The Taiwanese Backpacker: In Search of Purpose

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The Taiwanese Backpacker: In Search of Purpose

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Abstract

Taiwanese students face immense pressure to excel in a system that prioritizes grades over personal development, leading to a lack of direction and purpose. Working with The City Wanderer Association, we explored the potential of backpacking as a means of fostering purpose among Taiwanese youth. After conducting surveys, interviews, and ethnographies, our findings suggest that backpacking can significantly improve self-confidence and self-efficacy, which can translate into daily life and contribute to one's sense of purpose. Key experiences and catalysts for transformation often come from five core aspects of backpacking: people, culture, confidence-building through hardship, life direction, and self-understanding. We recommend ways to integrate backpacking into the organization's Wandering Challenge to promote purpose development among youth in Taiwan.

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- Sunny Yang, CEO of the City Wanderer Education Association, for continuously helping us design this project, answering questions, and supporting our endeavors.
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Executive Summary

Introduction & Background

There exists a world in which students are constantly under pressure and pushed to the brink to perform well, with very little time and room for personal growth, ultimately leading to a life without purpose or direction. Taiwanese students are no exception to this, as the education system in Taiwan has long focused on mastery of information for exams and competitive placement tests, leading to practices that prioritize rote memorization and grades over personal development. The ensuing pressure is so immense that this generation of youth often feels trapped, as they are coerced into conforming to the mold of traditional education ideologies. Deviation from these preordained paths only invites intense criticism and disapproval.

However, a promising tool exists that can aid students free themselves from the shackles of such routines. Backpacking, as a practice, possesses the potential to transform individuals and challenge the status quo of traditional Taiwanese education. Throughout the course of our study, we aim to demonstrate the capacity of backpacking to accelerate personal growth and empower individuals with the confidence to confront their daily struggles, particularly the pressures exerted by family and society to succeed in conventional ways.

Our sponsor, The City Wanderer Association, is a non-profit organization founded in 2015. They seek to address this issue by guiding Taiwanese youth in finding their path and developing a sense of purpose through low-barrier games based on experiential education called the "Wandering Challenge." Their mission statement is "to change the world, it takes not one single person doing a lot, but a lot of people doing a little," and, as a result of their programs, most participants have reported positive changes in their attitudes and abilities, such as greater willingness to confront uncertainty and improved problem-solving skills.

Backpacking comes into play as a form of low-cost, independent travel that extends beyond mere tourism. More importantly, it can be a journey of self-discovery and personal development. The City Wanderer Association has acknowledged the potential of backpacking as

a viable component in their program in the future and has expressed interest in gaining a deeper understanding of the field and its applicability to their program.

Our project aims to help our sponsor better understand how backpacking impacts the development of purpose and self-identity in Taiwanese youth. We have specifically designed our study around the relationship between backpacking, purpose, and Taiwan education to involve a wide range of methodologies, which leads to our research question: "How does backpacking influence purpose and self-identity development in Taiwanese youth?" To answer this question, our team has identified four main objectives:

(1) Understand the dynamics of backpacking in Taiwan.

(2) Understand how Taiwanese education potentially inhibits purpose development.

(3) Understand how backpacking influences purpose development.

(4) Understand the long-term effects of backpacking on personal growth and development in Taiwanese youth, including impacts on attitudes, behaviors, and perspectives.

Literature Review

Our literature review delved into three key areas: East Asian education, purpose, and backpacking. Our research on East Asian education revealed that the Taiwanese education system places a strong emphasis on academic achievement, resulting in high pressure for students to perform well. Recent studies have also highlighted the prevalence of mental health issues among students, with academics and family factors playing a significant role. Furthermore, we uncovered the importance of having a sense of purpose for healthy development and positive mental health outcomes. We also found gap years to be beneficial for students in terms of gaining knowledge, exploring education, and discovering career alternatives.

