

**“THEY’RE JUST FUN TO BE WITH”: BUILDING A COMMUNITY OF LEARNERS  
THROUGH OVERNIGHT SCHOOL TRIPS**

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This study applies Falk and Dierking’s (2000) Contextual Model for Learning to a study addressing the under-researched phenomenon of overnight school trips. The three overlapping contexts of Falk and Dierking’s (2000) Contextual Model for Learning demonstrate that learning is an intricate process that takes into consideration a person’s sense of self, place in society and understanding of the physical world. Acting as participant observers, six members of a research team from the University of Pittsburgh accompanied 48 eighth grade students from a rural community in a Midwestern state on a four-day overnight school trip to Washington, D.C. During the trip, the research team recorded their observations using digital audio recorders. After the trip, the recordings were transcribed into 25 pieces of media, named by site and observer. Analysis of the transcripts produced 31 codes applied to 400 excerpts. The findings of the study directly connected to the Contextual Model for Learning’s sociocultural and physical contexts. The study concluded that over the course of the trip, students created a community of learners, sharing their learning and working together to make meaning of the experience. While chaperones and staff members of the sites explicitly shared some of the behavioral expectations, students also learned to read the space they occupied, and identified and complied with implicit

behavioral norms. However, evidence that students contemplated their place in the world as a result of this trip exists (the personal context). This study concludes with a discussion of implications for further research.

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## PREFACE

This dissertation is the culmination of a life-long dream. Prior to this experience, I considered myself a decent writer; writing was not something I sought out, nor was it something I shied away from. This project awakened a love of the research process and I hope this is just the first of many studies I complete. While my name appears on the title page as the author, I am forever indebted to a number of people who supported me throughout the process. While a few written lines cannot express the depth of my gratitude, I would be remiss if I did not take a moment to thank those most influential in helping me in this journey.

First, I would like to thank my editor, Sarah Dugan. Her expertise in APA and ETD formatting made this process easier. I greatly appreciate her attention to detail, as that is a place I am often lacking.

My entire family has been a source of love and encouragement throughout this entire process. My parents, John and Cathy, instilled in me a love of learning and continue to push me to reach my goals. They taught me that any job worth doing should be done well, and when I wanted to just be done, it was my father's voice in my head telling me not to give up. While my two younger siblings, Beth and John, will always tease me about being the "nerd" of the family, they have kept me grounded every step of the way, never letting me take anything too seriously. I know that it is with pride that they celebrate the end of this journey with me. My nephew,

Matthew and niece, Samantha, will never know how much they inspired me through this process. Seeing the world through their eyes will never get old.

I will never forget telling my husband, Tim, that I was starting the doctoral program. We had been talking since the completion of my master's program at Carnegie Mellon about my interest in starting a doctoral program, and he did not realize that I had finally applied. While the financial expense of embarking on such a program was overwhelming, he never batted an eye. Throughout this entire process, he has nagged me to get to work when I wanted to relax and took on extra responsibilities around our home so that I could work. There were weekends where we could not do the things together that he wanted to do because I had schoolwork, yet he never complained. Tim has stood by my side through two graduate degrees. I will forever be grateful for his unconditional and undying love and support and only hope that I am as strong a support for him as he embarks on his own educational journey this fall.

Meghan Murray served as my writing buddy throughout the process. Most Sunday mornings, we were the first two people in Panera or Starbucks where we sat side-by-side working on our studies. It was that accountability to just show up that kept me moving when the obligations of my job and life offered excuses to procrastinate. I appreciate Meghan for her ability to help me identify the word that simply skipped my mind, her ability to make the hours spent sitting at a table in the corner enjoyable, and her friendship.

Dr. Kerr assembled the best dissertation committee imaginable. They served as a significant source of encouragement while also pushing me to think outside the box and push my thinking just a bit further. Dr. Lovorn's experience traveling with students at both the high school and collegiate level brought a voice of expertise I never expected to find, but greatly appreciate. Dr. Suzik's voice is easily seen in the introduction and the discussion of the history

of field trips; his advice to look at the Progressive movement in education added another dimension to my work. I sincerely appreciate Dr. Trovato's ability to always find the right word and to insist on more vivid description. I was blessed with an amazing committee who made the process enjoyable as well as rewarding.

The members of the research team not only served as keen observers without whom this project would not be possible, but also made the process fun. I will forever cherish the memories of traveling together and the rich conversations that we shared. The undergraduate students on this team never ceased to amaze me in both their work ethic and intellectual capabilities. Kristen Frese and Rachel Neuhoff possess an amazing eye for detail both in their written work and when observing students. The time these ladies spent transcribing the observations after our trip is more appreciated than they will ever know. While Spencer Kilpatrick pushes me to think outside the box and to always ask the next question, he also always makes me laugh. His personality came through in the transcripts of his observations and served as a source of laughter even when the task seemed daunting. My fellow doctoral student, Rebecca Price served as an incredible asset. I can never thank her enough for her assistance in locating those articles I just could not seem to access, and it was her document search that produced the sole study on overnight school trips. I appreciated the sporadic email chains that we shared throughout our processes and hope to work together on projects in the future.

Our entire team is forever in debt to the community of "Bartley." I have truly grown to love this small rural town, where everyone seems to know each other and feel some connection to, and pride in, the annual eighth grade trip to Washington, D.C. Every person we came into contact with when visiting this community, welcomed us with warmth and hospitality. The students of Bartley served as an inspiration for this study, while also taking great pride in being

the subject of our research. The chaperones welcomed us into their community as colleagues, and took great interest in the value of data we collected every day. Their dedication to our study is greatly appreciated. While the entire Bartley community was instrumental in the success of this study, Mr. M and Ms. G, the leaders of this trip were invaluable in the formation of our partnership. I greatly enjoyed visiting with them while we visited Bartley, getting to know their families, and travelling with them to Washington, D.C. on multiple occasions. Their dedication to their students and this trip make them model educators. I am forever indebted to them, and grateful for the camaraderie that we built through this process.

Last but certainly not least, I want to thank Dr. Mary Margaret Kerr. I will never forget that first meeting in her office when she pushed my transcripts across the table at me and told me that I needed to get back to my roots, rejecting my proposed dissertation topic. In that simple exchange, she proved to be the single most influential person in my entire educational career. Words cannot express my gratitude in being granted admittance to her research team. I thoroughly enjoyed the hours spent traveling together. Her advice and mentorship, not only in my dissertation, but also in life will always be remembered fondly. Thank you is not enough.



## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

School trips<sup>1</sup> are a common phenomenon in adolescence and have been for many years. Dating back to the Middle Ages in Europe, school trips originated as a way to celebrate the completion of a student's formal education (Krepel & DuVall, 1981). By the late nineteenth century, English journals encouraged the use of school trips as a way to further a student's education in conjunction with the belief that "every child is a stranger to the world; thus it is the function of education to introduce the child to human and material surroundings" (Krepel & DuVall, 1981, p. 8). While the origins of school trips took root in Europe, the American educational system adopted the practice agreeing that students learn through experience.

In the 1930's and 1940's American Progressives like John Dewey and Caroline Pratt encouraged the use of school trips as an element of experiential learning. Dewey believed that learning was an inherently social process and that "a primary responsibility of educators is...that they also recognize in the concrete what surroundings are conducive to have experiences that lead to growth" (Dewey, 1997, p. 40). Believing that the setting in which a lesson takes place,

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<sup>1</sup> For the purposes of this paper, "school trips" refers to school sponsored and planned trips in which K-12 students travel with their peers and teachers to off-campus sites for the purposes of continuing education. Trips for the purpose of athletic or academic competitions do not fit this classification.

greatly impacts its educational value, Dewey placed the responsibility for identifying and obtaining the best possible learning environment for a lesson, on the classroom teacher. As such, when learning about a specific topic, the best environment for that learning is one that is as close to that concept as possible. Much the way Caroline Pratt described classroom experiences in which students identified a problem through their course of classroom activities, and then planned trips to sites that would help them identify solution to their identified problems (Pratt, 2014). The American school system adopted the belief that students learn by doing and that the location of activities plays a role in student learning.

The tradition of school trips has continued to the current day, not as a celebration, but as an instructional strategy included in students' formal education. Today, school trips take place around the world with great frequency. Twelve million visitors (nearly five percent of all visitors) to national monuments, in Great Britain, annually are schoolchildren, generating £8 million in revenue (Cooper & Latham, 1989). In 2001, nearly 128,000 interstate schoolchildren traveled to Washington, D.C. as part of a school trip (Cambourne & Falk, 2003). The US Holocaust Memorial Museum, the Newseum, and the Oklahoma City Bombing Memorial each report welcoming thousands of students to their site annually (Kerr & Price, 2016). When barriers arise that prevent students from physically traveling on a school trip, some classrooms even engage in virtual school trips, connecting with others around the world using various forms of technology (i.e., Skype, Polycoms™).

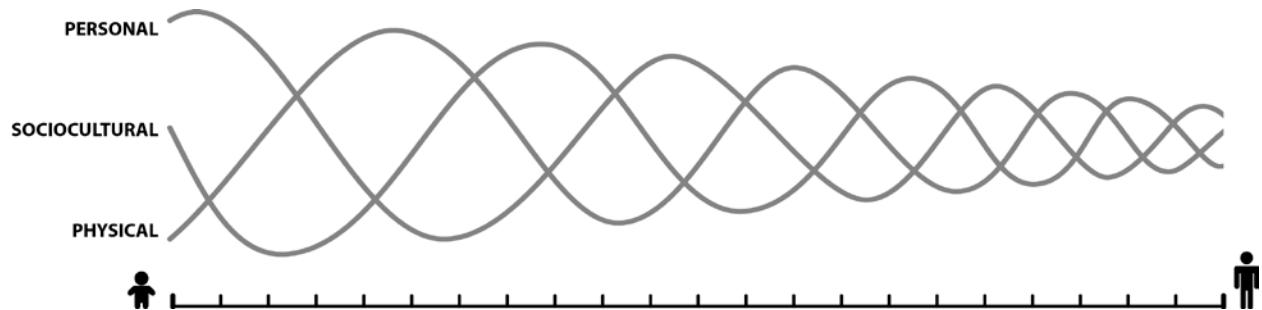
School trips have continued because of their perceived benefits to students. While academic benefits appear to be the primary reason for school trips, students are also thought to benefit interpersonally from participating in school trips. School trips provide students with an experience that cannot be replicated in the classroom, giving students the opportunity to be in a

space that provides an authentic experience. Research, from teacher and student perspectives, supports these beliefs. Through a survey of Australian teachers, Munday (2008) concluded that 93.3% of respondents believe that school trips do in fact provide students with diverse educational opportunities (p. 152). Similarly, while studying Australian students through pre and post-trip surveys, Ballantyne and Packer (2002) found that the exposure to new experiences changed the way that students felt about their environment.

Research confirmed that students benefit from their participation in school trips. The Conceptual Model of Learning put forth by Falk and Dierking (2000), discussed in the following section, helped us understand the specific ways in which participation in school trips benefits students, however, as demonstrated below, the literature pertaining to overnight school trips is limited. After a brief introduction to the Contextual Model of Learning, this study first examines the literature on school trips through the lens of the Contextual Model of Learning in chapter two. Chapter three outlines the methods used in conducting a study of a four-day overnight school trip in which a six member research team from the university traveled to Washington, D.C. with a group of 48 eighth grade students from a rural community located in a Midwestern state. Chapter four recounts the observations made by members of the team at six different sites visited over the course of this trip, and begins to align those observations to the Contextual Model of Learning. Chapter five contemplates the limitations of this particular study, while also suggesting avenues of further research around school trips.

## 1.1 THE CONTEXTUAL MODEL OF LEARNING

Conceptual models deriving from the literature on school trips confirm that learning occurs during out-of-the-classroom experiences. After studying museum experiences for a number of years, Falk and Dierking (2000) put forth the Contextual Model of Learning. This model stipulates that learning is a process that occurs as people process, connect, and make meaning of, real-world experiences. Three overlapping contexts—the personal, the sociocultural and the physical—compose the Contextual Model of Learning. Over time, our experiences weave together as we apply our understanding of what have experienced in the past to make meaning of the present. Figure 1 serves as a visual interpretation of the Contextual Model for Learning, showing the connection of the three contexts, personal, sociocultural, and physical, over time.



*Figure 1. The Contextual Model for Learning*

## 1.2 PERSONAL CONTEXT

The personal context draws connections between a person's motivation, interests, past experiences, and prior knowledge (Falk & Dierking, 2000). Motivation takes into account a

person's emotions, and reasoning for making meaning of experiences. Falk and Dierking (2000) argue that a primary motivation for learning is to gain a sense of self and understanding of a person's place in the world: "It is this sense of self that serves as the primary filter of experience, enabling the mind to focus on those issues and events perceived as relevant and to ignore those perceived as irrelevant" (p. 21). We choose to process, and make connections between those experiences that we believe help us gain a greater understanding of ourselves. Such choices, conscious or unconscious, constitute our motivations for learning. Personal interests refers to a person's likes and dislikes, as well as the concepts to which that person feels compelled to assign attention, persistence and curiosity (Falk & Dierking, 2000). As we go through life, we continue to pull on our past experiences and knowledge to make meaning of new experiences. At times, we may not realize the significance of an experience until another event down the road forces us to draw upon that experience.

### **1.3 THE SOCIOCULTURAL CONTEXT**

The sociocultural context addresses learning as a cultural construct as well as the development of self (an overlap with the personal context) and the identification of the person's place within society. Cultures use learning as a way to create functioning and contributing members of society. All learning is experienced through the lens of the culture in which an individual lives. "The world has meaning for us because of the shared experiences, beliefs, customs, and values of the groups that inhabit it with us" (Falk & Dierking, 2000, p. 39). Many of a person's first learning experiences take the form of modeling those around them (e.g., parents, siblings). As a result, "our most fundamental and individually characteristic patterns of behavior...are

*nonverbally* learned” (Falk & Dierking, 2000, p. 49). The information that cannot be shared through modeling is quite often shared through stories and narratives. Such stories and narratives teach the history of the culture, putting the cultural values and norms into context for learners (Falk & Dierking, 2000). As people share experiences, they talk about what they know, making connections between past experiences and sharing interpretations of events; in doing so, people create what Falk and Dierking (2000) refer to as a community of learners. In communities of learners, members work together create a common understanding of a shared experience. It is through modeling the behaviors of others, social interactions, and social narratives, that we learn how to function within our culture.

#### **1.4 THE PHYSICAL CONTEXT**

Where the personal context addresses a person’s sense of self, and the sociocultural context addresses a person’s place in society, the physical context helps a person understand the physical world in which they live: the nonself. When referencing the physical context, Falk and Dierking (2000) referred to all elements of the setting, in which an event occurs: the natural and manmade world along with the emotions that setting evokes. The importance of understanding how to navigate one’s physical environment dates back to the origins of human existence when the ability to understand how to navigate the physical context was literally a life and death matter (Falk & Dierking, 2000). Over time, humans began to develop what psychologists Barker and Wright refer to as “behavior settings” (Falk & Dierking, 2000). The term “behavior settings” refers to the notion that human behavior can be predicted more accurately from the physical context in which the behavior occurs than from the person’s personality characteristics. People

learn the expected behaviors for various settings and comply with those expectations. As such, physical contexts become associated with specific behaviors like learning or having fun (Falk & Dierking, 2000). With such an emphasis on the purpose of certain physical spaces, Falk and Dierking (2000) report that learning often becomes context specific with the learner struggling to transfer new information from one environment to another.

## **1.5 SUMMARY**

The three overlapping contexts of Falk and Dierking's (2000) Contextual Model for Learning demonstrate that learning is an intricate process that takes into consideration a person's sense of self, place in society and understanding of the physical world. "In a sense, the sociocultural context...serves as a bridge between the individual's sense of self, the personal context, and the nonself, or physical context, the individual must live within" (Falk & Dierking, 2000, p. 56). People use what they know of their culture and past experiences with others to understand how to interact with the physical world in which they live. What these three contexts do not fully address is that learning is a continuous process that begins from birth and continues throughout a person's life. While not an official fourth context, Falk and Dierking (2000) suggest that time should also be taken into consideration when applying their Contextual Model for learning. The addition of time to the model views "learning as being constructed over time as the individual moves through his sociocultural and physical world; over time, meaning is built up, layer upon layer" (Falk & Dierking, 2000, p. 11). As people move through life, they continue to interact with others and the physical environment, gaining a greater understanding of self, their place in society, and their relationship with their world.

## **2.0 REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE**

The process of learning is a personal endeavor not experienced by any two people in exactly the same way (Falk, Ballantyne, Packer, & Benckendorff, 2012). When applied to the literature on school trips, Falk and Dierking's (2000) Contextual Model of Learning helps us better understand that learning process for students as a result of their participation in school trip experiences. What follows is a review of the literature that addresses each of the three contexts (personal, sociocultural and physical) respectively, as well as my interpretation of that literature. However, the Contextual Model for learning does not apply to all of the literature identified during the course of this review. Therefore, the review concludes with a separate section discussing those publications. The review begins with a description of how publications were located and selected for this analysis.

### **2.1 METHODOLOGY FOR IDENTIFYING THE BODY OF LITERATURE PERTAINING TO SCHOOL TRIPS**

The work of DeWitt and Storksdieck (2008) provided a preliminary body of literature that addressed school trips, and served as the starting point for this review. Next, I searched databases including ERIC, EBSCOHOST and Google Scholar. The initial searches utilized the terms "fieldtrip" "school trip" and "school excursion." The databases produced a robust body of



literature. Interestingly, I found different results after adding a space between the words “field” and “trip” in initial search term of “fieldtrip.” The term “field trip” produced over 100 articles. Because this study focuses on K-12 school groups, all articles discussing teacher preparation programs or students at the collegiate level were discarded. Of note, implementing the additional parameters of peer-reviewed articles, written in English and addressing students in K-12 education further narrowed the field of potential sources. The review led to additional searches regarding “experiential learning,” “interpretation,” and “educational tourism.” In all, the searches produced 48 peer-reviewed sources, which we discuss in the next sections.

