them. It was striking then, as I have

illustrated above, and illustrate again in the formative event blow, that even with the ‘endorsement’ of local Singaporeans, and in the presence of the PSTs, that there was a resistance to any knowledge, status or authority I might have from the PSTs.

Formative Event 3: The Mass Rapid Transit

A feature of Singapore is its highly efficient and effective Mass Rapid Transport (MRT) (a rail system). We used this often as a mode of transport throughout the study tour. The first and second authors typically took the lead as the study tour group entered the station; pointing to signs, walking towards the appropriate platform and so on. And of course, as to be expected, especially given the intricacies of the network, and the many places visited, there were moments of disorientation and misdirection (although these were minimal). Ultimately, the MRT was chosen as the final formative event because it both literally and symbolically represented the ‘journey’ of the study tour.

Soong’s Reflections

Having lived in Singapore for almost three decades, I knew how to get around via public transport well. However, over the years, the MRT has undergone major extensions to almost every suburb and housing area. Whilst I could still get around with the PSTs quite easily, there were always some unfamiliar names which I was not sure about due to the constant upgrading and development constructions of housing and expansion of MRT transport. During a few episodes of taking the MRT, I noticed how the PSTs would verify with me whether they were heading in the right direction even after the second author has given clear instructions of where they were going. I felt very uncomfortable about it.

Apart from this uncomfortable feeling, I was also troubled by how little interests the PSTs showed in the new surroundings while they were on the MRT train. On many occasions during the MRT trips, I noticed there were missed opportunities for them to observe Singaporeans more closely. Instead, for most of the time, the PSTs were sitting amongst themselves, chatting and laughing without a clue that for many Singaporeans, who are English literate, they could hear and understand what they were saying.

Caldwell’s Reflections

It was in the context of the MRT that I was openly criticized by the PSTs for my ‘apparent’ lack of knowledge regarding the MRT, and ultimately, my way around Singapore more generally. These initial critiques then became an albeit humorous bond between the PSTs; the idea that the second author didn’t know where he was going. This was in direct contrast to the first author, who was never criticized or questioned when leading the group. In fact, on one occasion, a PST explicitly suggested that the first author ‘take the lead’. This response from the PSTs was especially peculiar for several reasons: 1. For the vast majority of the time, I *did* know where I was going. There were very few occasions where I had to re-navigate. 2. The first author would often defer to me as to where to go. NB: as a local, first author had not visited many of the inner-city and ‘tourist’ locations that we visited. Often, I was the *only* ‘knower’ amongst the group with respect to the destinations, and journey there.

As with the classroom experience as a formative event, there was a conscious rejection of my capital as a knower of Singapore from the PSTs. In this case, it is especially salient; not only was it an explicit rallying point for all PSTs, but it was simply ill-founded. Paradoxically, in a context where Second author had the most knowledge (and demonstrate this to the PSTs by leading them to a range of destinations most ‘local’ Singaporean’s aren’t aware of), he was roundly rejected and ridiculed by the PSTs.

CONCLUSION: THE NOTION OF BECOMING A ‘COSMOPOLITAN EDUCATOR’

The journey of ‘becoming’ cosmopolitan educators involves a process of mediating and harmonizing contradictions and differences that are critical in any study tour. The events have helped us to uncover a particular paradigm of a cosmopolitan learning that Rizvi (2009) has referred to. The matter of being and becoming a cosmopolitan educator is not only intimately related to the new knowledge about how we perceive ourselves, it is also intimately relational to the PSTs’ responses. The process is never stable and straightforward. Despite our individual transnational experiences of becoming cosmopolitan educators, we found that our PSTs struggled with taking a positive ‘first-step’ towards detaching particular homogenous and essentialized identities to us.

In response, we held a debrief session on our final day in Singapore where we explicitly asked the PSTs whether they could see the nuance; whether they could see the first author as Asian-Australian, and the second author as Australian-Asian. Unfortunately, in their eyes, the first author’s cultural and national identity remained Singaporean, and the second author Australian. We stress however that such accounts should not position these PSTs as deficit (especially when we have not engaged the PSTs’ views). Such is the limitation of an autobiographical study. The challenge for us is to give an in-depth analysis of our accounts, with personal reflective views, without being misinterpreted as a study of ‘self-absorption’ (Bunde-Birouste et al., 2019, p. 515).