The second area focused on purpose and its importance. We discovered that having a sense of purpose can lead to personal fulfillment, happiness, joy, and a sense of belonging. Scholars discuss a stable and central intention of motivating action or change and providing meaning in life. Additionally, Stanford professor William Damon's book provided valuable

insights into a twelve-step process for purpose development, which he notably describes as a relatively consistent process of exploration, discovery, and self-reflection. Education also plays a significant role in purpose development, with pathways such as adventure and experiential education leading to better purpose development when compared to traditional East Asian education.

Finally, we uncovered backpacking to be a form of experiential education that may have a positive impact on purpose development. Backpacking is a form of low-cost, independent travel that extends beyond sightseeing and can be a journey of self-discovery and personal development. Our review suggested that backpacking can have many effects on personal growth, such as improvements in skills that can lead to a greater sense of self-efficacy, giving us a steppingstone to progress into our research.

Methodology

Our team utilized a multi-method research design, which consisted of archival research, interviews, surveys, and ethnographies. We conducted the research between the 13th of March and the 1st of May in 2023, primarily in the city of Taipei, Taiwan. Our desire to utilize four methods stemmed from triangulation, as described by Berg and Lune, and to oppose the notion that "methods impose certain perspectives on reality" (Berg & Lune, 2017). By utilizing multiple methods collecting different data, we aimed to "relate them so as to counteract the threats to validity identified in each" (Berg & Lune, 2017).

We conducted archival research in the form of a literature review that synthesized the current knowledge of East Asian education, backpacking, and purpose. This method gave us the proper background knowledge that helped us develop the overall methodology of this project. We aimed the interviews, surveys, and ethnographies at a demographic of backpackers in Taipei older than eighteen and any ethnicity, although we expected the sample to potentially skew towards the young adult age range. The use of interviews and surveys helped contribute to completing all four objectives, as we directly received information from these participants about their experiences in backpacking, education, and purpose development. The use of ethnographic methods helped our team with the first objective, specifically, of understanding backpacking experiences in Taiwan.

We collected data for interviews in the form of audio recordings, which we transcribed and translated from Mandarin to English. Our team conducted surveys using Qualtrics, which included both qualitative and quantitative portions. We analyzed the interview transcriptions and qualitative portions of the surveys using Voyant Tools. To demonstrate the trends in the data, we visualized the quantitative data using various graphs and charts. Each team member recorded their ethnographies through journal entries, detailing their experiences.

Findings

Throughout the course of our study, our team has identified many concepts regarding backpacking, the topic of purpose, and their underlying relationship. These ideas were consistently supported by our interviews, surveys, and ethnography and demonstrate how backpacking can almost always influence purpose in a meaningful way. However, we generally struggled to answer our second objective of relating Taiwanese education to a lack of purpose in a consistent manner, and as such, our findings do not touch on this objective.

Our twelve survey participants varied in levels of backpacking experience and demographic backgrounds. Most participants had intermediate or experienced levels of backpacking experience, and some had solo travel experience. The survey found that backpacking has a positive impact on personal growth and purpose development, with most respondents reporting positive impacts. Respondents mentioned that meeting new people, engaging in interpersonal communication, experiencing different cultures, and learning from hardships were key factors in changing their viewpoints or purpose in life. The most frequently used words to describe backpacking were experience, love, and joy, indicating that backpacking can foster self-discovery and personal growth.

Our first finding identifies a characteristic of purpose that deviates from established literature on purpose. Specifically, we discovered that individuals' sense of purpose is often fluid and highly personalized, contrasting with the more single and stable definition of purpose put forth by researchers such as William Damon. We observed that purpose shifts naturally over time, with many of our older participants indicating that they hold multiple purposes concurrently.

Our second finding regards backpacking, which often acts as a catalyst towards personal growth, particularly in terms of confidence and self-efficacy; this is a salient aspect that reinforces backpacking's advantages as a transformative practice. Nearly every participant attested to the positive impact of solo travel on their overall strength and resilience to hardship, notably in planning and navigating unforeseen circumstances. More importantly, this newfound ability carried over into their everyday lives, especially in making decisions regarding their careers and life direction. The results of our interviews, survey, and ethnography strongly corroborate this perspective, further emphasizing the transformative effects that backpacking can have on personal growth.