## **2.2 APPLICATION OF THE PERSONAL CONTEXT**

As mentioned above, the personal context of learning takes into consideration a person’s motivation, interests, prior knowledge, prior experiences, and the context of the learning experience. A rich body of literature aligning to the various elements of this context exists. Table 1 summarizes this literature.

Table 1. *Literature Pertaining to the Personal Context*

Source	Summary of Findings
Anderson, Kisiel, & Storksdieck (2006)	The authors teamed up to compare their independent studies on teacher perspectives about field trips in Canada, Germany and the United States. The comparison found that teachers in all nations face many of the same constraints when planning field trips.
Bamberger & Tal (2007)	The authors studied more than 20 classes of students at four museums in Israel in an attempt to understand how the structure of the visit impacted student learning. They found that school trip activities that offered students limited choice allowed teachers to appropriately scaffold the activities while still providing students with the ability to self-direct their learning and increase engagement.
Behrendt & Franklin (2004)	Through this literature review, the authors argued the importance of experiential learning through school trips. This review also uses the literature to suggest a researched based methodology for planning and conducting meaningful school trips.
Cambourne & Faulks (2003)	This case study examines school tourism in Canberra, Australia. It provides many statistics about the Australian school tourism market in 2001.
Cooper (1999)	Cooper writes for those that provide the sites for school trips. After establishing that school trips are a segment of the tourism market that destinations should take seriously, Cooper sets about describing how tourist sites can attract school visits to their facility. Cooper sites specific data about school tourism in Europe, however that data is over 15 years old.
Cowan & Maitles (2011)	The article details Scottish student experiences in the <i>Learning from Auschwitz</i> program. The researchers use student responses to explain the effect of the experience. While this trip was educational, it was sponsored by the national government, not a school system, and as such students often traveled independently and not with their classmates.
Dewitt & Storksdieck (2008)	This review of literature concludes that while school trips may not provide students with the best learning environment, the opportunities student have to explore and participate in first-hand experiences proves beneficial to the students overall educational experience.

Table 1 (continued)

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Falk et al. (2012)	The authors outline the history of tourism research as it is linked to learning, while looking at learning through the lens of tourism. After doing so, they reach the conclusion that the field is under-researched and propose using Aristotle's concept of <i>phronesis</i> as a framework for the field.
Gottfried (1980)	The author observed student groups at a BioLab over the course of six months. Follow-up interviews, as well as the observations demonstrated that students, when given the opportunity to explore on their own engaged in experiments that resulted in student learning about animal biology and associated skills.
Krepel & DuVall (1981)	This how-to manual begins by examining the history of school trips as well as school policies and other constraints that regulate the use of field trips as an instructional tool. After outlining the recommended procedure for planning a school trip, the authors conclude with a list of sample trips across school disciplines. They also cited other people's field trip experiences in showing examples of successful trips.
Lai (1999)	The article summarizes a case study of a geography field trip of Year 10 students at an affluent boys school in Hong Kong. During the trip, students took part in two distinct activities; one was teacher led while the other allowed students to guide their own activity in achieving a learning goal. Lai concluded that when given the opportunity to control their experience, students took more responsibility for their learning.
Lankford (1992)	This book serves as a guide to properly planning field trips. Lankford presents a researched based process for maximizing student learning on school trips.
Millan (1995)	Millan draws upon years of taking students on field trips as well as the literature to create a process for the planning of successful school trips.
Pace & Tesi (2004)	The study focuses on the interviews of 8 adults between the ages of 25 and 31 to see what they remembered learning on field trips taken during their K-12 education. All participants remembered some aspect of a field trip experience from their youth.
Wolins et al. (1992)	This is an ethnographic study of student memories of museum trips. Students in the study participated in an abnormal number of museum trips annually; the number different each year of the study. They found that the classroom teacher's involvement in the trips, greatly impacted the quality of the students' experiences. Children remembered trips where they were more involved and had meaningful social interactions.

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The literature shows that students who participate in a school trip experience personal as well as academic growth (Cowan & Maitles, 2011). School trips provide students with the opportunity to learn through activities that they find enjoyable while making connections between the school trip and previous experiences. The application of the personal context of the Contextual Model for learning helps us better understand the benefits of school trip experiences to participating students.

School trip activities motivate student learning through real world connections and the presentation of materials in a way that students find enjoyable, motivating them to participate in the learning process. Often, field trips present information to students in a way that is fun, entertaining and enjoyable (Anderson et al., 2006; Cooper, 1999). One study found that as a result of participating in a school trip, students began to associate learning activities with “fun and playful activity” (Gottfried, 1980, p. 173) as opposed to the formality and routine of the classroom. In order to optimize this motivation and create a learning environment in which students are motivated to participate in learning activities, adults planning school trips must pay particular attention to the structure of the activities students complete during the school trip (DeWitt & Storksdieck, 2008). The amount of choice and control provided to students during school trips impacts student learning. Students enjoyed the school trip better, and engaged more fully in learning activities when they were given the opportunity to make choices during the experience instead of the teacher planning and implementing specific activities during the trip (Bamberger & Tal, 2007; Behrendt & Franklin, 2014; DeWitt & Storksdieck, 2008).

It is no surprise that the literature suggests that students make greater meaning of the school trip experience when they are highly involved in the activities of the school trip (Millan, 1995; Wolins et al., 1992). These finding suggest that teachers should plan a school trip with a

specific learning goal in mind, but allow students to identify the most motivating, interesting, and enjoyable way to reach that learning goal. By making selections on how they will learn, students also gain a better understanding of how they learn.

The studies listed above lead us to conclude that school trips help students learn by connecting the classroom and the real world (Anderson et al., 2006; Behrendt & Franklin, 2014; Cambourne & Faulks, 2003; Krepel & DuVall, 1981; Lai, 1999; Lankford, 1992; Millan, 1995; Pace and Tesi, 2004). "Field trips offer a unique opportunity for students to create connections, which will help them gain understanding and develop an enjoyment of learning" (Behrendt & Franklin, 2014, p. 238). For example, in studying student school trips to Auschwitz concentration camp, Cowen and Maitles (2011) concluded that such visits "can provide young visitors with a greater understanding of the scale of the inhumanity and tragedy that occurred there" (p. 166). Students may read and sit through classroom lessons about a topic like the Holocaust; however, until they stand where the victims stood, they lack the ability to empathize and understand the magnitude of the historical events.

This same study, found that students' emotional responses intensified as they had time to reflect on their experiences (Cowan & Maitles, 2011). The fourth, unofficial, component of the Contextual Model for Learning – time – allows students to reflect on school trip activities and make connections with both past and future knowledge and experiences in order to make meaning of, and learn from, the school trip experience.

In summary, the personal context tells us that learning occurs when students are able to make connections between experiences, which may occur both inside and outside of the classroom and school trip experience. Everyone arrives at meaning in their own way, by connecting previous experiences to the new experiences of their school trip (Falk et al., 2012).

True learning may not take place until experiences after the school trip itself force the student to recall the school trip experience and make connections.

### **2.3 APPLICATION OF THE SOCIOCULTURAL CONTEXT**

The sociocultural context addresses learning through modeling, social narratives, and the formation of communities of learners, which helps students better understand their place in the world. While less prevalent, some literature on school trips looks at learning on school trips through the sociocultural context. Table 2 summarizes this literature.

Table 2. *Literature Pertaining to the Sociocultural Context*

Source	Summary of Findings
Behrendt & Franklin (2004)	Through this literature review, the authors argued the importance of experiential learning through school trips. This review also uses the literature to suggest a researched based methodology for planning and conducting meaningful school trips.
Falk et al. (2012)	The authors outline the history of tourism research as it is linked to learning, while looking at learning through the lens of tourism. After doing so, they reach the conclusion that the field is under-researched and propose using Aristotle's concept of <i>phronesis</i> as a framework for the field.
Falk & Dierking (1997)	This article studied over 120 field trip participants to assess their long-term memories of their field trip experiences. The authors found that, even years later, the participants remembered where they travelled, who they were with, and specific things they did while on the field trip.
Larsen & Jenssen (2004)	Utilizing a case study of a 10th year class in Norway, and the research of Fodness (1994) as their literary basis, the authors examine student motivation for participation in school trips. They conclude that the students' reasons for traveling with their class were overwhelmingly social.
Lavie & Tal (2015)	The authors looked for student feedback as to the elements of the field trip that had the largest impact on their learning. The authors found that students believed that the field trip helped them connect the school curriculum to everyday life. In addition, they found that the stories and abilities of the guides had a significant impact on student engagement and learning.
Wolins et al. (1992)	This is an ethnographic study of student memories of museum trips. Students in the study participated in an abnormal number of museum trips annually; the number differed each year of the study. They found that the classroom teacher's involvement in the trips, greatly impacted the quality of the students' experiences. Children remembered trips where they were more involved and had meaningful social interactions.

Various studies suggest that the social interactions inherent in school trips often help students to remember the experience in the long term. Students developed long-term memories of their school trip experiences (Behrendt & Franklin, 2014). Falk and Dierking (1997) found that 98.4% of field trip participants could recall one specific memory from their trip while 80.5% could recall three or more specific events from the trip. Even years after participating in a school trip, students “did recall what they did, what they saw and with whom and where the visit took place” (Wolins et al., 1992, p. 18). Further analysis of these memories found that while the majority of these memories were content related, many also associated feelings and referred to social interactions experienced during the trip (Falk & Dierking, 1997, p. 215). In summary, social interactions experienced during school trips aid in student learning and recall of their experiences.

When participating in school trips, learning is inherently social. School trips can help students to better understand the world around them as well as their place within it by introducing students to new cultures while also inspiring personal growth and a greater understanding of self (Falk et al., 2012). The opportunity for students to interact with their peers and teachers in different ways presents itself during school trips. Collaborative and social learning techniques provide students with learning strategies that often do not, or cannot occur in the classroom; students interact with their peers and work together to overcome the anxiety of new environments (Lavie & Tal, 2015). Such techniques promote the creation of communities of learners that work together to make meaning of the school trip experience and better understand the world beyond their home communities.



## **2.4 APPLICATION OF THE PHYSICAL CONTEXT**

The physical context helps students understand the world around them: the non-self. Through the physical context, students learn that there is more to the world than what they experience on a daily basis. Table 3 summarizes the literature on school trips pertaining to the physical context.

Table 3. *Literature Pertaining to the Physical Context*

Source	Summary of Findings
Balling & Falk (1980)	Balling and Falk reflect on four different studies that aim to assess the effect that an environment's novelty has on student learning. They conclude that, no matter a student's background, significant learning occurs on field trips as students are often more engaged in the learning process.
Bätz, Wittler, & Wilde (2010)	Using Falk and Dierking's Contextual Model of Learning as the underlying framework for this study, the authors seek to prove the impact of motivation on learning in an out-of-school environment. They conclude that while girls show a little more motivation, all students showed a significant knowledge gain when participating in learning activities on school trips.
Brugar (2012)	Brugar observed student groups in three Detroit cultural institutions to see how teachers used museums as a resource to teach social studies. The author considers the museums' educational content alignment to state standards. Brugar concludes with recommendations for resources to use in planning school trips.
Falk & Balling (1982)	The authors detail research that aims to measure the effect of the same activity done both as part of a school trip and as part of the regular school day, outside of the elementary school, but on school grounds. They conclude that the novelty of the school trip sight distracted younger students while helping to motivate older students.
Falk, Martin, & Balling (1978)	The study focuses on the effect of setting novelty upon the child's behavior and cognition. The researchers consider both student IQ as well as income level. The authors suggest that the novelty of the field trip environment provides students with too much stimulation that then interferes with their learning.
McManus, P. M. (1993)	This study collected data as to students' memories of museum experiences. The researcher mailed surveys to museum visitors during a school trip. They found that most memories of field trips were of objects and things.

Table 3 (continued)

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Millan (1995)	Millan draws upon years of taking students on school trips as well as the literature to create a process for the planning of successful school trips.
Nespor (2000)	Nespor argues that as suburbs developed, and leisure spaces and travel became more private, the definition of public spaces, and students' access to those spaces has changed. She suggests that school trips allow students to access those spaces in a different way.
Scarce (1997)	Scarce looks at the power of using school trips in teaching college sociology courses. While the students in this study are not K-12 it does offer the typical planning process as well as information on student learning and the social impact of school excursions.
Werry (2008)	Werry reflects on her experience teaching a tourism course that required students to participate in a school trip to Hawaii and New Zealand. She attempts to argue that shame in our lack of understanding of other cultures plays a role in how we interpret our experiences in those other cultures. She also touches on the fact that tourists often feel that tourism itself should be a leisure, not academic, activity.

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Potentially, school trips allow students to experience new places and cultures they might never otherwise visit. Students learn more when they are exposed to new environments and cultures first-hand (Werry, 2008; Millan, 1995). Often, school trips provide students with new experiences that would otherwise be impossible to simulate in the classroom (Balling & Falk, 1980, Scarce, 1997), taking students away from the security of the known to “expose them to the larger world” (Nespor, 2000, p. 39). It is one thing for students to read about different cultures and places that exist outside of their community; it is completely different when students experience those places and cultures first-hand. Participation in school trips provides students with a means to experience and interact with new places and cultures.

## **2.5 STUDIES THAT DO NOT FIT WITHIN THE CONTEXTUAL MODEL OF LEARNING**

While the Contextual Model of Learning provides a framework through which to analyze much of the literature pertaining to school trips, other studies also appeared in the literature that addressed different topics (i.e., obstacles to taking school trips, policies/laws, handbooks). Table 4 summarizes this literature.

Table 4. *Literature that does not align with the Contextual Model for Learning*

Source	Summary of Findings
Anderson et al. (2006)	The authors teamed up to compare their independent studies on teacher perspectives about field trips in Canada, Germany, and the United States. The comparison found that teachers in all nations face many of the same constraints when planning field trips.
Ballantyne & Packer (2002)	In this Australian study of nature-based education programs the authors collected data through surveys (pre and post) of a sample of student participating in school trips. They conclude that students desire greater freedom and choice when participating in school field trips.
Berliner & Pinero (1985)	Berliner summarizes two research studies to defend the value of field trips. Pinero builds off Berliner's narrative to explain the best practices in planning.
Cooper (2003)	Source provides a source of statistics about educational tourism in Europe.
Cooper & Latham (1988a)	This article summarizes research completed by survey in England about school field-trip habits in the late 1980s. The authors present statistical data about field trips that is not found in other sources examined.
Cooper & Latham (1988b)	This study surveyed both schools and the suppliers of educational visits to gain a fuller understanding of school trips to in 1980's England. The articles conclusions can be used to advise suppliers of trip destinations.
Cooper & Latham (1989)	The article explores the impact of the British Education Reform Act (1988), which prohibits schools from charging students for school trips held wholly or mainly during the school day. The article summarizes the act itself and then advises attractions how to respond to/plan based upon the new law.
Coughlan, Wells & Ritchie (2003)	The case study examines the constraints upon school tourism in Australia.

Table 4 (continued)

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Cowan & Maitles (2011)	The article details Scottish student experiences in the <i>Learning from Auschwitz</i> program. The researchers use student responses to explain the effect of the experience. While this trip was educational, it was sponsored by the national government, not a school system, and as such students often traveled independently and not with their classmates.
DeWitt & Hohenstein, (2010)	The author provides a comparison of student-teacher interactions in the classroom and on school trips. The sample includes four diverse classrooms in two different countries. The author concludes that student learning increased when the teacher interacted with students and encouraged the students to explore the site and make their own meaning.
Gennaro (1981)	Using a pre-test/post-test method, this study sought to evaluate the impact of pre-visit preparation on a field trip. The study concluded that pre-visit lessons that introduce students to the topics they will engage with on the school trip enhance student learning.
Griffin & Symington (1997)	Claiming that the role of teachers on a school trip is under-researched, this study looks to evaluate the importance of the teacher. The authors found that most teachers lack a clear understanding of the most effective ways to implement school trips into their school curriculum.
Griffin (1994)	The study investigates how schools use trips to museums. The researchers used interviews of students and teachers at various points during, as well as after, the trip. They conclude that teachers and students both lack a clear understanding of how to use the museum as a learning tool.
Hinkley & Jakubowski, (2008)	The researchers seek to argue the importance and impact of field trips by citing specific examples of their own experiences. They conclude that field trips increase student learning and help students connect the real world to the school curriculum.
Hurd (1997)	The study looks at "novel instructional resources" and the importance of "critical others" to help students understand the novel space of the field trip.

Table 4 (continued)

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Kho & Parker (2010)	The article explores the mandatory school excursion program in Singapore. The article distinguishes between the active and engaging Singaporean school excursions and their view of other, passive, "field trips."
Kisiel (2006)	Kisiel argues that schools trips are most effective when they directly connect to the school curriculum. This article offers examples of two zoo lesson plans that directly connect the visit to the school curriculum while offering students a fun but rigorous learning activity.
Krepel & DuVall (1981)	This how-to manual begins by examining the history of school trips as well as school policies and other constraints that regulate the use of field trips as an instructional tool. After outlining the recommended procedure for planning a school trip, the authors conclude with a list of sample trips across school disciplines. They also cited other people's field trip experiences in showing examples of successful trips.
Lankford (1992)	This book serves as a guide to properly plan school trips and maximize student learning while participating in school trips.
Millan (1995)	Millan draws upon years of taking students on field trips as well as the literature to create a process for the planning of successful school trips.
Munday (2008)	In an attempt to validate her own personal experiences as a teacher planning school trips, Munday surveyed Australian teachers about their own school trip planning experiences. Her findings are summarized in a list of constraints faced by Australian teachers when planning field trips.
Orion & Hofstein (1994)	The researchers studied 296 students on a nature field trip. They analyzed students in groups based on their level of preparation for the trip to determine the importance of variables such as age, grade, gender, and attitude. They concluded that preparation for the trip was the single greatest variable to student learning.