Ensuring that we keep moving towards a more positive and transformative approach of valuing diversity and transnational understanding and experiences of intercultural study tours for our PSTs is key in building a cosmopolitan teacher education. The challenge to become cosmopolitan educators is visible from both sides (Boei et al. 2015). In the process of pursuing our professional and personal development of reflexivity, the values and experiences that we gain by adapting to cosmopolitan environments plays a vital role in how we can contribute back to the education of these PSTs. These reflective autobiographical accounts of our past experiences, and formative events, highlight the need for cosmopolitan teacher educators to be aware of the tensions and dilemmas facing the cross-cultural experiences of teachers and PSTs alike.

By way of conclusion, it is also worth considering the potential impact of the location of Singapore itself on these recounted tensions and transformations, and as a site for future study. Singapore provides a unique cosmopolitan context for PSTs; the city-state is renowned for blurring the binary perceptions of ‘East’ and ‘West’ (Brown, 2005). And yet it might be this sense of the familiar – East and West – the ‘other’ and the knower (or non-knower), that afforded, and reinforced the kinds of essentialized identities imposed on the first author and the second author respectively by the PSTs. We have also found that as we navigate tensions to which the perceptions of our PSTs play a role, we are not arguing that we want them to actively position us as fixed in terms of our cosmopolitan identities. Rather, what we hope is that our PSTs are actively revising their views in relation to what is in effect a dialogue about how they reflect and conceptualize their study tour experiences. Such form of reflexivity with self and others corresponds closely to Archer’s (2007) communicative reflexivity. In framing this way, we see the focus of our autobiographies makes the form of our continual reflexivity ‘pedagogical’ (Henderson, 2018), rather than critical. This means that the capacity to become cosmopolitan teacher educators can be deepened if we consider how we prepare our PSTs before their study tours, and also how we can create spaces for exploring each other’s ways of knowing culture and place: one that Talbot and Thomas (2019) employ in their study through the notion of ‘epistemology of experience’. The question is how we, as cosmopolitan teacher educators, unlock

the potential for cosmopolitan learning for our PSTs who themselves also come with a complex web of values, experiences and histories on which different kinds of ‘cosmopolitan learning’ can come into effect. The study tour can also create another pedagogical space for us to consider: how, as cosmopolitan teacher educators, we promote intercultural interactions between Singaporeans who come into contact with our students. In this way, the terrain that host members, our students and us are navigating in requires cosmopolitan teacher educators to co-produce critical knowledge of our place in the global world, and hone our PSTs’ intercultural awareness and competence, to becoming “global citizens” in a cultural sense (Soong, 2018). A timely future study would be replicating a similar study tour, in a location that is more homogeneous in its cultural identity. Paradoxically, would a study tour to China for example invoke less essentializing from the pre-service teachers towards their hosts? More comparative studies on the impacts of study tour experiences is needed.

Finally, whilst our reflective accounts do not lend this study as generalizable, they have highlighted the ways in which overseas study tours have a potential to shape the capacities of teacher educators, and PSTs, in becoming cosmopolitan educators, from diverse backgrounds and histories. Our self-narratives show that becoming a cosmopolitan educator is a continual process of re-constructing oneself as a reflexive human being (Alsup, 2006). In the process of writing this paper, following Rizvi (2009) and Appiah (2006), we hope that we have presented an exemplar of cosmopolitan learning, not simply in our self-perception and experiences, but in our ‘openness’ to generate new forms of critical knowledge. In this case, in simple terms, the knowledge that our self-perceptions as cosmopolitan educators, are likely to be resisted and rejected by others, including those whom we are hoping to develop a sense of openness. An awareness of our multiple identities, the conditions in which they come into existence, and how they shape our ways of becoming, are essential for our continual process of professional development as cosmopolitan teacher educators.

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