Our third significant finding addresses the relationship between backpacking and purpose, which we initially believed would have a direct connection. Backpacking proved to be beneficial as it allows individuals the time and space to reflect on their lives and helps them move in the right direction, as well as find solutions to problems. However, our findings revealed that not every interviewee found a clear purpose during their travels. Moreover, a few interviewees have demonstrated that travel and exploring the world has remarkably become one of their most prominent purposes.

Lastly, our ethnography confirmed the benefits of solo-traveling for personal development and reflection. During our bike trip around Taiwan, we encountered physical challenges, interacted with new individuals, and immersed ourselves in Taiwanese culture. Notably, one of our team members, Alex, had a harrowing experience biking through a tunnel with poor visibility. Despite facing significant fear and apprehension, he overcame the obstacle and subsequently experienced a profound sense of accomplishment. Our journeys further cemented that the notion of conquering difficult tasks while backpacking can facilitate the development of enhanced confidence and problem-solving skills.

Recommendations

Based on our findings, our study has several implications for The City Wanderer Association. We have four recommendations on how the organization can incorporate backpacking into their programs as a means of promoting purpose and personal development among Taiwanese youth:

Recommendation 1: Design a New Program Centered Around Physical Challenge or Social and Culture Immersion

Our first recommendation is to develop a new program that considers the two primary backpacker archetypes uncovered in our study: those who seek out physical challenges and those who prioritize social and cultural immersion. By creating programs that cater to both these groups, City Wanderer can attract a more diverse range of participants and enhance their overall experience. Engaging in physical challenges can rapidly instill confidence and self-efficacy, while cultural immersion can broaden worldviews and cultivate a passion for travel and meeting new people. Furthermore, being in a country where the primary language differs can significantly impact personal growth and the ability to connect with strangers.

Recommendation 2: Incorporate Risk and Difficulty in the Journey

Our second recommendation is to integrate risk and difficulty into their programs. Our study indicated that the degree of risk and difficulty experienced during backpacking trips often had a significant impact on the amount of personal growth participants achieved. These challenges can foster resilience, problem-solving abilities, and an aptitude for adapting to unexpected situations. Furthermore, including these challenges into the journey can create a more meaningful and unforgettable experience for participants.

Recommendation 3: Solo Backpacking Over Group Backpacking

Our third recommendation for City Wanderer is to prioritize solo backpacking over group backpacking. As highlighted by many of our survey respondents, solo experiences such as interacting with locals, hitchhiking, and facing challenges alone can yield the greatest benefits. Traveling solo can intensify all facets of backpacking, and participants may encounter more opportunities to push themselves and achieve personal growth. By promoting solo backpacking, participants can have an exceptional and meaningful experience, especially compared to that of group backpacking.

Recommendation 4: Use Backpacking as a Tool for Personal and Purpose Development

Our last recommendation is to leverage backpacking as a tool for personal and purpose development. While backpacking may not provide an immediate sense of purpose, it can offer participants dedicated time to contemplate their life and aspirations. Moreover, the impact of backpacking on purpose may be more substantial in the long haul, as participants apply their experiences to shape their future direction. By advocating backpacking as a channel for personal and purpose development, it can support participants in uncovering their passions and forging a more substantive sense of self.

Table of Authorship

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1.0 Introduction

There exists a world in which students are constantly under pressure and pushed to the brink to perform well, with very little time and room for personal growth, ultimately leading to a life without purpose or direction. Taiwanese students are no exception to this, as the education system in Taiwan has long focused on mastery of information for exams and competitive placement tests, leading to practices that prioritize rote memorization and grades over personal development. The ensuing pressure is so immense that this generation of youth often feel trapped, coerced into conforming to the mold of traditional education ideologies. Deviation from these preordained paths only invites intense criticism and disapproval.