Table 4 (continued)

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Ritchie (2003)	Ritchie explores the educational tourism market through the lens of adults, language schools, K-12 schools, and universities. He argues for increased research so that suppliers of educational tourism sites can better understand their market.
Ritchie & Coughlan (2004)	Written more for those that supply school trip sites, Ritchie and Coughlan summarize research conducted in Australia during the 1998-99 school year that sought to understand better the way Australian schools decided upon school trip sites. Their research concludes by offering insights into defining and planning school trips.
Ritchie (2009)	Ritchie approached school excursions from the perspective of an advisor to providers of educational tourist sites. He based his study on a comparison of the capital cities of Australia, Canada, and the United States. Acknowledging that the field is understudied, he shared what has been learned about educational tourism as well as suggestions for further research.
Sedzielarz (2003)	The study looked at the interactions of students and chaperones in Minnesota museums. After discussing the multiple roles that chaperones fulfill for students on the trip, the author concluded that chaperones are a key part of the field trip experience.
Shargel (2014)	Through group wikis, students summarized their own learning during a field trip experience to Washington D.C. monuments and museums. The researchers then analyzed the wikis for common themes. The wikis emphasized the multi-disciplinary aspect of the field trip experience.
Wilson (2011)	Drawing from personal mishaps, the author explains how to plan a proper school trip.

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The sections that follow present a summary of these studies. Specifically, the discussion includes obstacles encountered in planning school trips, laws and school district policies, how-to guides for planning school trips, and trends in school trips.

### **2.5.1 Obstacles to school trips**

The first category of studies that do not directly link to the Contextual Model of Learning are those that address possible obstacles to school trips. School trips fulfill parent desires to provide their children with the best, most diverse educational experiences possible (Ritchie, 2003). Despite the popularity and perceived benefits of school trips, elements such as limited resources (both financial and time), and concerns of student behavior and safety cause those that plan school trips to take pause (Anderson et al., 2006; Cooper & Latham, 1988a; Coughlan et al., 2003; Munday, 2008; Ritchie & Coughlan, 2004; Ritchie, 2009).

The average school district spends 2% of its annual budget on field trips and school excursions (Pace & Tesi, 2004). School trips require financial expenditures for transportation, meals and lodging, and often substitute teachers. In addition, participation in school trips takes away from time spent implementing the school curriculum and preparing for standardized tests. In a time when schools are struggling to balance budgets while also ensuring challenging curricula without raising taxes, school trips must demonstrate returns in the form of student learning. The literature discussed above suggests that the benefits to students participating in school trips experience such returns.

Beyond the financial and time obstacles, trust in the students' ability to participate appropriately in school trips provides a third obstacle. In any educational environment, educators consider the behavior and safety of students. Student behavior and safety, and liability

concerns in regards to that behavior and safety, may prevent educators from being willing to take students on school trips. In a study of Australian teachers, Munday (2008) found that 50% of teachers taking student on school trips reported having to address inappropriate student behaviors. In Great Britain, an increase in student deaths and promiscuity while participating in school trips resulted in a decline in the number of school trips planned across the country (Ritchie, 2003; Ritchie, 2009). A fear of being held responsible for student indiscretions or injuries and the ensuing lawsuits serves as yet another obstacle to school trips (Krepel & DuVall, 1981). Despite these possible obstacles, the number of school trips annually suggests that schools continue to find school trips beneficial to the students that participate in these experiences.

### **2.5.2 District policies and national laws**

The literature also addressed district policies and national laws that dictate the implementation of school trips. Many teachers felt that the school policies made the process more difficult, yet school systems around the world implement regulations specifying how school trips are to be implemented (Munday, 2008). However, different countries have taken different approaches to those regulations. School districts around the United States have adopted policies limiting student participation in school trips (Lankford, 1992). The British 1988 Education Act requiring “that education is free, and that parental contributions must be voluntary and in line with the school's charging policy” has severely limited school trips in low socioeconomic communities of the United Kingdom (Munday, 2008, p. 34). Requiring school districts to finance school trips without student assistance limits the ability of districts in areas with a low tax base funding

education from participating in the same kinds of school trips as schools in areas with greater financial resources. Such policies create the financial obstacle to school trips discussed above.

### **2.5.3 How-to guides for planning school trips**

There also exists a body of literature that serves to provide educators with a framework for planning school trips, which examines not only the logistical components of selecting a site and securing permission for the trip, but also the instructional activities students will complete as part of the experience. These guides recommend teacher collaboration, because such collaboration is rewarding and tends to enhance the value of the school trip for participating students (Millan, 1995; Munday, 2008). Once the logistics of the trip are established, teachers must share the plan with all stakeholders: the destination venue staff, parents, students, and school administrators (Hinkley & Jakubowski, 2008; Krepel & DuVall, 1981; Lankford, 1992; Millan, 1995; Wilson, 2011). The literature recommends that teachers send a letter home to parents to increase student learning (Lankford, 1992). With such communication established prior to the trip, parents and students better understand what they will experience and the expectations for their behavior while participating in the school trip (Hinkley & Jakubowski, 2008; Wilson, 2011). Parents are then able to help prepare students for the trip, and perhaps support the trip with a follow-up family trip to the site. With the logistics of the trip established and communicated, teachers turn their attention to planning activities for students to optimize learning from the school trip experience.

Teachers greatly influence student learning during school trips through their established structure of communication with students, and the activities they plan for students during a school trip. Teachers often use fewer evaluative statements when interacting with students

during school trips than they do when interacting with students during their regular classroom routines (DeWitt & Hohenstein, 2010). When questioning students during school trips, teachers more often used closed-ended questions (DeWitt & Hohenstein, 2010). Beyond the use of communication techniques, the structure of activities during school trips greatly impacts student learning.

The use of worksheets represents a controversial topic in the study of planning and preparation for field trips. Some of the literature suggests that worksheets provide students with the necessary structure to achieve the learning desired during a field trip (DeWitt & Storksdieck, 2008). However, other research concluded that students often found worksheets as constricting and unenjoyable during school trip experiences (Ballantyne & Packer, 2002; Griffin, 1994; Griffin & Symington, 1997; Shargel, 2014). Yet, Griffin and Symington (1997) found that students “did not believe they were learning unless they were answering questions on their worksheets” (p. 773). Despite this research, those studying school trips from the perspective of those that supply locations for those trips have determined the importance of sites providing teachers with resources to use with their students while on field trips and continue to encourage sites to supply such materials (Cooper & Latham, 1989; Cowan & Maitles, 2011; Gennaro, 1981; Ritichie et al., 2009). When planning activities for students to complete during the school trip experience, teachers must take into consideration their learning goals, and a knowledge of the student group that will be participating in the trip, to plan activities to maximize student learning. Worksheets may or may not facilitate learning for that group of students.

#### **2.5.4 Trends in school trips**

The final category found within the literature on school trips analyzes the logistical trends among schools providing their students with school trip experiences. When attending field trips, groups travel an average of 40 miles by bus and stay for an average of less than two hours at the location (Cooper & Latham, 1989). The most popular time to take school trips is during the late spring and summer terms (Cooper, 2003). The studies found that school groups tend to repeat trips on an annual basis; once they find a school trip destination that adequately addresses their goals, the teachers will return year after year with their students (Cooper & Latham, 1988b; Ritchie, 2009). When students participate in school trips, they spend roughly as much time, if not more, traveling to the sight as they do experiencing the location of the school trip. In addition, the fact that trips tend to happen later in the school year as the curriculum is coming to a close suggests that trips are not always placed where they would best supplement the curriculum.

### **2.6 LIMITATIONS IN THE LITERATURE ON SCHOOL TRIPS**

A remarkable limitation in the literature on school trips is the absence of studies pertaining to *overnight* school trips. Overnight school trips represent a context different from day trips. A trip that expands beyond the confines of an average school day provides us with the opportunity to gain a more in-depth understanding of the various components of the Contextual Model for Learning.

### **2.6.1 The personal context and overnight school trips**

Overnight school trips provide us with the ability to look at the personal context in greater detail; overnight trips take students away from their families and force students to step out of the comfort of their daily routine. Suddenly, students are faced with decisions that their parents often make for them: what to have for dinner, what to buy with pocket money, and with whom to spend their time. In addition, extended time periods at a school trip site often provide students with the ability to explore the site beyond the activities planned by the teachers, thus providing students with a choice about how and what they will learn during the course of the trip. When students have the opportunity to make decisions on their own, students gain a better understanding of their own personal interests and values.

### **2.6.2 The sociocultural context and overnight school trips**

The sociocultural component of the Contextual Model for Learning emerges in a different way during overnight school trips. Overnight school trips involve meals and residential experiences away from home. Students often select the group with which they will socialize during meals as well as those they room with during the course of the overnight experience. The increased exposure to classmates may strengthen or cause tensions among friendships. The shared experiences of a school trip may facilitate the development of new relationships that would not otherwise form in school environment. Furthermore, time spent in hotel rooms, while often regulated by hall monitors to ensure that students do not leave the room, provides students with unstructured time during which a small group of students is alone in an unfamiliar environment without immediate adult supervision. This provides students with the freedom to make choices

about how to spend their time and how much sleep they will get. Roommates often make this decision together. These social interactions give school-aged students a small taste of the independence they will gain with adulthood while also maneuvering the social structure of a school group in a different way.

### **2.6.3 The physical context and overnight school trips**

Perhaps the most prominent component of the Contextual Model of Learning to the extension of a school trip to include overnight experiences is the physical context. School trips allow students to engage with people living in other cultures and/or regions. The increased distance capabilities of school trips that extend overnight, give students the opportunity to travel to different states, and possibly even different countries. Students from rural areas may experience an urban setting for the first time during overnight school trips. The exposure to new cultures helps students understand that there is a greater world beyond their community. For students coming from low socioeconomic backgrounds, school trips may be their only opportunity to experience such venues as such trips are impossible for their family without school financing (Pace and Tesi, 2004). The exposure to new cultures provides students the opportunity to witness different ways of living and may even change student perspectives on opportunities for their future.

For some students, school trips may be a first experience traveling away from home, thereby exposing young travelers to new forms of transportation and lodging. Students may fly or ride a train for the first time while taking part in a school trip. Depending on the structure of the trip, students may live in small quarters that are at times less accommodating than home. Student may for the first time share a room/bathroom and have to learn how to navigate the sharing of space with others. At times, the lodging during the school trip may not provide

students with comforts to which they are accustomed (e.g., televisions and air conditioning). Navigating these new environments teaches students not only about different lifestyles, but may help them to understand better the quality of life they value and hope to achieve in their futures.

## **2.7 CURRENT STATUS OF RESEARCH ON OVERNIGHT SCHOOL TRIPS**

Despite these reasons to study overnight school trips, only one peer-reviewed paper, Gee's (2015) "Creating a temporary Community? An ethnographic study of a residential fieldtrip," appeared in the literature. Given its importance as the only peer-reviewed, published study to date, this paper warrants discussion here.

Gee studied 36 A-Level Year 12 students in England who participated in a weeklong school trip to a residential study center along with three of their teachers. Gee carefully selected the location of the school trip due to its accessibility to the research team pre-trip. When selecting students, Gee (2015) believed that Year 12 students possessed the ability to discuss their experience in a mature and insightful way. Throughout the weeklong excursion, Gee acted as a participant observer, ensuring the ability to study the teachers and students in a variety of activities and settings. Based on observations and informal discussions and semi-formal individual interviews with students and teachers, Gee (2015) concluded that the students participating in the school excursion saw the social aspects of the trip, including the blurring of lines between teacher and student, as the most memorable and beneficial aspect of the school trip. While many students developed relationships with students that they did not know prior to the trip, others spent the time strengthening existing relationships. Gee also observed that groups



of students were quick to claim public spaces as their own, allowing these students to focus on their school work in a more relaxing, social and motivating environment (Gee, 2015).

In addition to the single peer-reviewed paper published in 2015, the Wall Street Journal published a story describing overnight school trips taken by German kindergarten students. Given the lack of literature on overnight school trips, this story deserves consideration. German education traditions include the phenomenon of German kindergarten camping trips, in which kindergarten teachers take their young students on weekend camping trips in the wilderness. Detailing parent and teacher perceptions of the benefits of taking kindergarteners camping, the authors concluded that the primary benefit of these trips is the building of relationships and development of self-reliance (Holzer, 2015). Like other school trips, the application of the Contextual Model for Learning helps us to understand better these two studies.

## **2.8 APPLYING THE CONTEXTUAL MODEL OF LEARNING TO OVERNIGHT SCHOOL TRIPS**

By aligning the Contextual Model of Learning to the two accounts of overnight school trips discussed above, one reaches the conclusion that overnight school trips provide similar learning opportunities as the daylong school trips studied in the research discussed above. By applying the Contextual Model for Learning to the conclusions of Gee (2015) and Holzer (2015) we gain a greater understanding of their findings.

In explaining the sociocultural context of their Contextual Model for Learning, Falk and Dierking (2000) discuss the idea of a community of learners. All students participating in the school trip create such a community. By simply traveling together, and sharing the experience of

the trip, the students create a community that shares an experience unlike any other group of students. Even if the activities of the trip were replicated in years to come, no two groups of students have the exact same experience.

The Gee (2015) study included students who did not share a significant relationship or interactions prior to sharing the overnight school trip. Gee (2015) reported that while traveling on an overnight school trip, the students created new relationships. While forming a new community of learners, students created another connection to a group of people in the larger societal context, giving students one more reference point to understand their place in the world.

The application of the physical and sociocultural components of the Contextual Model for Learning helps us to understand the breaking down of barriers between students and teachers as presented by Gee (2015). The sociocultural context alludes to the fact that there is a hierarchy in society: teachers rank higher and are the supervisors of students. This hierarchy is based on cultural values about respect for certain positions and the expected relationships between different classifications of individuals (i.e., teachers and students). Supporting this hierarchy are the cultural expectations around the formality of specific locations (i.e., the school building and the school trip site). However, the changing of location (the physical context) from the school to the school trip site inspired a temporary breakdown of those barriers while teachers participated in fun activities with the students. As such, the students and teachers created what Falk and Dierking (2000) referred to as behavior settings (behavioral expectations specific to each environment). Early in the educational process, students learned the specific set of behaviors expected in the school environment. The students and teachers who participated in the school trip created a different behavior setting. Students learned that outside the walls of the classroom,

the formality of the teacher-student relationship relaxed, giving students the opportunity to enjoy their teachers as human beings as well as providers of knowledge.

The physical component of the Contextual Model of learning helps readers to understand the ritual of claiming spaces around the venue during the school trip. Early in the trip, Gee (2015) observed groups of students staking out areas around the school trip venue. Students retreated to these areas whenever teachers assigned work. Gee (2015) concluded that the students selected spaces that the group found motivating. Applying the physical context to this ritual helps us to understand that by claiming a space as their own, students were starting to organize the destination: each group had their place to work in a comfortable and motivating environment. Different areas evoked the feelings of motivation and comfort for different students.

While Holzer (2015) briefly summarizes the experience of German Kindergarteners in a short newspaper article, the application of the Contextual Model of Learning helps us to understand the findings she reports. The sociocultural context helps readers understand the relationships and self-reliance developed by kindergarteners during the camping trips. Through activities implemented during the trips, teachers facilitate the development of self-reliance among the kindergarteners. Through their interactions with teachers and classmates, students gain a greater understanding of themselves and their own strengths and abilities; this element also relates to the sense of self, discussed as part of the personal context of the framework. Moreover, developing relationships with their classmates allows students to gain a greater understanding of their place within the group. Each person in a group has a particular role, and that role evolves as the group continues to interact.

The work of both Gee (2015) and Holzer (2015) suggests benefits to students participating in overnight school trips, a conclusion that should prompt further research. Because we have limited research on the phenomenon of overnight school trips, the opportunity exists for future researchers to gain a greater understanding of how students benefit from participation in overnight school trips. The following section offers a rationale for why we should undertake such studies.

## **2.9 THE CASE FOR STUDYING OVERNIGHT SCHOOL TRIPS**

What these two summaries of overnight school trips suggest is that there are characteristics of overnight school that are both similar and different from their daylong counterparts. Findings in both studies suggest areas worthy of new research. Both accounts found that students reported changes in relationships with peers as well as teachers. The literature discussed earlier in this chapter confirmed that learning during school trips is inherently social and prior research hinted at changes in relationships. What these studies did not address is the time that it took to form these relationships. Both Gee (2015) and Holzer (2015) concluded that removing students from their home environments resulted in the development of self-reliance. This conclusion warrants more in-depth study.

The duration of overnight school trips allows researchers to apply the Contextual Model for Learning in ways different from the applications made during daylong trips. Overnight school trips obviously give researchers the opportunity to observe students over a longer period of time. Lengthier trips also allow one to observe students in multiple different sites and types of settings. When studying overnight school trips, researchers could carefully study the group to

observe changes in relationships both between students and between students and teachers in a variety of different kinds of sites. Observing these group interactions while visiting historical/educational sites, eating in restaurants, or spending free time in the hotel hallway prior to lights out, would allow researchers to understand further the sociocultural benefits of overnight school trips.

Studying overnight school trips would provide insight into the impact of physical space on students' school trip experience. Additional time spent at a site allows for students to really take in all aspects of the physical world around them. As mentioned above, many school trips last only a few hours, and most of the time spent away from the building tends to be spent in transit from the school to the destination and back. The limited time spent in daylong school trip locations does not allow for students to truly absorb all the information presented, inhibiting learning potential (Cowan & Maitles, 2011).

Continued study of overnight school trips could inform three groups: educators who plan school trips, tour operators who organize and conduct school trips, and destination site managers who supply venues for students to visit. First, for educators, these findings could reveal how to provide students with the best possible school trip experience and to maximize student learning during overnight school experiences. Greater understanding of overnight school trips would help teachers and school administrators use school trip experiences to improve student learning and other educational outcomes, by supplementing the school curriculum. Trip elements like the selection of venues, hotels, and travel methods can make the trips enjoyable for students so they can focus their attention to the learning opportunities present during the school trip. Understanding how students learn while participating in overnight school trips could help teachers create student grouping and instructional strategies to maximize student learning.

Second, tour operators offer a variety of domestic and overseas trips to students. These trips offer students experiences ranging from touring new cultures to participating in service learning projects like building schools in developing countries. While tour operators have a thorough understanding of the travel industry and work with students on a regular basis, many of the employees and tour guides do not possess an educational background. While many schools elect to use professional tour companies whose greater knowledge of the destination area and connections allows them to gain students' admittance to high-demand sites, tour operators often do not take into consideration the sociocultural aspects of planning a trip for students. Studies of overnight trips would help tour operators to align itineraries and experiences with educational goals.

Third, studies of overnight trips would help destination site managers operate sites such as museums and memorials to enhance the experience for student visitors through the layout of exhibits and the creation of interpretive materials supplied to young visitors. A greater understanding of how students move through sites, and what elements of exhibits attract the most attention of student visitors helps site managers to build exhibits, and interpretive materials, in a way that fosters student learning, and in turn, attracts greater interests from those responsible for planning school trips. In so doing, site managers stand to increase the number of students visiting their site annually via school trips, thus increasing annual revenue.

## **2.10 A PROPOSAL FOR FURTHER RESEARCH**

This review confirmed that overnight school trips represent a woefully under-researched field of study (Cooper & Latham, 1988a; Falk et al., 2012; Kerr & Price, 2016; Larsen & Jenssen, 2004;

Pace & Tesi 2004; Poria & Timothy, 2014; Ritchie, 2003; Ritchie & Coughlan, 2004; Sedzielarz, 2003; Small, 2008). Given the gap in the literature, I conducted a study of an overnight school trip spanning four days, as described in the following chapter.

### **3.0 METHODS**

This study is an analysis of data collected during a four-day trip to Washington, D.C. with forty-eight eighth grade students from a small rural community in a Midwestern state. The study analyzes data collected as part of a larger, multi-year ethnographic research study. This study helps us to understand better the overlooked phenomenon of overnight school trips, through the Contextual Model of Learning as described earlier. This chapter outlines research design, data collection, and the data analysis for the present study.

#### **3.1 BACKGROUND**

As mentioned above, this study examined one set of data gathered during a larger “mobile ethnography” (M. Sandelowski, personal communication, 2015) study of an overnight school trip. The Flight 93 Research Team from the University of Pittsburgh participated in the annual Bartley Middle School eighth grade school trip to Washington, D.C. For the last twenty-five years, the Bartley School District, serving a rural Midwestern community, has taken their eighth grade class on a fieldtrip to Washington, D.C. Beginning in the spring of 2003, the two teachers in charge of the trip, added a brief stop on the first day of travel, to visit the Flight 93 National Memorial in Shanksville, Pennsylvania. The Bartley group caught the research team's attention



in the spring of 2014 as the team categorized and analyzed the artifacts left at the Flight 93 National Memorial by visitors, including tributes left by Bartley students.

Every year when the Bartley eighth graders visit the Flight 93 National Memorial as part of their annual trip, the students bring a wreath created out of note cards. On these cards, the students write about their understanding of what happened on September 11, 2001, and the role the passengers of Flight 93 played in the day's historic events. Ironically, the teachers annually told the students to put time and effort into their writing because researchers might use them some day (a possibility that one of the teachers had learned in his reading about the National Park Service). When a member of the research team came across the cards while analyzing children's tributes in the Flight 93 National Memorial Objects Collection, he suggested that the team reach out to the school staff to learn more about their trip and to solicit a partnership in further study. In the summer of 2014, the partnership was formed between the teachers responsible for the trip and the University of Pittsburgh's Flight 93 Research Team. Since that time, the team has worked with the teachers to research this annual school trip. Our team met with the teachers in Bartley, traveled to Washington D.C. to evaluate possible site visits for the students, observed classroom preparation for the school trip, and joined the school trip in both the spring of 2015 and 2016.

### **3.2 RESEARCH DESIGN**

In keeping with the tradition of an ethnographic study, the method used to gather data for this study, *participant observation* required prolonged engagement in the field (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006). Following Gold's Typology (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006) the Flight 93 Research Team

adopted an “observer as participant” role. The team introduced themselves to the students and their families during a meeting in October of 2014; the role of researcher was clearly outlined to the students and the parents, whose consent we sought. In introducing the study to the families, the University team emphasized the importance of student voice in our research and outlined the methods by which the team and the students would collect data during the study. During this meeting, the team emphasized that students had the option to remove themselves from the study or from individual study activities while still fully participating in the trip.

In March of 2015, three members of the University of Pittsburgh’s team traveled to Washington, D.C. for a three-day planning trip with the Bartley teachers. During this trip, the team worked to strengthen the relationship with the teachers while traveling to potential sites to add to the trip during the 2015 year. As the team walked through the sites that students would visit, we planned how and when to distribute and collect research materials to students. The team also identified areas of the site where researchers would position themselves to observe student interactions with the site and each other.

Subsequently, the day prior to leaving for the school trip, four members of the research team travelled to Bartley Middle School and observed the lesson during which students finished learning about the actions of the Flight 93 passengers on September 11, 2001, composed the notecards and constructed the wreath. During this visit, the team trained students on the use of the Sonic Pics app<sup>2</sup> provided to the students to record their comments and photographs and introduced the post-visit comment cards that students would complete during the trip.

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<sup>2</sup> The Sonic Pics application for the iPad was being used during this particular trip as a trial run for further research. Once students took a picture, or series of photographs, they were

While traveling on the school trip with the students, the researchers stayed in the same hotel and traveled on the same buses to each day's activities, as the students. The team did miss some of the evening activities in order to process the data collected during the day (process described below). During meals, the team typically sat together, apart from the students and teachers. While interaction with the students during the trip was limited to polite conversations and observation, the team typically gave the teachers leading the trip and the accompanying chaperones general updates on the status of data collection.

This study focuses solely on the observations made by the six members of the team who accompanied the students on their trip. Based on observations of the eighth grade students over the course of a four-day school trip to the Flight 93 National Memorial and various Washington D.C. tourist sites, this study sought to answer the following research questions:

1. What behaviors did students display that demonstrated an evolving understanding of their place within the group and the formation of a community of learners (sociocultural context)?
2. How did students' interactions with the sites demonstrate a greater understanding of the nonself (physical context)?

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then able to record a voice-over on the file in which the students explained the significance of the element they photographed in their eyes. Such reflections help the research team better understand how students make meaning of the sites they visit as well as what students deem to be significant.

### **3.3 ETHICAL SAFEGUARDS**

The data analyzed in this study were gathered with the approval of the University of Pittsburgh Human Subjects Protection Board. The author is a member of the research team receiving approval to conduct the study. Details about specific ethical safeguards (e.g., consent to participate) appear below.

### **3.4 SETTINGS**

#### **3.4.1 Community**

The community of Bartley is located in a Midwestern state. The demographics show that Bartley is a working-class community. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, in 2013, only 5.4% of the population of Bartley had attained a Bachelor's degree or higher. The Census Bureau reported that in 2015, 57.1% of the households brought in an annual income of \$50,000 or less and 12.3% of families were considered living below the poverty level over the past 12 months. With a mean household income of \$52,624 in 2015 of and a median income of \$46,068, the majority of families in Bartley most likely lack the disposable income to travel or expose their children to different cultures and experiences beyond their hometown. In fact, the teachers of Bartley Middle School report that this trip is the first time most of the students have ever visited Washington, D.C., and for some, it is the first time that they have ever left their state.

### **3.4.2 School**

The Bartley School District serves approximately 750 students in a single building, divided into an elementary school, a middle school, and a high school. While the numbers have fluctuated slightly between the 2013-2014 and the 2015-2016 school years, the Bartley school district remains over 94% white with the remainder of the student body split between the ethnic classifications of Hispanic or Multiracial. During that same period, the economically disadvantaged rate hovered around 33%. The percentage of students with disabilities remained around 15% (Ohio State Report Card).

## **3.5 PARTICIPANTS**

### **3.5.1 Sample**

All students in the Bartley eighth grade class are eligible to participate in the school trip, as long as they are not deemed to have a disciplinary concern. Thus, the Bartley eighth grade class represents what Merriam (2009) refers to as a typical sample; all students enrolled in the district in eighth grade during a given year may self-select to be part of the study. For those students whose families cannot afford to pay for the trip on their own, students begin fundraising during the spring of their seventh grade school year. The students sell items such as pies and pizza kits and run concession stands at school sporting events. In addition, community members often make donations to sponsor students who might not otherwise be able to afford the trip.

During the 2015 trip, 48 students travelled with six chaperones, all employed by the school district in various roles including teacher, school nurse and high school principal. The students were of mixed gender, but travelled on two buses, divided by gender. Members of the team also divided by gender when riding the buses.

### **3.5.2 Participants' orientation to the research team (observers)**

In October of 2014, three members of the University of Pittsburgh's research team travelled to Bartley to participate in a parent meeting preparing for the trip in May. Teachers encouraged students to attend this meeting in order to meet the team and learn about our research, as our interest in the community had already gained the attention of local papers. During this meeting, the team members introduced themselves and provided students and parents with information about the study and how it would be conducted during the trip, assuring both parties that it would not be obtrusive or take away from student enjoyment of the trip. In accordance with the approved IRB protocol, during this meeting, families were provided with the opportunity and procedure to exclude their children from the study.

After the meeting, the team did not see the students again until the day prior to leaving for the trip. At that time, four members of the team observed the final preparations for the trip and the assembly of the memorial wreath to be left at the Flight 93 Memorial. During this visit, the team shared a video demonstrating the use of the Sonic Pics App that students would use to record their photographs and captions of pre-selected sites during the trip. Students then received time to experiment with the iPads to ensure that they were able to use the app during the trip. The next day, the research team met the Bartley group at the Flight 93 National Memorial and traveled with them for the remainder of the trip.

## **3.6 DATA COLLECTION**

### **3.6.1 Observers**

Six members of the Flight 93 Memorial Research team traveled with the Bartley Middle School eighth graders in May of 2015. A tenured member of the University of Pittsburgh's School of Education faculty organized the team. At the time, the team traveled to Washington, D.C., three members of the team were undergraduate students at the University of Pittsburgh in their senior year of the Developmental Psychology program; and two members were doctoral students in the School of Education's department of Administration and Policy Studies. All three of the undergraduate students, two female and one male, were in their early twenties and preparing to enter a master's program the following fall. One of the doctoral students was employed by a neighboring university as a media specialist in the library. The second doctoral student (and author of this study) worked as an assistant principal at a large high school north of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

### **3.6.2 Observation guidelines**

Coming from different backgrounds, and at different places in our educational and career paths, each member of the team brought different expectations for conducting the observations. Thorne (2008) recognized that "the basis upon which each of us conducts this rapid-fire processing and sorting is a combination of our personality and experience, including our disciplinary orientation as well as our particular biases and curiosities" (p. 143). In order to prevent such orientations, biases, and curiosities from skewing our data collection, prior to embarking on the school trip,

members of the Flight 93 Memorial research team collaborated in the creation of observation guidelines to ensure that all members of the team viewed student behaviors through a similar lens and interpreted behaviors in a similar way. Table 5 outlines the behaviors the team anticipated observing during the school trip.



Table 5. *Observation Guidelines*

Classification	Specific Behaviors Expected
Children as members of a community of learners (Social Context of Learning)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assisting in the use of the Sonic Pics app</li> <li>• Looking out for others               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Looking for someone who is not with the group</li> <li>○ Helping someone find their way</li> <li>○ Accommodating others' special needs</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Helping someone “save face” when in an embarrassing situation</li> <li>• Pointing out something unsafe</li> <li>• Friendly joking and playing</li> <li>• Pointing out things of interest to someone/sharing observations</li> <li>• Helping to carry materials</li> <li>• Helping one another recall things during conversation</li> <li>• Encouraging someone who is struggling or tired</li> <li>• Figuring out menus or other texts</li> <li>• Physical (non-romantic, non-sexual) gestures</li> <li>• Discussion of the sites visited</li> </ul>
Interactions with exhibits (Physical Context of Learning)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Touching the site itself</li> <li>• Taking pictures</li> <li>• Reading information connected to the site/exhibit</li> <li>• Leaning into exhibits</li> <li>• Talking about what they are seeing</li> <li>• Leading other students to look at things, coming back to look at something again</li> <li>• Emotional changes</li> </ul>

### **3.6.3 Observer orientation**

Prior to departing for the trip, the Flight 93 Research team met at the University of Pittsburgh to discuss the observation guidelines. During this meeting, the team discussed the behaviors to watch for, defined what those behaviors looked like, and outlined the procedures for recording the data. While a draft of the guidelines was created prior to this orientation, part of the discussion centered on the revision of the observation guidelines listed in Table 5. At this time, the team became familiar with, and practiced using, the audio-recording devices to be used during the trip's observations.

In addition, during the orientation, the team reviewed the planned agenda for the school trip with Bartley. Given the size of many of the sites, and the challenge of observing a large number of students and their chaperones at the same time, the team planned for the observations by mapping out where each member of the team would be located, or which group they would travel with at each individual site. This allowed for the observation of a greater number of student interactions.

### **3.6.4 Audio-recording devices**

The research team borrowed a number of digital recording devices from the University of Pittsburgh. These devices were used daily throughout the trip. Each night, the audio-recorded observation notes were uploaded to secure file storage and the memory on the devices was erased. The recordings were catalogued by observer, place, time, and date.

### 3.6.5 Schedule and locations

Table 6 summarizes the sites visited by the Bartley eighth graders.

Table 6. *May 2015 Bartley Washington, D.C. Trip Itinerary*

Day	Hours of Activity	List of Activities/Sites Visited
Tuesday	5:30 A.M. to 10:00 P.M.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Travel from Bartley to Flight 93 National Memorial</li> <li>• Flight 93 National Memorial</li> <li>• Travel from Flight 93 National Memorial to Washington, D.C.</li> <li>• Dinner at Pentagon City Mall Food Court</li> <li>• Old Town Alexandria Lantern Lit Ghost Tour</li> <li>• Check-in at Hotel</li> </ul>
Wednesday	7:00 A.M. to 10:30 P.M.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Breakfast at Hotel</li> <li>• George Washington’s Mount Vernon, Ford Center and Reynolds Museum</li> <li>• Lunch at Hard Rock Café</li> <li>• Newseum</li> <li>• White House /exterior walking and photos</li> <li>• Potomac Spirit Dinner Dance Cruise</li> </ul>
Thursday	7:30 A.M. to 10:30 P.M.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Breakfast at Hotel</li> <li>• Marine Corps Memorial Iwo Jima Statue</li> <li>• Arlington National Cemetery walking tour</li> <li>• Ride DC Metro to Smithsonian National Museums of student choice</li> <li>• Medieval Times Dinner &amp; Tournament</li> </ul>
Friday	7:30 A. M. to 11:15 P.M.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Breakfast at Hotel</li> <li>• National World War II Memorial</li> <li>• Presidents Gallery by Madame Tussaud</li> <li>• Travel from Washington, D.C. to Bartley</li> </ul>

## 3.7 DATA ANALYSIS

### 3.7.1 Transcriptions

When the team returned from the trip in May 2015, members of the research team transcribed the recordings of each observer, verbatim. The transcriptions, when broken down by observer and location resulted in 25 distinct pieces of media that I studied, coded, and analyzed. Table 7 details the volume of data collected at each site.

Table 7. *Summary of Data Collected*

Site	Number of Team Members	Minutes (rounded) of Recordings	Word Count of Recordings
Flight 93 Memorial	3	25	1,226
Mount Vernon	6	56	7,883
Newseum	6	63	7,787
Iwo Jima Memorial	4	11	1,567
Arlington National Cemetery	5	23	3,296
The Mall	1	16	233

### 3.7.2 Coding

During the initial reading and coding of the transcripts, nine initial codes emerged through the descriptive coding process (Saldaña, 2013), in which short words and phrases were used to

describe each passage as it was read. It quickly became apparent that the subcoding process also applied, in which “a second-order tag is assigned after a primary code to detail or enrich the entry” (Saldaña, 2013, p. 77). For example, “engagement” took on different forms, including reading, pointing, taking initiative. From this initial reading, the first draft of the studies codebook emerged. In addition, during this process, I wrote a large number of analytic memos, which included my primary impressions of the data as well as the first stages of analysis. These notes were shared with the advisor of this dissertation to allow for data verification.

For the purposes of this study, the transcripts were then uploaded into a web-based qualitative analysis program, and the initial codebook was built within the project. The initial codes reflected the concepts described in Chapter 2, the Contextual Model for Learning. While the transcripts were analyzed against the Contextual Model for Learning, the initial phases of data analysis allowed for what Thorne (2008) describes as “making accurate records and spending time to be immersed in those records, developing a sense of the whole beyond the immediate impression of what it is that they contain” (p. 143).

Each transcript, from all six observers, was read and annotated a minimum of four times. After each reading, additional codes emerged and some of those already present were combined into a larger, overarching code as I began to realize that the definitions of some terms were too similar; in such instances, those codes were eliminated from the final codebook. In all, the analysis of the transcripts resulted in 31 codes applied to 400 excerpts with 766 code applications. The finalized codebook located in Appendix A contains a detailed description of the code and the criteria used to determine if the data was included or excluded from the code category (Crabtree & Cohen, 2006).