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Our goal is to provide insights and knowledge that will help The City Wanderer Association improve their practices and incorporate backpacking into their programs. Our study involved several methods to gather data, including surveys, in-depth interviews, and ethnographies. For the surveys, we shared them widely across various hostels in Taipei, Facebook groups, and other online communities to reach a diverse range of participants. Our in-depth interviews were conducted with participants from a wide range of backgrounds, from those who have narrowly escaped landslides to skilled hitchhikers. Finally, our team conducted ethnographies that demanded blood, sweat, and tears to gain an in-depth understanding of the experiences of backpackers in Taiwan. Through these methods, we have arrived at fascinating and significant insights on the nature of backpacking and purpose.

In this paper, we will share our findings on the relationship between backpacking and purpose, including key moments and the long-term effects that backpacking has had on the participants of our study. By shedding light on the benefits of backpacking for personal growth and development, we hope to inspire The City Wanderer Association with our recommendations on incorporating backpacking into their programs as a means of promoting purpose and personal development among Taiwanese youth.

2.0 Sponsor Background

The City Wanderer Education Association is a non-profit organization based in Taiwan that aims to promote experiential education and personal growth among Taiwanese youth. The organization was founded in 2013 and formally established in 2015 by a group of young Taiwanese professionals who were concerned about the state of education in Taiwan and the increasing prevalence of stress and hopelessness among Taiwanese youth. Their mission is "to create a supportive educational and social environment, inspire youth in Taiwan and in other Asian countries, help them find passion worth pursuing for a lifetime, and make the world a better place in the practice of self-worth" (City Wanderer n.d.). Through their model, they strive to motivate young people to take steps toward a path of purpose with the use of leadership and gamified experiences.

The highly demanding, test-focused culture in East Asia has become very pervasive. This practice results in adolescents and young adults frequently experiencing stress-induced suffocation, and many go on to experience depression. There are roughly 1,000,000 college students in Taiwan, and according to City Wanderer, around half of them are completely lost and unsure of what they want to do with their lives. They lack an understanding of their own identities, passions, potential careers, and potential to contribute to the world (City Wanderer n.d.).

City Wanderer developed one of Taiwan's first experiential education programs: the Wandering Challenge. The program is a low-barrier game-based experience, where students work in groups of three to complete thirty missions outside of the classroom in three weeks,

which can be categorized into four dimensions: self-awareness, adventure & challenge, connection building, and social participation. The tasks encourage students to push themselves beyond their comfort zones, engage in emotional and mental challenges, ponder deep questions, and engage in discourse with marginalized groups to understand the demands of society.

The City Wanderer Education Association has organized more than sixty-seven challenges in twenty-five countries across Taiwan, Japan, Malaysia, Hong Kong, China, and the US over the last few years, having provided service to more than 11,000 students. They have conducted almost 44,000 missions in total, affecting 220,000 people through their acts. The City Wanderer Education Association has not only provided warmth and positivity to the community but also increased consciousness and knowledge of issues such as the environment, homelessness, and migrant workers. According to the City Wanderer Education Association data on students' self-evaluations of their development, 73% of students said they are more able to deal with uncertainty, 68% said they are more confident in their problem-solving abilities, 81% are willing to let go of stereotypes to understand others, and 73% are ready to act on important social issues.

3.0 Literature Review

3.1 East Asian Education

Taiwan's educational system, like that of many other East Asian countries, places a high value on academic achievement and the development of high-achieving students. However, this focus on standardized academic success can have negative effects on the mental health and purpose development of Taiwanese youth. To progress into higher education, junior high school students in most East Asian countries must take a national or state-wide high-stakes high school entrance exam (HSEE) which determines whether they will pursue academic or vocational tracks (Huang et al., 2021). In Taiwan, the HSEE was significantly modified by the Ministry of Education in 2001 to improve the mental health of youth, allowing students to take two tests instead of one per year.

Although the entrance exam reform in 2001 had a significant and wide-ranging impact, those who choose to retake the exam after their first attempt still spend long hours studying and stress about the results and experience high pressure to perform well on exams. This pressure has been linked to depressive symptoms in adolescents across Asia, including those in Taiwan (Huang & Chien, 2013). Students frequently feel characterized by their grades and lack a clear sense of direction in terms of future pursuits, leading to feelings of profound discontentment (Mau & Wang, 2017). The requirements of the exam overwhelm and stress out many students, and some have even reported feeling depressed and anxious as a result. Despite these challenges, the HSEE continues to be a crucial component of Taiwan's educational system and a key predictor of a student's academic and professional future. According to The City Wanderer

Association, education has become a source of competition, often pressuring students to stay in the classroom. Furthermore, they may struggle to connect with other students, which fuels isolation depression.