## **4.0 FINDINGS**

In analyzing the observations collected by the research team during a four-day trip to Washington, D.C., with the eighth grade students of Bartley Middle School, this study looked for evidence that Falk and Dierking's (2000) Contextual Model for Learning applied to overnight school trips as it did to the day-long school trips studied throughout the literature on school trips. While the questions driving this study focused on the sociocultural and physical contexts, there is evidence that suggests students also learned about themselves as they traveled with their peers (the personal context).

### **4.1 BUILDING A COMMUNITY OF LEARNERS**

This study sought to identify behaviors that indicated students gained a greater understanding of their place within the group. Furthermore, this study looked for evidence of the creation of a community of learners in which students collaborated to come to a common meaning about their school trip experiences. Both of these elements align to Falk and Dierking's (2000) Sociocultural context of the Contextual Model for Learning.

In developing their Contextual Model of Learning, Falk and Dierking (2000) argue that learning is inherently a social action. In looking for evidence of the formation of a community of learners, the following codes were applied to the observations transcripts: engagement, shared

experiences, questioning of adults and socialization. Each “parent code” and the resulting “child codes” are discussed below.

#### 4.1.1 Engagement

*Engagement* refers to student demonstration of interest in, and/or interaction with a site or exhibit. In the case of the Bartley students, engagement manifested itself in a number of different ways: photography, reading and viewing, making connections, taking initiative, expression of enthusiasm, touching, emotional response, and leaving behind. Table 8 summarizes the breakdown of engagement child codes as applied to the media.

Table 8. *Distribution of Engagement Child Codes*

Child Code	Number of Occurrences
Emotional Response	9
Expression of Enthusiasm	11
Leaving Behind	8
Making Connections	26
Photography	40
Reading/Viewing	36
Taking Initiative	13
Touching	9

Each of these manifestations will be discussed in the sections that follow, in the order of prominence within the code of engagement.

#### **4.1.1.1 Photography**

*Photography* refers to the observed actions in which students appeared to be taking a photograph of an element of a site or exhibit. The most popular engagement child code, this term applied to 40 excerpts within the media. Given the provision of iPads and the Sonic Pics app discussed in Chapter 3, it is probable that the research team influenced the prevalence of this code in the observations, as students had been asked to take pictures and describe the importance of different aspects of their experiences. While some observations specifically mentioned students using iPads or personal cameras to photograph different parts of the school trip experience, not all observations were so specific. Photography was most often observed at the Newseum, with 14 recorded observations, followed by Mount Vernon and Iwo Jima, each with eight recorded observations. The Flight 93 Memorial and Arlington Cemetery each had five or fewer recorded observations.

While it was difficult to conclude what exactly students chose to photograph, it appears that most of the photographs can be categorized as either photos of the site or photographs of the students within the setting of the site. On 21 different occasions, members of the research team observed students apparently taking pictures of the site or exhibit alone. Nine of these observations occurred at the Newseum where students seemed to pay particular attention to the Ku Klux Klan and 9/11 exhibits. The remainder of excerpts relating to photography included members of the Bartley school group as an element of the photography. These photographs commemorated students' visit to the sites. At times, the grouping of students in the photos also helped to reassert group identity as discussed below.



#### **4.1.1.2 Reading and viewing**

*Reading and viewing* described excerpts of the observations in which students read or viewed the information (i.e., text explanations, pictures, videos) embedded in the exhibit. This code often appeared in conjunction with the sharing of knowledge and sharing of observations codes, each discussed below. Members of the research team recorded 36 observations of students doing what appeared to be reading and viewing exhibits.

Twenty-three of these observations occurred at the Newseum. Students appeared to take particular interest in the FBI exhibit (which highlights famous investigations into American gangsters, the Lindbergh Kidnapping, the Ku Klux Klan, and 9/11, among others) as well as the exhibit commemorating 9/11. Students quietly moved through the exhibits reading the information and viewing video clips embedded in displays. Students took their time, as demonstrated by one boy who stood in front of a video about 9/11 for approximately five minutes. Another student sat on the floor in front of the video commemorating the FBI raid on the cult in Waco, Texas, apparently getting more comfortable in order to view the video.

Students made reading/viewing a priority. One male student stood at the Patty Hearst exhibit reading the information within the display. When a classmate approached to speak to him, the boy responded to his classmate by stating, “Sshh, I want to finish reading this.” The student then finished reading the information that interested him. Such attention to reading and viewing information from exhibits serves as evidence that students wanted to learn from their school trip experience.

#### **4.1.1.3 Making connections**

*Making connections* occurred when students verbalized connections between their prior knowledge and experiences and their current experience while visiting one of the sites on the

trip. Such instances occurred 16 times in the observations: most prominently at Mount Vernon (seven occurrences) and the Newseum (five occurrences).

During the first stop of the trip, students began making connections to their social studies classes at Bartley while visiting the Flight 93 Memorial. Students asked both chaperones and park rangers questions about the timing of the events that happened on September 11, 2001, questioning the timing of the crash recorded at the memorial in comparison to the timeline of events as they understood from the lesson the previous day in class in preparation for their trip.

The next day at Mount Vernon, students began to analyze the life of George Washington on his estate through the lens of their lifestyle in rural Bartley. As students moved through the home itself, they commented on the fact that Washington's home contained more guest rooms than total rooms in their own homes. They also pondered spending a night in the house, with creaking floors. Upon hearing that visitors often stayed for long periods, students engaged in conversation with one of the chaperones, stating that such practices are uncommon in modern times. At the 16-sided barn, one of the chaperones asked the student to imagine what it would have been like to work as a farmer during this time period, causing students to ask questions about farming techniques and to make comparisons about farming then and now. Students also engaged in conversation with one of Mount Vernon's staff members about the sheep that she was tending, sharing their personal experiences of farming with the Mount Vernon Staff member.

Students also found exhibits at the Newseum and Arlington National Cemetery that connected to their school experiences and lives back in Bartley. Upon seeing the Ku Klux Klan exhibit, one student commented that they had learned about the organization in social studies earlier in the year. A group of boys was observed in front of an exhibit talking about weapons. They pointed out the guns they recognized and connected those guns to the corresponding news

story. Two different members of the research team observed students sharing that their grandfathers were killed in World War II and possibly buried in Arlington, this revelation coming during the visit to Arlington Cemetery. Throughout the trip, students found connections between what they experienced during the school trip, and their lives at home. Unexpectedly, this element of engagement relates directly to the personal context of Falk and Dierking's (2000) Contextual Model for learning. As students experienced new settings and ideas as a result of their school trip, they drew on understandings from previous experiences to better understand their present, and in some cases, to clarify their misconceptions of past, experiences.

#### **4.1.1.4 Taking initiative**

When *taking initiative* occurred, students either moved to another part of the site not previously planned for the group's exploration, or asked questions that extended beyond the intended topic. More than once, students looked for answers to questions sparked by the site itself. Thirteen instances of taking initiative were coded; however, some of them referred to the same student and situation, as multiple members of the research team observed this student at different points throughout the site.

The first example of students taking initiative and exploring a site in greater detail happened during the group's first stop at the Flight 93 Memorial. One of the male students on the trip walked past one of the members of the research team and informed her that he was "going to go investigate." She and another member of the research team later observed this same student deep in conversation with one of the rangers. He asked questions like "What is the exact time that Flight 93 hit the ground?" as well as questions about the plane's flight path (e.g., angle and velocity of the crash). The observed portion of this conversation lasted approximately five minutes. The student, upon viewing the memorial realized that his previous understandings

lacked specific details, and independently sought the answers to those questions on his own prior to leaving the memorial.

The next day at Mount Vernon, a student approached a member of the research team asking if she thought there would be enough time to visit an exhibit prior to the bus leaving. The exhibit in question peaked the student's interests but was not on the agenda for the larger group. Later that day, at the Newseum, a member of the team observed as two girls spent several minutes reading a poem written by the World Trade Center bomber. One of the girls asked the other if the poem had been written during the trial or while the bomber was in jail. As the girls discussed the meaning of the poem, they pointed to elements of the text. This particular element of the exhibit drew the girls' attention and they worked together to arrive at a common understanding of the poem.

At Arlington National Cemetery, students wandered past the tour guide as she was leading them to the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier to look at the memorials of the Iranian Hostage Crisis and the space shuttles Challenger and Columbia. The tour guide mentioned these memorials existed in Arlington, but did not intend for all students to see them. However, this group of students sought out the memorials, knowing they were close to their location, and desiring to view them.

#### **4.1.1.5 Expression of enthusiasm**

*Expression of enthusiasm* occurred when students made a sudden exclamation. These exclamations often involved quick judgments of the students about their interest in, or initial reaction to, a particular exhibit. Members of the research team recorded ten observations of expressions of enthusiasm. Members of the team observed six expressions of enthusiasm at the

Newseum. The remainder of the observations occurred at Mount Vernon (two), Arlington National Cemetery, and the Iwo Jima Memorial (one each).

The Newseum elicited more expressions of enthusiasm than any other site visited during the four-day school trip. After the 4-D movie experience tracing the history of journalism, many of the students approached their chaperone. One exclaimed, “How close was that bullet to your head – that bullet was SO CLOSE!” Various elements of the FBI exhibit elicited similar responses from the students. Upon seeing the KKK exhibit, students responded with “Oh, this is cool” and “Oh my God!” While viewing wreckage of the fuselage from Flight 93, one boy responded, “Wow, this is crazy!” Another student, in walking past a member of the research team, summarized the entirety of the FBI exhibit with a single word: “intense.” When viewing the 9/11 exhibit at the Newseum, another student took a picture of the antenna that was once on top of the North Tower and now appears in the Newseum. He then looked at the picture, showed it to a member of the research team and proclaimed, “Wow, That’s a great picture. That’s a crazy picture.”

At Mount Vernon, one student exclaimed, “Man, Washington was one smart guy!” Students shared their impressions of the Iwo Jima Memorial as “This is huge!” and “This is surreal!” Such expressions of enthusiasm lack deep analysis but demonstrate a feeling of excitement and engagement in the experience.

#### **4.1.1.6 Touching**

At various times, students were *touching* physical parts of exhibits, making a physical connection with a component on display. On nine different occasions, students were observed touching elements of the exhibit. Three such incidents occurred at the Flight 93 Memorial, another three at Mount Vernon, two at the Newseum, and one at Iwo Jima.

At the Flight 93 Memorial, students were observed touching the slabs of the wall with the names of the passengers and crew of Flight 93. One student even leaned into the wall as if to rest. As students walked down the path to the entrance of the Flight 93 Memorial, a group of boys stopped at the alcove cut into the wall where visitors leave tributes behind. The boys picked up several of the items that had been left in the niche and inspected them before returning them to their places.

At Mount Vernon, students expressed enthusiasm at being able to touch some of the artifacts in one of the exhibits, asking first if it was permitted for them to touch. Once assured that touching the exhibit was permitted, students spent additional time looking at and touching different artifacts. The research team member observing this interaction also noted an increase in students reading the corresponding text once they made physical contact with the artifact.

At the Newseum, students used physical interaction with the site to help them maintain focus on a particular aspect of the site. As students read the information about a particular component of the exhibit, students would hold their spot in the text by touching the informational signage and then searching out the specific item in the display. Once they located the item, their attention returned to the reading and the process repeated.

At Iwo Jima, a student even used touching to bring order to the site. A previous visitor to the site had hung a 2015 Police Community Unity tour medal from a fence post surrounding the statue. Upon observing the medal, the student, straightened the tie of the medal so that it hung straight on the fence. The student must have felt a need to interact with, and bring order to, the memorial.

#### **4.1.1.7 Emotional response**

*Emotional response* refers to an instance where a student demonstrates an emotional response to a site. While such physical responses are often difficult to identify, the team identified ten specific instances of an emotional response. All but one occurred at the Newseum.

The 9/11 and Lindbergh kidnapping displays in the FBI Exhibit served as the inspiration for four of the emotional response observations. One of the members of the team observed a girl reading the story about the Lindbergh baby under the headline “Baby Dead.” As she read, the girl was observed leaning over the display and wrapping her arms around her body, hugging herself. When she walked away from the display, a fellow Bartley student approached her, to whom she responded, “I don’t want to talk about it.” The information she read clearly upset this student.

Also, in the FBI exhibit, a girl was observed leading another girl to the 9/11 display and pointing to the credit cards that were pulled from the wreckage. The girls stood silently for a couple of minutes looking at the display; their body language became more closed, and they crossed their arms. Before walking away with sad looks on their faces, the two girls hugged, and one of them was overheard saying “Aww.” After viewing the 9/11 display, the girls apparently felt a need for comfort and found it in a shared hug.

Multiple Bartley students demonstrated an emotional response while watching the video portion of the 9/11 exhibit at the Newseum. One of the boys had his elbows on his knees, and he then clenched his hands. After unclenching his fists, the student pressed his hands to his face. When he lifted his head, he showed a troubled expression. One of his female classmates watched the same video with her mouth open and eyes wide. As the video continued, her breathing became shallower. Upon walking out of the video viewing area, a few of the girls had

visible tears in their eyes, while the face of one of their male classmates was visibly more red than before. Such physical reactions to the video demonstrated that the video evoked an emotional response in the students as they viewed the images and heard the stories of journalists who put their lives in danger to share the events of 9/11 with the rest of the world.

The final occurrence of an observed emotional response occurred at Arlington National Cemetery at John F. Kennedy's tomb. One boy from Bartley quietly watched the Eternal Flame for a few minutes, leaning towards the flame over the chain surrounding the area. When he was finished, he walked away slowly, stopping once to look over his shoulder to view the flame one last time. While it is unclear exactly what this student was thinking, such an action was not typical of other students around him. The site seemed to cause a deeper reflection beyond simply viewing the gravesite.

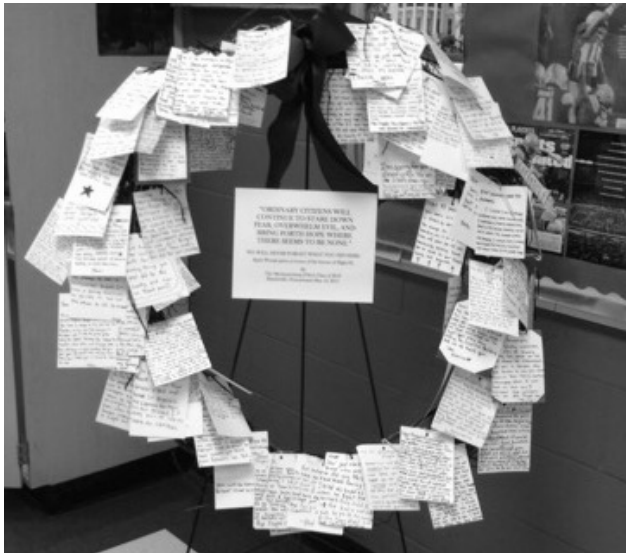
#### **4.1.1.8 Leaving behind**

*Leaving behind* addresses the phenomenon of students leaving or writing a tribute at the site. While not all of the sites visited provided the students with an opportunity to leave tributes, the students seemed to take advantage of those that did, and members of the team observed the phenomenon eight times: four at the Flight 93 Memorial, and four at the Newseum. All occurrences of leaving behind connected to 9/11.

One of the trip traditions is the assembly and placing of a notecard-wreath at the Flight 93 Memorial. After one of the two lead teachers, who teaches social studies, delivers a two-day lesson on September 11<sup>th</sup>, each of the 8<sup>th</sup> grade students at Bartley writes a message to the passengers and crew of Flight 93 on a notecard. The notecards are then assembled into a wreath



that is left at the memorial every year.<sup>3</sup> One member of the team observed students approaching the wreath after it was left at the memorial, seeming to show pride in what they created together and left behind. Figure 2 is a photograph of the 2015 Bartley wreath immediately after completion the prior to leaving for Washington, D.C.



*Figure 2. 2015 Bartley Wreath Left at the Flight 93 Memorial during the First Stop of the Trip*

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<sup>3</sup> All Bartley 8<sup>th</sup> grade students participate in this tradition, even if they are not traveling with the rest of their classmates to Washington, D.C. As mentioned above, four members of the research team traveled to Bartley to observe the final preparation for the trip, and observed the final social studies class before the students embarked on their journey; as a result, observing the construction of the wreath. In each of the three class periods, the team observed one student seeming to take responsibility for their class's participation in assembling the wreath. When asked how that evolved, the teacher explained that he finds a student in the class who is unable to go on the trip and asks them to oversee their class's addition of card to the wreath, allowing that student to feel a connection to the trip, even though they will not be leaving Bartley.

Both the Flight 93 Memorial and the September 11<sup>th</sup> exhibit at the Newseum provide visitors the opportunity to leave their thoughts behind in the form of writing. At both locations, multiple students took the time to write thoughts on notecards, or on the computer terminal. While the Flight 93 Memorial simply catalogs these notecards, the Newseum projects the comments on the wall above making the comments part of the exhibit.

At the Flight 93 Memorial, two members of the team observed a girl walking to the entrance of the memorial from the wall. As she passed the niches cut into the wall for people to leave various tributes, she stopped to look at the items that had been left behind. Before continuing to walk back towards the entrance, the girl took her hair-tie and left it in in the cove. While a hair-tie may seem insignificant, this student had nothing else with her at the time. She must have felt so compelled to leave something to commemorate the passengers and crew of Flight 93 that she left the only thing in her possession at the time: a hair-tie.

#### **4.1.2 Shared experience**

*Shared experience* refers to the ways in which students experience the site together and links directly to Falk and Dierking's (2000) concept of a community of learners in which members work together create a collective understanding of a shared experience. The shared experiences displayed by Bartley students are also evidence of their engagement in sites visited throughout the trip. As the code applied to engagement, shared experiences were observed in several different ways. Each of these will be discussed in order of prominence. A summary of the application of the child codes pertaining to shared experience in the media appears in Table 9.

Table 9. *Application of Shared Experience Child Codes*

Child Code	Number of Occurrences
Care for Others	12
Collective Decision Making	15
Evaluating	8
Leading Others	7
Sharing Knowledge	14
Sharing Observation	7

#### **4.1.2.1 Collective decision-making**

Through *collective decision-making*, students collaborate to decide how to navigate the site visited and then move through the site together. The research team observed 15 instances of collective decision-making, occurring across all the sites visited with the exception of the Washington Mall. Students faced decisions ranging from how to view the site itself, to how to participate in group activities during the trip.

One category of decisions students faced pertained to the order in which exhibits were explored. For example, at the Flight 93 Memorial, four students decided to begin their exploration of the memorial with the area where one may write a notecard at the site, while many of their classmates headed directly for the wall that commemorated the passengers and crew of Flight 93. Most of the other students who chose to write a notecard did so after viewing the entire Memorial, just prior to boarding the bus. At other times, students decided to return to certain exhibits, for example the KKK display in the FBI exhibit at the Newseum (two separate groups of Bartley students were observed doing so).

In one instance, the collective decision had nothing to do with viewing the site, but how to participate in a group photo. At Mount Vernon, one of the chaperones stopped a group of students and told them to get together for a picture. One of the girls asked, “Are we smiling?” Together the group decided to smile for the picture. Another group when photographed decided to give the peace sign when told to do something silly. At Iwo Jima, members of the team observed students taking pictures of the Memorial itself, but then taking group shots or selfies afterward. As a group, students decided not only how to travel through a site, but also how to commemorate their visit to the site.

#### **4.1.2.2 Sharing knowledge**

Throughout the four-day trip, the team observed 14 incidences of students *sharing knowledge* with their peers. In these instances, students helped peers understand an exhibit by sharing their own knowledge. At times, this knowledge appeared to be based upon student experiences prior to the trip, while in others, students shared what they learned through information presented throughout the trip.

At times the students brought knowledge with them from previous other experiences. As mentioned before, while viewing a display about gangsters embedded in the FBI exhibit at the Newseum, students discussed guns they recognized to news articles they viewed in the exhibit. The next day, at Arlington National Cemetery, two members of the team observed an interaction between the company tour guide and a group of Bartley students. One of the students asked the tour guide why people left coins on the headstones. When the tour guide shared that she was unsure of the answer, a male classmate jumped in with an explanation saying “that in military tradition, they often leave different coins on top of the graves, like a penny to show that you remember the deceased, or a quarter says that you were good friends and served together in the

military.”<sup>4</sup> While it is unclear exactly where the student gained this information, it was not readily available to students through written media at the cemetery nor from the tour guide.

At other times, students read or viewed something or even questioned an adult at the sites and then shared their learning with peers. At Mount Vernon, two boys argued over whether Washington had smart slaves or smart animals. While they disagreed, they referenced evidence found on the estate to support their argument. One Bartley student watched about five minutes of the 9/11 film embedded in the FBI exhibit at the Newseum. After watching the video, he went over to a group of his peers and shared with them the facts that he learned from watching the video. In this same exhibit, a pair of students examined a display about the events in Waco, Texas, focusing on the FBI agent who pulled a woman out of the burning building. One of the students read the information and used it to answer the questions of his companion. Students clearly used what they learned from exhibits to assist their peers in gaining a greater understanding of the experience.

In some instances, students applied knowledge that they gained from their experiences on the trip to evaluate experiences that occurred prior to the school trip. At Mount Vernon, the student shared stories they heard about George Washington prior to coming on the trip. As a collective, they assessed the validity of the stories, appearing to use what they had experienced as justification. For example, while standing on the bank of the Potomac River, a group of students agreed that a story one of them had heard about Washington throwing a coin across the

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<sup>4</sup> Interestingly, the research team then observed this young man sharing the same information with two adults visiting the cemetery who were not part of the Bartley group.

river could not be true. Having seen the Potomac for themselves, students were able to apply that knowledge to a story they heard previously.

#### **4.1.2.3 Care for others**

*Care for others* describes students' expressions of concern for the wellbeing of their peers. These expressions range from students ensuring that all members of the group were present, to making sure that peers abided by behavioral expectations. Such expressions appear in observations on twelve different occasions and pertain to each site visited with the exception of the Iwo Jima Memorial.

On the final day of the trip, one of the chaperones shared with the research team that the students, in general had been kind to one another. The chaperone remarked that even those students who were not friends prior to the trip looked out for one another and included each other in activities. Throughout the trip, students helped each other using the iPads and SonicPics app. Because student pairs shared assigned iPads, the team observed students asking if their partners needed to use the iPad to record their thoughts at multiple sites. When the group started to move to different locations within a larger site, students called out to peers so that they would not be left behind. Students reminded each other of appropriate behaviors, reminding them not to talk in certain areas, and one going as far as issuing the warning, "Don't be idiots."

One particular situation epitomizes the care that Bartley students demonstrated for one another. While having lunch at Hard Rock Café, many of the students visited the gift shop and purchased memorabilia. At one point, one of the Bartley boys entered the gift shop and asked the man working there for a bag in which purchases would be placed. He then returned to his table, slammed the bag down in front of another boy at the table, and exclaimed, "Here you go, Buddy!" The student receiving the bag thanked his friend profusely and appeared to be very

excited. While it is unclear whether the recipient was not able to afford anything in the gift shop or what the motivation was, it was clear that the boy obtaining the bag knew that his friend wanted something by which to remember his lunch at Hard Rock Café and made sure that happened. The Bartley students continuously worked to ensure that their peers enjoyed the school trip experience.

#### **4.1.2.4 Evaluating**

*Evaluating* occurred when students expressed a positive or negative opinion about the experience with their peers, chaperones, or members of the research team. Eight instances of evaluation exist in the collected observations. The team recorded five of these observations at the Newseum, and one observation at each the Flight 93 Memorial, Mount Vernon and Arlington National Cemetery.

Some students demonstrated their meaning making of sites by making suggestions to improve the site or exhibit. One such example occurred at the Flight 93 Memorial. In speaking to one of the members of the research team, one of the boys from Bartley asked the team member why the designers of the memorial had elected to memorialize the location that the plane hit the ground with a large bolder. The student continued by sharing that he felt a different tribute – one that memorialized the plane in some way – would have been better than the boulder.

Other students shared their opinion of what they experienced. For example, at the Newseum, two boys were reading the Patty Hearst display. One of the boys commented to the other, “This chick killed a lot of people,” assessing the information he read embedded in the exhibit. Also at the Newseum, one girl, viewing the display on the Lindberg kidnapping commented, “Baby dead? That’s gross.” When leaving the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier at

Arlington Cemetery, one boy stated, “I like the way they walked.” Students willingly shared their thoughts and feelings about what they experienced with others, and in doing so, they demonstrated an effort to make meaning of what they experienced through interactions with their peers.

#### **4.1.2.5 Leading others**

In *leading others*, students brought other students to an area of the site that they wanted their peer to also view. Seven excerpts pertain to this code. All observed instances occurred at the Newseum.

At times, this action was a simple verbal statement as simple as “Look at this one” or “Oh, you have to read this one!” Other times, students physically led their peers to a location within the exhibit. For example, a Bartley girl physically grabbed two of her peers, leading them to the writing kiosk of the 9/11 Exhibit. All three students then wrote messages using the kiosk. It is unclear if the students realized that their messages would later be incorporated into the exhibit by being projected onto the wall. The leading of others did not always involve peer interactions. One Bartley female, who had spent a great deal of time viewing and discussing the poem written by the World Trade Center Bomber discussed above, returned to the display bringing a member of the research team over to look at it as well. Students appeared eager to share their experiences with others and did so by leading others to see parts of exhibits they found interesting.



### 4.1.3 Questioning of adults

Often, students participated in the *questioning of adults* including site staff, chaperones, and members of the research team. This code addresses questions specific to the site where the questioning occurred. Twenty-four observations address student questioning of adults. Fifteen of these observations occurred at Arlington National Cemetery, six at Mount Vernon, two at the Flight 93 Memorial and one at the Newseum.

At Arlington National Cemetery, many of the questions asked requested clarification or rationales for what the students observed. Students wanted to know why fonts are different on some of the headstones, and why some headstones are more elaborate than others. After observing coins sitting on top of some of the gravestones, students questioned the practice, wanting to know what each coin meant. Students also inquired about places visitors are not allowed to go within the cemetery.

In some instances, the site inspired students to think further about what they observed. For example, after viewing Washington's tomb at Mount Vernon, students questioned how entombment works and how bodies are prepared for burial. Students also asked about the remainder of the Washington family and where Martha's children were buried. At other times, questions resulted from chaperones drawing student attention to a specific element of the site. At Mount Vernon, the teacher called student attention to the trees, leading to questions about who originally planted the trees on the estate.

Students also questioned site workers on how they got their jobs. Two different members of the research team observed examples of this at Mount Vernon. Students asked workers in the farm area how they got their jobs. One female student engaged one of the workers in a conversation about the Mount Vernon Ladies Association and the process to become a member.

The conversation also included a discussion of the necessary college major to get a job working at Mount Vernon.

#### **4.1.4 Student/chaperone interactions**

The code *student/chaperone interactions* describes observations where students and teachers interact throughout the school trip. These interactions fall into four categories: friendly interactions, giving directions, teachable moments, and adult feedback. Each of these categories will be discussed in the order of prominence within the observations. Table 10 summarizes the applications of the child codes.

Table 10. *Application of Student/Chaperone Interactions Child Codes*

Child Code	Number of Occurrences
Adult Feedback	2
Friendly Interaction	21
Giving Directions	18
Teachable Moments	14

##### **4.1.4.1 Friendly interactions**

*Friendly interactions* refer to those interactions that would be atypical from student-teacher interactions expected within in the classroom. This code pertains to interactions ranging from a more relaxed relationship between a teacher and student, to mutual joking that would not take place during the course of daily interactions in the classroom. Throughout the observations, members of the research team noted 21 different interactions that fit this code spanning all sites

with the exception of the Flight 93 Memorial. Sixteen of the 21 observations occurred at Mount Vernon.

Most of the observations denote a more relaxed relationship between school staff and the students. During the visit to Arlington National Cemetery, one of the chaperones reminded students to have their iPads ready as they approached the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. A male student, stood behind him “mocking him – ‘be sure you have your iPads,’ waving his hand and exaggerating his mouth and his hand.” Such behaviors would rarely be permitted to occur in the classroom setting, yet it appeared that this went unaddressed in the moment. On eight instances, observers noted general joking between students and chaperones. In one instance at Mount Vernon in particular, a female student asked one of the chaperones to buy her a sheep. Also, at Mount Vernon, the chaperone attempted to get student attention by saying, “In all seriousness...” but a student interrupted saying, “There is no seriousness anymore!” Such sassiness indicates a relaxation of classroom expectations in the school trip environment.

Teachers seemed to appreciate the friendly interactions with the students. On the final day of the trip, just prior to boarding the bus for home, one of the teachers confided in a member of the research team, “They’re just a lot of fun to be with,” describing the whole of the trip. While teacher-chaperones took responsibility for the students while traveling together during the trip, teachers were also able to enjoy less formal interactions with students.

#### **4.1.4.2 Giving directions**

*Giving directions* refers to teachers and tour guides taking a moment to explain to students the expectations for behavior or the plan for moving through the site. Eighteen of the interactions between students and chaperones received this code. Observations from all sites, with the exception of the Mall, included chaperones giving directions to students.

Chaperones reminded students to take off their hats at Arlington National Cemetery and pointed out signs asking visitors to conduct themselves with dignity and respect. Chaperones encouraged students to interact further with the site and to ask any questions that arose. Other directions given by chaperones encouraged students to take their time and experience all that the site had to offer. While visiting Mount Vernon, one chaperone reminded students, “It’s okay to stop and read things, there’s no need to rush.” At Iwo Jima, when students were standing around in a group, one of the chaperones directed the students to walk around and look at memorial from different angles.

Members of the research team, at times, even participated in giving students directions. While visiting the Newseum, one member of the research team was observed introducing the students to the 9/11 exhibit as she entered the floor with a group of Bartley students. This introduction helped students better understand the site before entering, preparing them for what they were about to see.

Due to the nature of student/chaperone relationships, teachers giving students directions is expected. However, a surprising omission from the observations pertaining to chaperones giving students directions is the lack of observations in which teachers told students to stop a specific behavior. While student adherence to behavioral norms is discussed below, no observations included chaperones redirecting student behavior beyond directing students to spend more time or engage more fully in the experience.

#### **4.1.4.3 Teachable moments**

*Teachable moments* are those instances in which teachers take advantage of interest demonstrated by students in a particular site and use that interest to make connections to the school’s curricular content. This type of interaction occurred 14 times in the observations. Eight

of these occurrences took place at Mount Vernon, four at Arlington National Cemetery, and two at the Newseum.

Chaperones used these moments both to reinforce what students already learned in the school curriculum, while also introducing them to elements of the curriculum they would study in the future. While at Mount Vernon, one of the chaperones engaged students in a discussion comparing the era of George Washington to modern day. Given that students studied the Revolutionary War period earlier that year in social studies, students supplemented their experience at Mount Vernon with what they learned during the unit from their social studies course to make appropriate comparisons of the two eras in American History. While looking at artifacts from 9/11 at the Newseum, one chaperone connected the artifacts to the students' study of 9/11 in social studies. Such teachable moments allowed teachers to build upon information students received in the classroom.

While waiting for their turn to take a group photo at Mount Vernon, a group of students entered into a discussion with an elderly man sitting by the river. The discussion led to the topic of iron working, which the chaperone accompanying the group used as an opportunity to discuss the agricultural revolution, which students would study the following year. This conversation served as a foreshadowing of information students would learn in the future.

#### **4.1.4.4 Adult feedback**

*Adult feedback* refers to those instances where chaperones evaluated student thoughts/behaviors and offered direct feedback. While this interaction was only noted twice, it is worthy of mention as teacher feedback is often an expected component of student-teacher interactions within the learning environment, and often increases student adherence to behavioral norms. As the students walked away from Washington's Tomb, having followed the behavioral expectations of

being quiet and respectful, one of the chaperones gave his students a thumbs-up and mouthed “Good job!” Later that same morning, another chaperone complimented the students on asking the tour guide thoughtful questions. These interactions affirmed student actions, increasing the likelihood those behaviors occurred again in other similar situations.

#### **4.1.5 Socializing**

*Socializing* describes those off-task conversations and activities that did not pertain to the site where students were located. They typically referred to non-educational experiences that, while pertain to the school trip, did not add to a student making meaning of the current site. As expected when traveling with any group of students, the students of Bartley engaged in socializing activities throughout the trip, at times pulling chaperones into the action. Forty-one excerpts reference socialization between members of the Bartley group.

While observing the student, the research team noticed student participation in many off-topic conversations. Topics of conversation included things like hair, shoes, and food. Some conversations were simply joking in nature. Not all of the social interactions occurred through conversation. Seven of the instances referred to students taking pictures, posing with silly looks on their faces, or getting friends together in groupings in front of scenery and monuments.

At times students reminisced about events that occurred during the school trip that extended beyond the educational components of the trip. Students talked about their experience staying overnight in a hotel room, a new experience for some. Two girls discussed the messiness of their roommates, apparently annoyed at their peers’ lack of organization in the temporarily shared living space. Students also recounted memorable events. For example, on the first

morning in the hotel, a group of Bartley students got the elevator stuck by jumping as it moved between floors. The event and chaperone reaction to it served to fuel student conversations.

Some components of the trip aimed at giving students the ability to engage in social behaviors, while providing students with experiences unavailable at home. On the second evening of the trip, the students took a dinner and dancing boat cruise on the Potomac River. This trip allowed students to see the city from a different vantage point, while providing students the opportunity to engage in the typical social interactions of a dance. The events of this evening offered fodder for conversation the next morning.

Some interactions seemed to be romantic in nature. One young man was observed numerous times calling out to a specific young lady to show her different things. The night after the boat ride, the research team noticed what appeared to be two or three new couples. It is unclear if one of the apparent new couples was the boy who sought the young lady's attention the previous day. However, it is clear that the school trip allowed for prolonged student social interactions with their classmates.

Other school groups also seemed to be of interest to the students. During the trip to Mount Vernon, a group of Bartley students approached a group of students from another school and engaged in conversation, learning about where the group originated. Students used social interactions to learn about others who did not travel with their group.

#### **4.1.6 Reasserting group identity**

*Reasserting group identity* addresses students, and chaperones, taking actions that demonstrated to others the members of their group. These simple displays of group membership tell other

people who belongs to the group, and who does not. Twenty-one of the excerpts address reassertion of group identity.

Like many school groups observed also in Washington, D.C. in May 2015, all students and chaperones in the Bartley group wore lanyards with an identification card that included their picture and identified them as a member of the group. The lanyards also included information about whom to call should the students become separated from the rest of the group. These lanyards were worn at all times during the trip and served to identify clearly all members of the Bartley group.<sup>5</sup>

While there is evidence that the students created a larger group, the research team also observed the formation of distinct smaller group identities linked to the chaperone to which students were assigned. When moving over large areas, the students stayed close to their assigned chaperones, and in some locations, like the Newseum, spread out in different locations around the site to improve ease of movement through the exhibits, based upon the chaperone groupings. At various points throughout the trip, the larger group stopped to take pictures of chaperone groups. While doing so by the river at Mount Vernon, one student tried to get into a picture with a group to which they were not assigned. A member of that group responded, “If

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<sup>5</sup> To welcome the members of the research team into the group (as participant observers) the leaders of the Bartley trip also ensured that each member of the research team received a lanyard. However, they also incorporated the team into a chaperone tradition. Each year, chaperones receive a second lanyard with the picture of cartoon character that one of the trip’s organizing teachers believes represents the chaperone. Each member of the research team also received this second lanyard.



you're not in Smith's group, then get." All of the chaperones participated in the group photographs with the students for whom they were responsible, reasserting membership in the smaller group. Overall, photography played a large role in the assertion of group identity as nine of the 21 excerpts coded discussed photographing multiple students in one way or another.