3.1.1 Mental Health

In recent years, the prevalence of mental health issues among Taiwanese youth has increased, including over 5,000 cases of youth suicide, depression, and anxiety (Ministry of Health and Welfare, 2020). Risk factors beyond academic pressure such as family conflicts, bullying, and social isolation contribute to this problem. To address this issue, Huang et al. examined motivational theories and investigated whether providing junior high school students with more chances to take the rigorous high school entrance exam would reduce depressive symptoms (Huang et al., 2021). Using a series of polls conducted in March and October to contrast depression symptoms between before and after taking the HSEE, the authors found that allowing more testing flexibility in Taiwan's high school admission exam policy had a significant impact on reducing youth's depressive symptoms.

Similarly, Chao and Y.-T. Sung utilized stratified random sampling data from 5,292 students obtained in 2012 to investigate the causes and origins of the heightened test anxiety (Chao & Y.-T. Sung, 2019). The surveys concluded a strong relationship between test anxiety, studying time, and educational success, highlighting the need for more effective anxiety management techniques. Furthermore, Yang investigated the consequences of Taiwan's education system transition from a joint entrance exam to multiple enrollment system (Yang, 2004). Multiple enrollment programs on students have been the focal point of many debates;

however, researchers have given minimal attention to investigating student burnout and its causes, particularly in technical-vocational universities. Students may overcome these obstacles through cognitively based motivation theories, such as discovering one's purpose and self-efficacy, which focuses on how individuals' beliefs or confidence in their abilities influence their actions (Yang, 2004).

Lastly, social pressure from factors outside of school, such as family expectation, leads to more mental health issues amongst Taiwanese youth. Tsai et al. examined the link between parental pressure, perfectionism, and mental health symptoms in Taiwanese high school students (Tsai et al., 2019). The study revealed that high levels of parental pressure and perfectionism were strongly connected with increased symptoms of anxiety and depression among Taiwanese high school students. The results underline the importance of culturally sensitive interventions that address the difficulties experienced by Taiwanese youth and highlight the significance of encouraging healthy development in a caring and supportive environment.

Overall, mental health amongst Taiwanese youth is a significant concern, with factors such as academic, parental, and societal expectations all contributing to the problem. The studies reviewed suggest that having a sense of self-purpose is crucial for healthy development and mental health outcomes in youth.

3.1.2 Gap Year

Gap years are becoming increasingly popular in Taiwan among students who wish to take a break and explore education, career, and life alternatives after finishing high school. Gap years occur when students take a break from their education for about a year to obtain additional

experience in a field of interest or to plan for the future. Gap years allow students to gain valuable knowledge of the world and their purpose, build independence, develop confidence, and explore their passions before pursuing a particular field of study. Furthermore, they can help students to become more self-sufficient while also learning about diverse countries, customs, and lifestyles.

In a study conducted by Chen and Chien, the authors examine the impact of taking a gap year on the career development and life satisfaction of college students in Taiwan (Chen & Chien, 2021). According to the study, taking a gap year has a great positive impact on their career development and purpose in life. Individuals who took a gap year reported better levels of career exploration, self-efficacy in career decision-making, and life satisfaction than those who did not take a gap year. Additionally, the study reveals that students who take a gap year with a clear purpose and goal, as well as those who engage in meaningful and diverse activities during the gap year, benefit more from the positive impacts of a gap year on career development and purpose. Likewise, Cheng and Lin add that gap-year experiences help Taiwanese university students make better decisions about their future careers (Cheng & Lin, 2020). The students who took a gap year reported having a clearer understanding of their career goals and more confidence in their abilities to attain them. They also stated that they were more proactive in seeking career-related information and opportunities.