At times, students reasserted their group identity simply by how they moved through a space. When the one of the chaperone grouping entered a video viewing area, they all came and sat together along the back row. Initially, there had been some other people there but as they got up leave the area, the small group of Bartley students all moved down so they and their chaperone were all seated in a row across the back bench. They remained seated together, side-by-side for the duration of the video. When the video ended, they got up together and moved into the main area of the exhibit, once again looking over the antenna and other elements of the exhibit, moving as a group. Anyone observing them move through the area together could reach the conclusion that these people were all members of the same group.

## **4.2 UNDERSTANDING THE NONSELF**

This study also sought to understand how students demonstrated a greater understanding of the nonself as defined in Falk and Dierking's (2000) physical context of the Contextual Model for learning. When defining the nonself, Falk and Dierking (2000) explained that this context explored how people learn to navigate the world around them – both natural and man-made – as well as how to act within those settings. The codes that most directly link to this understanding – how students occupy the space and following norms – are explored below.

#### 4.2.1 How students occupy the space

*How students occupy the space* addresses student behaviors around the perceived amount of room in relation to a site or exhibit. This includes how students move about the space, or even wait to accommodate others within the space. Most often, students moved through the exhibits in pairs or groups; 22 of the 25 excerpts pertaining to students' occupation of space refer to students moving through the site as part of a group.

Observations made by the team quickly began to note the impact of other groups on the way the Bartley students moved through a site. "I noticed that when a large group of kids came in, our kids followed behind them in a line, not really looking at anything, just sort of being a part of the crowd. For the most part, they walk through the educational center without reading anything else or touching any more artifacts."<sup>6</sup> When students entered a space and came to the conclusion that there was not enough room for them, they typically moved through the space quickly, giving the exhibit minimal attention. Interestingly, when the Bartley students occupied a space before another group of students entered that space that group seemed to be less of a distraction, and the students continued to focus on the displays of interest to them. "It seems like when our group was in here first and then a larger group came in, our group was comfortable because they were here first and were able to situate themselves in front of exhibits that interest them." At this point, the obligation to figure out how to occupy the crowded space fell upon the new group entering, not the one previously occupying the space.

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<sup>6</sup> Interestingly during the course of the trip, members of the research team started to refer to the Bartley student's as "our students" in the observations, especially when comparing their behavior to those of other groups visiting sites at the same time.

At times, students seemed to show a great deal of comfort in a given space, and even used areas in ways the area was not intended to be used. For example, one student took a seat on the floor in front of a video in the middle of the FBI exhibit. The Newseum had not provided a seating area for this video, yet he felt comfortable enough in the setting to make such an area for himself.

Students laid claim to areas with their words as well as with their physical presence. A large group of students had congregated around a display featuring a Ku Klux Klan robe in the FBI exhibit at the Newseum. Multiple students jostled for position to take a picture of the robe. One of the students asserted his right to the space saying, “Hey, the cool kids are here – move.” Not only did this student physically occupy the space, he also verbally laid claim to his position.

#### **4.2.2 Following norms**

*Following norms* refers to the students following explicit or implicit rules for behavior at a site. Through the analysis of observations, four child codes emerged related to following norms. Each will be discussed in turn. Table 11 summarizes the application of each child code.

Table 11. *Application of Following Norms Child Codes*

Child Code	Number of Occurrences
Follow Explicit Norms	13
Follow Implicit Norms	10
Rejecting the Norms	22
Showing Respect	18

#### **4.2.2.1 Follow implicit norms**

When students *follow implicit norms*, they imitate the behaviors of others (i.e., chaperones, peers, other visitors to the site not associated with their group). In so doing, they model the behavior that they believe is expected of them at that site. Ten coded excerpts referenced student compliance with implicit norms. Seven occurrences refer to student behavior at Mount Vernon, while one occurrence refers to each the Flight 93 Memorial, Newseum, and Iwo Jima Memorial.

At Mount Vernon, one member of the team made a general observation, “We are watching them observe and learn tourism customs; actions are appropriate of things to do at places like this.” Students took their cues from different sources– both chaperones and other visitors at sites. Two of the ten excerpts referenced the importance of the chaperone to student behavior. One team member observed, “When the chaperone jokes around, so do the students.” On the other hand, when the chaperones were serious and respectfully, students modeled that behavior as well.

At times, students also modeled the behavior of other visitors to the site. Multiple members of the team observed students lining up to view Washington’s tomb at Mount Vernon. Once they reached the front of the tomb, many students also chose to photograph the scene leading one member of the research team to wonder, “if they were taking pictures because they saw others doing that, or because they really wanted those pictures.” The chaperones did not tell the students to quietly get in line, but they observed others doing so and followed suit. Students learned how to behave at each site by observing the actions of others.

#### **4.2.2.2 Following explicit norms**

*Following explicit norms* refers to those behavioral expectations that are specifically shared with students either orally or posted through signage at a particular site. Transcript excerpts received

this code 13 times; many of these excerpts were simultaneously coded with the student/chaperone interaction child code of giving directions.

The Bartley staff clearly defined student expectations for dress and behavior prior to embarking for Washington D.C. One of the lead teachers on the trip explained, “We talk about their technology and what they’re allowed to have. We’re very strict about the different things, even taking your hat off when you go into restaurants and stuff, but you see other groups that the girls are wearing the shorty shorts and the things we won’t allow, and we can actually point at them and say, like at the tomb today, we said, ‘See how they’re acting?’ and our kids knew, ‘Yeah I can see how they’re acting.’ It goes along with their expectation, that roles into their behavioral expectation, and they know we’re going to clamp down on them on different things like this.”<sup>7</sup>

Their teachers, paid tour guides employed by the company that organized the trip, and staff members of the visited sites, shared explicit norms with students. While these norms usually pertained to specific behaviors expected of students traveling on a school trip, some of these norms were also advice given by site staff on ways to make the most of their visit. At the Flight 93 Memorial, two of the Bartley girls were observed saying that they “were making their own memories by taking their time at the memorial doing with the ranger had asked them to do.”

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<sup>7</sup> While this particular interaction was recorded as part of the observation transcripts, members of the team had a conversation about setting expectations with the teachers prior to embarking upon the trip. In doing so they shared the story that one student also asked if he could bring his deep fryer on the trip. While humorous, this story asserts the importance of the chaperone in setting clear expectation for behavior prior to traveling with students.

Through their conversation, the girls affirmed that a park ranger offered this advice, and the students decided to follow it.

Not all explicitly stated norms derived from oral directions. Sites like Mount Vernon and Arlington Cemetery posted signs in different areas asking for quiet and respect. Five of the 13 excerpts pertaining to explicitly stated norms confirm that Bartley students heeded those signs, behaved appropriately, and at times pointed those signs out to peers that entered an area behind them to ensure that they too followed the norm.

#### **4.2.2.3 Showing respect**

In *showing respect*, students move quietly through a site and act respectfully in what appears to be a response to the solemnity of the site. Eighteen observations address students' demonstration of respect while participating in the trip. What sets this code apart from following implicit norms is that these behaviors were not explicitly connected to those of their chaperones or other visitors to the site. Students seem to exhibit these behaviors simply because they seem the right thing to do. Eighteen excerpts fit this code.

Six of the excerpts coded as showing respect occurred at the Newseum. Students seemed to connect to the site, despite the gravity of the subjects being commemorated through the exhibits. Within the FBI exhibit, one observer commented, "Their tones are more somber, they're quiet and respectful, and they seem to be taking this more seriously than some of the other places we've been. It seems like they are able to understand what happened in a lot of these incidents and they understand the tone of this room in general." She continued the observation saying, "When the kids start getting antsy or want to joke, they go outside and sit on the benches to do that. I haven't seen a lot of joking around from within the exhibit." Students seemed to understand that there exists a time and place for every interaction. When the exhibits

became too weighty, and students needed a break, they walked out of the room and took that break before returning to engage further in the exhibit.

Perhaps students learned some of these behaviors prior to the trip. At Arlington National Cemetery, one member of the team observed, “After the students looked at the Eternal Flame, the group of boys stood back and they are standing quietly and respectfully.” While this particular tourist attraction was new to most of the students, there are cemeteries in the town of Bartley. Most likely, students on the trip attended a funeral at a cemetery prior to travelling to Washington, D.C., learning the behaviors expected in such a setting.

Other demonstrations of respect pertained to simple manners. In general, students were respectful of each other, their chaperones and site staff, “While listening to the people who work here the student seem to pay good attention. They gather around and don’t really talk over the speaker.” No one explicitly stated to the students that it is impolite to talk over a presenter, yet the students knew to show speakers respect and listen as they talked.

#### **4.2.2.4 Rejecting the norms**

When *rejecting the norms*, students exhibit behavior that does not comply with the norms, either implicitly or explicitly shared. Throughout the transcripts, 22 excerpts discussed student rejections of the norms. While members of the team observed rejection of the norms at all sites with the exception of the Mall, 14 of them occurred at Mount Vernon.

Sometimes, it appeared that Bartley students seemed to forget their surroundings. At Mount Vernon, a boy climbed into the hollow of a tree while another “student was hiding behind the wall trying to jump out and scare the others.” Such actions, often aimed at being funny, clash with expected norms. Students sometimes moved through Mount Vernon by running, skipping or dancing. While not blatantly disrespectful, this went against expected behavior for the site.

### 4.3 OBSERVATIONS THAT WERE UNEXPECTED

As mentioned above, the primary focus of this study revolved around the sociocultural and physical contexts of the Contextual Model for learning. However, during the coding process, two codes emerged that did not fit within either context: looking to the future and new experiences. While not directly connected to one of the research questions posed, these observations of the Bartley students showed students contemplating their sense of self, clearly aligning to the personal context from the Contextual Model for Learning (Falk & Dierking, 2000).

#### 4.3.1 Looking to the future

*Looking to the future* refers to evidence that students demonstrate that the site inspires them to think about their life beyond K-12 education. This behavior was not an anticipated student behavior discussed during the initial observer orientation, but this code emerged from the observations of student conversations and two different sites (three pieces of media) visited over the course of the school trip.

One girl from Bartley engaged in a conversation with one of the staff members at Mount Vernon. She was interested in how the woman obtained her job. “The girl asked how she could work there and how she could be a part of it. As the employee described different college majors, and the girl said, ‘So if I major in History I could be a part of all this?’” Asking such questions demonstrates that the school trip experience inspired students to think about life after graduation. As the students moved through the areas of Mount Vernon where the animals lived, “The students were fascinated with the different types of animals that they had and whether or



not her career could be possible in their futures.” Students continued to ask the workers how they obtained their jobs at Mount Vernon, proving once again that the experience caused them to look to the future.

Later in the trip one girl shared with her classmates, “I like this. I’m going to live here soon.” The experience of a trip in a new place got students to think about the possibility of a life beyond Bartley. This student expressed interest in living in another city.

### **4.3.2 New experiences**

The code *new experiences* describes excerpts in which students or chaperones acknowledged that the experience at hand is one that the students never had prior to the school trip. Prior to leaving for the trip, the lead teachers organizing the trip shared with the research team that many of the students had never been outside of Bartley. For some of the students, traveling eight hours away from home on a coach bus was a new experience. Students stayed in hotel rooms in groups of four, without an adult to oversee their sleep and eating patterns.

Coming from a small rural community, many of the students from Bartley had no experience seeing homeless people on the streets. As the group exited the buses in front of the Hard Rock Café where they ate lunch, there was a group of four homeless people sitting on the sidewalk. As the chaperones attempted to get students into line in front of the restaurant, students were too busy staring at the group of homeless to pay attention to getting in line. Some of the students attempted to hide their staring, but others did so blatantly. A group of girls was observed photographing the homeless person, pointing out to their peers that the person was homeless. When students talked about what they were seeing, they used the term “bum” to identify the homeless people. These new experiences allowed students to understand better who

they are and where they place value, while also introducing them to alternative lifestyles they may not witness in their own community.

#### **4.4 SUMMARY**

Careful analysis of the observations collected during the four-day trip to Washington, D.C. resulted in 31 codes applied to 400 excerpts. The research team observed the students as they engaged at six different sites, sharing their experiences with each other, and the chaperones with whom they interacted. Having summarized the data above, this study closes with a careful analysis of the data, as well as a discussion of its limitations and implications for further research.

## **5.0 DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS AND CONSIDERATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH**

Despite the fact that millions of students travel with their teachers and classmates on school trips annually, very little is known about the phenomenon of overnight school trips. When compiling the body of literature to support this study, only two articles (one peer-reviewed, one published in the *Wall Street Journal*) addressed this area of study. Through the application of Falk and Dierking's (2000) Contextual Model for Learning, this study sought to inform educators, school trip tour operators, and site managers hosting students participating in school trips, on best practices in planning overnight school trips that will engage students in the learning process.

The three overlapping contexts of Falk and Dierking's (2000) Contextual Model for Learning demonstrate that learning is an intricate process that takes into consideration a person's sense of self, place in society and understanding of the physical world. The personal context draws connections between a person's motivation, interests, past experiences, and prior knowledge (Falk & Dierking, 2000). The sociocultural context addresses learning as a cultural construct as well as the development of self (an overlap with the personal context) and the identification of the person's place within society. The physical context helps a person understand the physical world (both naturally occurring and manmade) in which they live: the nonself. A careful analysis of the literature pertaining to school trips found that the Contextual Model of Learning helped bring further clarity to this body of literature.

Traveling with a group of 48 eighth grade students as participant observers, six members of the university research team completed observations over the course of a four-day school trip to the Flight 93 National Memorial and various Washington D.C. tourist sites, this study sought to answer the following research questions:

1. What behaviors did students display that demonstrated an evolving understanding of their place within the group and the formation of a community of learners (sociocultural context)?
2. How did students' interactions with the sites demonstrate a greater understanding of the nonself (physical context)?

Four days of observations resulted in 194 minutes of recorded observations. After the trip, the research team transcribed those recorded observations into 25 pieces of media, 21,992 words in all, named by site and observer. The following sections discuss the data collected as it corresponds to these two questions.

## **5.1 RESEARCH QUESTION 1: CONNECTING THE SOCIOCULTURAL CONTEXT**

Recognizing that learning is an inherently social act, and as an element of the sociocultural context, Falk and Dierking (2000) defined a community of learners as one in which members of a group work together to create a common meaning around a shared experience. Evidence exists to support the conclusion that the Bartley eighth graders and their chaperones formed a community of learners during the four-day trip to Washington D.C. in May 2015.

Throughout the four-day trip, students demonstrated engagement in each of the sites visited where the research team conducted observations. However, students turned the learning

process into a social one by sharing that experience with their peers and teachers. The team observed students leading their peers to different elements of the exhibits, sharing their interests with others. Students viewed exhibits alongside their peers and engaged in conversations about the exhibit. In doing so, the students worked together to come to a shared understanding about the meaning of the exhibit. Students shared previous experiences and knowledge with their peers in order to help their peers come to the same conclusion about what they experienced during the trip. When the students found themselves unable to fully understand their experience on their own, or even sometimes with the help of their peers, they turned to the adults traveling with them to offer answers to their questions. As students engaged in the process of learning with their peers, and chaperones, they built a community of learners.

Throughout the trip, the students, and at times their chaperones, reasserted membership in this community of learners. From wearing common lanyards to taking group photographs, the eighth grade students who participated in this trip created a well-defined community different from other school groups that also visited Washington, D. C. in May 2015. Students looked out for one another throughout the trip, ensuring that members of the group were safe and accounted for. In addition to sharing educational experiences, the Bartley students also socialized throughout the trip and created memories unique to those traveling together.

Just as Gee found in his 2015 study, the observations of the Bartley group produced numerous examples of more relaxed interactions between students and the school-employed chaperones that participated in the trip. While the chaperones' primary role remained to ensure the safety and appropriate behavior of students, while also helping the students learn from the school trip experience, their interactions expanded beyond their typical student-teacher relationship to more friendly interactions. Students joked with their teachers, and teachers

seemed to take joy in the relaxed interactions with their students. This study affirms Gee's (2015) findings in regards to more relaxed interactions between students and teachers traveling together on overnight school trips, while raising additional questions about the creation of a community of learners.

While early observations from the first site visited during the trip suggest that Bartley students initiated the formation of the community of learners on the first day of travel, we are unable to clearly explain the impact of time (the fourth and unofficial component of the Contextual Model for Learning) or the preparation of students prior to embarking on their shared travels, on its existence. Given a single day's observation in the Bartley social studies classroom, it is unclear how, if at all, this community of learners differed from that of the typical Bartley classroom and even the typical interactions between Bartley students and teachers. Finding the answers to these questions requires additional research.

## **5.2 RESEARCH QUESTION 2: CONNECTING THE PHYSICAL CONTEXT**

Over the four-days of their trip, the Bartley students learned how to navigate a number of sites never previously visited. Some of these sites were crowded and occupied by other groups when the Bartley students entered the area. As such, the students identified the best way to share the space with the other groups, while still experiencing all the planned aspects of the exhibits. Just as Falk and Dierking (2000) suggested, students interpreted the manmade physical environments visited throughout the trip, and identified how they fit into that environment.

Most interesting about student occupation of space, was the way in which the students identified, and complied with, social norms expected within each space. When discussing the

physical context, Falk and Dierking (2000) defined behavior settings as the notion that human behavior can be predicted more accurately from the physical context in which the behavior occurs than from the person's personality characteristics. The way in which students learned behaviors through implicitly stated norms, demonstrates the development of behavior settings by the Bartley students. At Mount Vernon, students simply knew the expectation to get in line to see Washington's tomb. Students were quiet and respectful at Arlington National Cemetery. Despite the fact that students rejected the norms in some settings, in others, they seemed to know implicitly the expected behavioral norms and complied with them. While the teachers shared with the team their rituals for sharing student expectations, we do not know how parents reinforced those expectations with their students. In addition, in order to participate in the school trip, the school required students to meet specific behavioral guidelines ensuring that students travelling on the school trip tend to follow behavioral expectations. Further research is required to understand more fully this characteristic of students on school trips.