Students may become more self-sufficient and independent by learning how to traverse various surroundings and cultures on their own during gap years. According to Lee and Yang, students who took a gap year reportedly had greater levels of self-efficacy than those who did not, including self-efficacy in choosing a career path and self-efficacy in job searching (Lee &

Yang, 2021). They also reported improved identity clarity and a better understanding of their own strengths and weaknesses. In a global sense, gap years allow students to learn about different countries, customs, and lifestyles. Wu and Chou found that choosing to take a gap year improved Taiwanese students' global perspective (Wu & Chou, 2020). Gap year students reported considerable improvements in intercultural communication skills, intercultural understanding, and global awareness (Wu & Chou, 2020). The authors concluded that, in an increasingly globalized world, a well-planned and meaningful gap year can give students valuable experiences and skills that can aid them in their personal and professional life (Wu & Chou, 2020).

3.2 Purpose

3.2.1 Finding Purpose Matters

Attaining a sense of fulfillment from daily activities is a desirable aspect of life that everyone should aim to achieve. However, many individuals not only struggle to achieve this state but may never do so. Finding this feeling transforms mundane work into an empowering and motivating force that drives individuals to create change and make an impact on themselves as well as the world. Empirical evidence has even suggested that having a sense of purpose "predicts greater longevity in adulthood" (Hill & Turiano, 2014). Although the sample population of the study was predominantly Caucasian, the results are still significant and indicate that purpose is a factor when striving for a fulfilling life.

Many sources concur that discovering purpose leads to direction and fulfillment in life. William Damon, a Stanford Professor and influential figure in the study of purpose, characterizes a purposeful life as "characterized by a sense of direction, a feeling of control over one's life, and a sense of fulfillment and satisfaction" (Damon, 2010). Similarly, Araujo, in his study of purpose in Brazilian youth, concludes that "[i]f a person is coherent with herself, with her purposes in life, it is probable that they will have more satisfaction with their own lives" (Araujo et al., 2014). Heng et al. also support this view in their study of Israeli and Singaporean students, stating that "having meaning in life results in higher level of school and life satisfaction, while searching for meaning, in contrast, lowers school and life satisfaction." (Heng et al., 2020). One possible explanation as to why purpose is so effective at creating direction is that "[f]inding purpose is not simply a matter of having goals, but of having a particular kind of goals - ones that are tied to a deep understanding of one's own identity and values" (Damon, 2010). Purpose represents a profound connection to oneself and discovering it allows one to flourish.

Moreover, as Damon asserts, "[p]urpose can provide a buffer against life's challenges and difficulties, helping individuals weather setbacks and maintain resilience" (Damon, 2010). While the evidence on the impact of purpose on improved tenacity is limited to Damon's study, it is plausible that a sense of purpose would promote motivation and fulfillment. Damon further contends that "[h]aving a sense of purpose can also increase one's sense of meaning and significance, as well as contribute to a sense of identity and a sense of belonging to something larger than oneself" (Damon, 2010). Despite being a relatively under-researched topic in the field of purpose, our team finds it logical that purpose can often arise from helping others and having a social impact.

Purpose is an important portion of everyone's life and is often the key to living a fulfilling life. Thus, our team aims to study it and especially focus on how to allow young adults to discover it for themselves and proceed to live happy lives.

3.2.2 Defining Purpose

Purpose is often a very abstract term. It is often associated with motivation, reason, fulfillment, and meaning, but the preciseness of the definition often remains ambiguous and mysterious. This association becomes apparent when talking about purpose in the context of people and life. The quest for meaning and purpose in life is an enduring and perennially significant topic. However, the complexity and ambiguity of the question itself pose a challenge for those who seek out answers. In a 2021 study of highschoolers, researchers found that as many as two-thirds of young adults in high school and college tended to conflate purpose and meaning in life (Ratner et al., 2021). Based on the findings of this study, we must question whether the concepts of purpose and meaning in life are interchangeable or if their definitions vary depending on individual perspectives. Various words or terms frequently come to mind when discussing the concept of purpose; however, these synonyms do not provide a clearer understanding of the topic.

Damon defines purpose as "a stable and generalized intention to accomplish something that is meaningful to the self and important to the world" (Damon, 2010). Definitions of purpose tend to have two main parts: characteristics of the intention and the direction of the intention. In Damon's description, the intention's characteristics are "stable" and "generalized" and the intention's direction is to "accomplish something that is meaningful to the self and important to

the world." This use of purpose is very concrete as the characteristics and direction that the definition contains are well defined, easy to understand, and very tangible. Purpose under this definition is easy to understand and avoids ambiguity of words like motivation, fulfillment, and meaning. In contrast, researchers Kashdan and McKnight characterize purpose "as a central, self-organizing life aim" (Kashdan & Mcknight, 2009). This definition shares the same idea as Damon's definition in its description of intention through the use of "central" which is very similar to Damon's "stable" and "generalized", but Kashdan and McKnight add on "self-organized", which implies that purpose tends to come from the self in how it develops. These researchers also take a more generalized approach to the direction of their definition as they utilize "life aim" as opposed to Damon's more specific approach.

In a 2020 study of purpose about youth in Singapore and Israel, Heng et al. offer a description that deviates from the two prior references. Their team tackles life meaning as opposed to purpose but uses them interchangeably. They define the meaning of life as "find[ing] one's gift. The purpose of life is to use this gift for the benefit of both self and others'" (Heng et al., 2020). The second portion of the definition almost perfectly matches the end of Damon's definition in meaning. They emphasize how purpose can be directed towards both the self and others at the same time. However, the authors here choose to frame purpose as finding one's "gift" which is rather ambiguous, as it could be seen as something unique to one person. However, sometimes people may share the same purpose or life meaning as one another. Another perspective suggests that a gift is more akin to a skill, rather than a mere desire or intention to do something. In this light, the definition may be insufficient in its applicability.

These three perspectives all importantly agree that purpose means something greater towards both oneself and others. This agreement is significant, as our team aims to answer the individuals who have discovered their purpose and provide an understanding of what it means to have done so. Furthermore, it is noteworthy that two of the researchers convey that purpose tends to be "central" and "stable", suggesting that it is not a turbulent or constantly changing intention for individuals. These traits likely stem from the deep introspection and mature understanding of the world that are required to cultivate this sense of life's meaning; they will serve as significant factors to consider as we strive to answer our research question.

The discussion of purpose and its nature in the previous paragraph lays the foundation for exploring a specific concept that aligns with these ideas: ikigai. Ikigai is a Japanese concept that has gained popularity in recent years due to its emphasis on finding one's purpose and passion in life. The Venn diagram in Figure 1 demonstrates how the concept of purpose is a mix of different aspects of life − such as work, hobbies, family, and friends − that bring value and joy. Ikigai sees purpose as a source of zest for life, and those who have discovered their ikigai are said to be busily engaged in it every day (*Ikigai: The Japanese Secret to a Long and Happy Life*, 2017).

Figure 1: Ikigai Venn diagram

The concept of ikigai offers a new perspective on purpose, differing from traditional views that recognize purpose as a singular goal. This difference in perspective raises interesting questions about the nature of purpose and how it develops throughout one's life. For example, does purpose emerge from a singular passion, or is it the result of different factors combined together? How does one discover, cultivate, and nurture their ikigai over time?

These questions highlight the need for further research on the concept of ikigai and its relationship to purpose. By exploring the relationship between purpose and ikigai, we can gain insight into how people find meaning and fulfillment in their lives. Moreover, through examining the different factors that contribute to the development of purpose, researchers can develop programs that help individuals discover their ikigai and thus live an even more purposeful life (*Ikigai: The Japanese secret to a joyful life*, 2022). This is especially meaningful towards our

goals, as we plan to recommend methods of integrating backpacking as a means of developing purpose in our sponsor's Wandering Challenge program and integrating findings on ikigai will allow us to enhance our results and recommendations.