### **5.3 UNEXPECTED CONNECTIONS TO THE PERSONAL CONTEXT**

Throughout the experience, statements made by students suggest that they started to understand more about themselves and what was possible for their future. As discussed above, while at Mount Vernon, students began to question the workers about their jobs on the estate and how they obtained the positions. Such questions suggest that students were beginning to ponder the possibilities for them in the future, seeing opportunities away from their rural Midwestern community. While looking out over the city at Iwo Jima, a student mentioned that she wanted to live in Washington, D.C. While it is unknown if this student had previously decided that she

would not live in Bartley all her life, or if she will ever be able to make it happen, it is clear that this student realized that there might be possibilities for her outside of the Bartley community. While only a small number of observations mentioned students looking to their future, these excerpts represent an interesting avenue for further research.

#### **5.4 IMPLICATIONS OF THIS STUDY FOR EDUCATORS**

Prior to conducting the study, we predicted that continued study of overnight school trips would help educators better understand how students learn during participation in school trips, while also helping educators select venues, hotels and other elements of the overnight school trip experience. Through this study, we learned that students demonstrate engagement in learning in a variety of ways while participating in an overnight school trip: emotional responses, expressions of enthusiasm, leaving behind, making connections, photography, reading/viewing, taking initiative, and touching. By understanding the types of exhibits that appeared to engage students the most, educators can select venues that students find enjoyable while advancing the educator's learning goal for the trip.

When students engage with sites, they become more excited about their learning and often desire to share their experience with their classmates through the modes of care for others, collective decision making, evaluating, leading others, and sharing knowledge. By sharing their experience with both peers and chaperones, students work with others to create a shared understanding of their experience while also forming a true community of learners. Understanding how students share their school trip experiences can help educators to make



decisions on student grouping as well as school trip activities in which to engage students during the experience.

Better understanding of the importance of chaperones would also help educators as they plan to embark on overnight school trips with their students. The primary roles of chaperones remained that of taking advantage of teachable moments, directing student behavior, and ensuring student safety. The teachers of Bartley helped us to understand that clearly stating behavior expectations prior to leaving home, including expectations for appropriate dress, helped ensure the appropriate behavior of students while traveling to Washington, D.C. Despite the importance of chaperones in setting behavioral expectations, the interactions between students and chaperones became more relaxed as students spent a full four days in the company and care of their teachers, school nurse and future principal. Understanding this relationship could help educators select the best possible chaperones to accompany students on overnight school trips.

## **5.5 IMPLICATIONS OF THIS STUDY FOR TOUR OPERATORS**

Similar to the benefits of this study to educators, tour operators can use the results of this study to guide professionals planning trips for their students. With a better understanding of student engagement, tour operators can assist educators in selecting the appropriate sites to visit, eat, and reside during an overnight school trip. A simple analysis of codes shows that students became more engaged in some sites than others. It stands to reason that where students are more engaged, they are more likely to learn. A deeper understanding of the types of exhibits that engage students while they participate in overnight school trips helps tour operators plan better trips for their customers.

Throughout the trip, the research team observed students addressing their questions towards, and sharing their own experiences with, the tour guides employed by the tour operator. By understanding the ways in which students interact with their chaperones, tour operator provided tour guides, tour operators can more effectively assign tour guides to overnight school trips. When dealing with school-aged children, tour guides must possess more than knowledge of the area to which the group is traveling; they must know how to engage students in learning and identify stories and anecdotes that spark student interest in a site. A greater understanding of student/chaperone interactions allows tour operators to meet the needs of their customers better.

## **5.6 IMPLICATIONS OF THIS STUDY FOR DESTINATION SITE MANAGERS**

Destination site managers can use this information as they plan exhibits and promotional materials to recruit school trips to their site. Knowing what elements of exhibits engage students allows for destination site managers to work with their staff in the creation of exhibits and other educational materials that will interests, as well as educate, student visitors to their site. A more sound understating of the way that students occupy space within an exhibit can help destination site managers plan their spaces in ways that promote the ease of movement of larger groups of students through the space while also ensuring that the group gets the most out of the exhibit educationally. In addition, knowing how students use the site based on the number of students that are in the site at once could help sites to manage entrance into the exhibit better t. For example, through this study, we realized that upon entering a crowded exhibit space, student were more likely to rush through the space, giving the exhibit a cursory glance. When students entered an exhibit where they could freely move around and easily access the information shared

in the exhibit, students were more likely to take their time and view what the exhibit offered. With this knowledge at hand, venues should work to spread out admittance to exhibits in conjunction to planning movement through the exhibit.

## **5.7 LIMITATIONS AND DIRECTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH**

### **5.7.1 Limitations**

As with any qualitative research study, limitations exist in the collection and analysis of data. Any time data collection occurs through observations, a team runs the risk of missing important interactions between students; it is impossible to see everything that happens on a trip, despite a six-member team of observers. In addition, on this particular trip, due to their own class and work schedules, not all members of the team traveled with students for the duration of the trip. At times, there were only three members of the research team observing 48 students. It is likely that the team missed behaviors of pertinence to this study.

The demographics of the students studied (i.e., 48 eighth grade students from a rural Midwestern community) greatly impacted our study. Students of a different age group could possibly alter the results of this study. Increased education and additional life experiences increase the tools students possess to assist in making meaning of their current experience. For example, a group of high school seniors bring with them a different knowledge of American History and a higher level of maturity based on additional life experiences than did the Bartley eighth graders. Testing this hypothesis requires a similar study using students of different age groups, both older and younger to support the conclusions reached through this study.

Even eighth graders of a different demographic area could produce different results. Entering into this study, we knew that many of the students traveling on this trip lacked travel experience and had never visited Washington, D. C. prior to participating in this school trip. It is possible that students from a more affluent area, where parents travel regularly, taking their children with them, would experience the trip differently. Presumably, these students would have a greater understanding of travel behaviors and may be more comfortable and confident in new settings. The repetition of this study, following students of a different socioeconomic class would provide greater insight into this limitation.

While the observations of the Bartley students produced an extensive body of data, the research team observed the students at six sites over the course of a four-day trip. The research team did not attend, or did not record observations during social time like bus rides, the Potomac River cruise, and dinner at the Medieval Times. It is possible that we missed interesting conversations about what students experienced and learned at the sites where observations were formally conducted. In addition, students visited other memorials and museums within the Smithsonian without the team observing. Such observations in future studies could help us to learn more about student engagement and learning during similar trips.

Engaging students in a multi-day overnight school trip provides researchers with a multitude of dimensions to study. In addition to the limitations of this particular study, the analysis of the data collected through observing students on a four-day overnight school trip to Washington D.C. provoked additional questions that cannot be answered without further research. These new avenues of study would help researchers to understand more fully the understudied phenomenon of overnight school trips.

### **5.7.2 Differences in student engagement between sites**

Based upon the literature reviewed above, we speculated that the increased time would help observers gain a better understanding of children at individual sites. However, based upon this trip, students did not spend much more time at any one individual site than the two-hour averaged spent at sites during daylong trips discussed above. What an overnight school trip does allow researchers to do is observe students in a multitude of different sites at different levels of engagement. As mentioned above, a greater understanding of student engagement in individual sites would help educators, tour operators and site managers understand the best ways to engage students in a site, increasing the likelihood of students achieving learning goals for the trip. Further research is required to understand the types of sites that best engage students.

In regards to engagement, gender may also play a role in the way in which students engage in a site. Based on the observations by the research team, evidence exists that boys and girls selected different aspects of the sites to examine. For example, one member of the team noted that, while visiting the Newseum, boys tended to return to the exhibit pertaining to gangsters, while girls tended to skip this exhibit. Also at the Newseum, while viewing the Pulitzer Prize Photography exhibit, a member of the research team observed that boys gravitated to pictures pertaining to guns and war while the female students congregated around pictures referencing “relationships, love, and happier scenes.” Because not all observations produced such detailed notes about the differences between gender interests, further study of this particular aspect of engagement in school trip sites should be pursued.

### **5.7.3 Importance of the chaperone**

Another avenue of research to consider is the connection between chaperone guidance of students and the students' level of engagement in a site/exhibit. Throughout the collected observations, members of the research team compared student groups that coincidentally visited sites at the same time as Bartley students. From these observations, it appears that groups moving through sites/exhibits under the direct supervision of a chaperone tended to engage more fully in the experience. Unlike with the case of the Bartley students, we do not know how chaperones prepared these students for what they experienced at each site, where the students were from, or even their grade level. Even within the Bartley group, differences occurred in student behaviors depending on the chaperone to which the student was assigned. "Some groups are more serious and when their chaperone begins to walk away, they follow while other groups are more doing their own thing and not paying much attention to their chaperone." While chaperone behavior was not part of the purview of this study, some of the team members noted interesting behaviors of chaperones during this trip that elicit questions about the stresses of serving as a chaperone over such a long period of time. It is clear that chaperones greatly impact the student experience during a school trip. Further research is required to understand more fully this phenomenon.

### **5.7.4 The duration of the community of learners and transfer of learning**

While evidence clearly suggests that students participating in this trip with the Bartley eighth grade class created a community of learners, we do not know if those experiences impacted student relationships beyond the trip. During the trip, the Bartley chaperones observed that

students formed new relationships over the course of the trip, but we do not know if those relationships lasted beyond the four-days the students traveled together. In addition, we do not know how students applied the knowledge the students gained during the course of the trip aided in student academic performance upon their return. A continued study of these students after they returned to Bartley would provide greater insight into the last impact of traveling on overnight school trips.

### **5.7.5 The importance of souvenirs**

Another interesting area of research revolves around the purchasing of souvenirs. While not discussed above at all, students spent a great deal of time examining, selecting, and purchasing souvenirs. The majority of sites visited incorporated a souvenir shop of some sort into the site. Students spent additional time at stand-alone souvenir shops. The research team observed the students in these settings.

Some students spent a great deal of time selecting items for purchase, while others carried items around stores, only to put them back in the end; presumably, their souvenir budget causing them to rethink potential purchases. Some students resorted to collecting brochure maps of Mount Vernon, and other sites, that were free and available at the entrance. Also at Mount Vernon, multiple members of the research team recorded observations of students around a souvenir penny-press machine that presses a penny flat and imprints an image related to the site. These machines are often inexpensive – the penny that is pressed and less than a dollar to utilize the machine.

Many students bought souvenirs the first night in Washington, D.C. at the Pentagon City Mall. The next day, students boarded the buses in brand new Washington, D.C. sweatshirts, t-

shirts, and cowboy hats. Such actions lead to questions about the role of souvenirs in connecting the student to their new environment and community of learners: Do these souvenirs – and wearing them immediately – somehow make the student feel more connected to their current location, or is it the students' way of acknowledging that they have entered a culture different from that of their hometown? Do students that possess an inferior souvenir budget to their peers feel less connected to the newly developed community of learners? The study of souvenirs and student purchasing patterns while participating on school trips is another interesting aspect for future study.

## **5.8 CONCLUSION**

Learning is a complex process that occurs both inside and outside the traditional classroom setting. Adhering to this belief, as a teacher, I traveled with students on weeklong trips to Mississippi, post-Katrina, to work with Habitat for Humanity nearly a decade ago. While lessons students learned during these trips aligned directly only to the woodshop classes in the district's program of studies, students learned life lessons that we could not replicate in any other setting. Remembering these trips fondly, through this study, I hoped to affirm my belief that students received an educational benefit from participating in these trips, while gaining a better understanding of the role I played in the students' experiences. Today, in my current role as a school administrator, I am often called upon to approve student travel through overnight school trips, as are many other school administrators around the world, yet most fail to fully understand the benefits students receive from participating in such trips.



Despite the fact that schools around the world designate portions of the annual budget, and/or support student participation in overnight school trips, very little is known about the phenomenon and the way students make meaning of the experience. Schools pay tour operators thousands of dollars per trip to plan tours in the hope that students experience meaningful learning, yet tour operators lack a full understanding of the necessary elements to provide students with meaningful learning experiences. The resources needed to help teachers, tour operators, and site managers provide the best possible learning opportunities for students participating in overnight school trips, simply do not exist. Prior to conducting this study, the research team identified only one peer-reviewed study that addressed overnight school trips. This study sought to contribute to this body of literature.

In applying Falk and Dierking's (2000) Contextual Model of Learning to the observations of 48 eighth grade students from a rural community in a Midwestern state participating in a four-day overnight school trip to Washington, D.C., we learned that students participating in such school trips create a community of learners. Students spent four days together sharing new experiences, cultures, and learning. They worked together to make meaning of their experiences. Prolonged exposure to their peers and chaperones provided students the opportunity to build new relationships with peers, and experience more relaxed interactions with school personnel. Students increased their understanding of expected behaviors in different situations and different venues they may not have otherwise experienced at home. While chaperones and staff members of the sites explicitly shared some of these behavioral expectations, students also learned to read the space they occupied, and identified and complied with implicit behavioral norms.

Through participation in overnight school trips, students receive exposure to educational content, situations, and cultures that cannot be replicated in the classroom. When harnessed

appropriately, these trips have the potential to advance student achievement of learning goals established within the school curriculum, while teaching students meaningful lessons about life and what is possible beyond their K-12 educational experience. Despite what we learned from this study, a great number of questions remain. Our observations of the Bartley students over four days led to behaviors that we did not expect to see nor can we explain: the differences in school groups and purchasing of souvenirs. Gaining a thorough understanding of the significance of chaperones, and the duration and impact of newly created communities of learners, requires more in-depth investigation into the field. This study represents just one entry into a tiny, but significant, body of literature. We must continue to explore this field, and the many questions inspired by this study, to ensure that our children and teachers make the most of the learning opportunities provided by participation in overnight school trips.

## APPENDIX A

### CODEBOOK

**Engagement** – Students demonstrate interest in, and interaction with a site/exhibit. (Parent Code)

1. **Touching** – Students reach out to physical touch parts of the exhibits
2. **Reading/Viewing** – Student reads or views the information embedded in the exhibit. At times, this may be a combination as students read captions of pictures for example.
3. **Making Connections** – Students verbalize connections between prior knowledge/experiences and their experience at the site.
4. **Emotional Response** – Student demonstrates an emotional response to a site. Examples include tears in eyes; turning red, change in facial expression.
5. **Leaving Behind**- Students leave a writing or a tribute at the site
6. **Photography** – Students appear to photograph a particular element of an exhibit, site or person
7. **Taking Initiative** – Students either moved to another part of the site not planned for the group or ask questions that extend beyond the intended topic.

8. **Expression of Enthusiasm** – Students make a sudden exclamation. Examples include “cool” or “wow.”

**Shared Experience** – Students experience the site together. This links directly to Falk & Dierking’s concept of a community of learners. (Parent Code)

1. **Sharing Knowledge** – Students help peers understand an exhibit by sharing their own knowledge. This knowledge may come from experiences prior to the school trip, or may be gained from reading, watching videos or interactions with interpreters at the site.
2. **Collective Decision Making** – Students collaborate to decide how to navigate the site visited. They move through the site together.
3. **Evaluating** – Students express a positive or negative opinion about the experience with their peers. Students may also suggest changes that could be made to the site.
4. **Leading Others** – Students bring other students to an area of the site that they want their peer to also view.
5. **Care for Others** – Students express concern for the wellbeing of their peers. This may include ensuring that their peers are complying with behavioral expectations.

**Following Norms** – Student follow explicit or implicit rules for behavior at a site. (Parent Code)

1. **Follow Implicit Norms (modeling)** – Students imitate the behaviors of others. This can be other visitors to the site, not related to their group, or Chaperones and peers.
2. **Showing Respect** – Students move quietly through a site, act respectfully, in what appears to be, response to the solemnity of the site.

3. **Follow Explicit Norms-** Those behavioral expectations that are specifically shared with students either orally or posted through signage at a particular site.
4. **Rejecting the Norms** – Students exhibit behavior that does not comply with the norms, either implicitly or explicitly shared.

**Student/Chaperone Interaction** – Places where students and teachers interact throughout the school trip. (Parent Code)

1. **Giving Directions** – Teachers/Tour Guides take a moment to explain to students expectations for behavior or the plan for moving through a site
2. **Teachable Moments** – Teachers take advantage of interest that students demonstrate in a particular site and use that interest to make connections to the schools curricular content
3. **Adult Feedback** – Chaperones evaluate student thoughts/behaviors and offer direct feedback
4. **Friendly Interactions** – Those interactions that would be atypical from student-teacher interactions expected to be found in the classroom. Examples include joking; imitating one another; and appropriate physical contact.

**Questioning of Adults** - Student questions adults (site staff, chaperones, research team members). These questions directly to pertain to the site where the student is at the time. They may be questions to enhance their understanding of the exhibit or help them to make connections between the site and prior knowledge.

**Socializing** – Students engage in off-task conversations and activities that do not pertain to the site that they are visiting. They typically refer to non-educational experiences that, while they may have occurred during the trip, do not add to a student making meaning of the current site.

**Looking to the Future** – Student demonstrates that the site is inspiring them to think about their life beyond K-12 education.

**How Students Occupy the Space** – Addresses student behaviors around the perceived amount of room in relation to a site or exhibit. How students occupy the space (i.e., move in a large group, wait for others to move out of the way, rush through to get away from the crowd). How students move, or wait, to accommodate other.

**New Experiences** – Student/Chaperone acknowledges that the experience at hand is one that the student has never had prior to the school trip.

**Reasserting Group Identity** – students take an action that demonstrates to others the members of their group

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