3.2.3 Development of Purpose

With a more concrete understanding of purpose, it is important to understand how one develops purpose through life. Stemming from his research at Stanford, Damon outlines twelve steps that many people experience during their development of purpose: (1) discover your passions and interests, (2) reflect on your strengths, values, and beliefs, (3) explore new experiences, (4) get to know yourself better, (5) engage in self-reflection, (6) cultivate meaningful relationships, (7) seek role models and mentors, (8) engage in community service and giving back, (9) create a sense of identity and belonging, (10) take action and pursue your goals, (11) reflect on your experiences and learning, and (12) celebrate your achievements and continue the journey (Damon, 2010). The takeaway from these stages is that purpose development is a consistent process of exploration, discovery, and self-reflection. Kashdan and McKnight studied external factors that may affect purpose development and identified the Behavioral Approach System (BAS) and Behavioral Inhibition System (BIS) as influential factors. In the field of psychology, the BAS regulates positive or appetitive motives, which is when the intent is to move towards a desire. In contrast, the BIS operates by regulating negative and aversive motives, which entails striving to move away from unpleasant situations. They conclude that a strong BAS and low BIS is more conducive for individuals to establish purpose in their lives. Thus, those who tend toward curiosity and exploration more often develop purpose during their lives. In their exact words, "[f]or this process to unfold, we expect that a person must

possess a curious nature for the intentional pursuit of meaningful and rewarding behaviors"
(Kashdan & McKnight, 2009). Based on these two sources, purpose appears to come from being
aware, open, and receptive to new experiences and alternative ways to examine themselves and
the outside world (Kashdan & McKnight, 2009).

Education plays a significant role in purpose development as well. Researchers Heng et
al. conducted a study regarding purpose in adolescents of Singapore and Israel. They begin by
highlighting differences in the educational systems of the two countries: "while Singapore has
been recognized as a high-performing education system in international education benchmarking
indicators, Israel is well-known as a creative, innovative, 'start-up' nation with the 'highest
number of scientists, technologists and engineers per capita in the world, and the third-highest
number of patents per capita'" (Heng et al., 2020). The authors highlight that both have strong
education systems, but Singapore has more academic pressure to perform on exams, while the
Israeli system tends to be more relaxed in this area. This difference can be seen similarly to how
East Asian education generally differs from that of the world and Western countries. The results
of the study showed that "Israeli students reported an overall significantly higher life satisfaction
than Singapore's adolescents" (Heng et al., 2020). They explain this result as follows: "The
lower school and life satisfaction levels for Singapore's adolescents with no orientation... could
be reflective of the prevailing high-stakes academic achievement narrative in Singapore
schools." (Heng et al., 2020). This conclusion advances the notion that high-stress education
systems are detrimental to students and fail to facilitate life orientation. Similarly, researchers
Araujo et al. conclude that "active learning methods, based on principles of ethics and
citizenship, seem to be crucial to foster social engagement... It can foster the development of
more beyond the self-oriented purpose and the psychological well-being" (Araujo et al., 2014).

These active learning methods include more personal exploration and discovery than that of a traditional classroom and are likely to facilitate the process of purpose development. It is also shown that the socially engaged Brazilian youth "are more other-regarding oriented in terms of life goals... They showed a higher level of satisfaction with life" (Araujo et al., 2014). This paper strongly supports going out into the world and working with others towards change. The authors strongly advocate incorporating avenues of purpose development into education systems that span beyond conventional exam-based learning. To discover one's sense of purpose, youth must engage in immersive experiences that promote exploration and discovery beyond the confines of the classroom. To find purpose, it is crucial for youth to engage in exploration and discovery through interaction with the world beyond the classroom, aligning with the views of Damon, Kashdan, and McKnight as mentioned above.

All sources point towards exploration, curiosity, discovery, and interaction with the world outside of one's normal sphere as crucial towards developing purpose in life. Stepping out of one's own comfort zone and mindset to experience the world through a new perspective is a necessary milestone on the way to traveling through Damon's elaborate twelve steps to finding fulfillment. It also appears that education systems with a focus on more active learning that may include a more exploratory curriculum or a link to creating social impact outside the classroom can lead towards this development as it fosters the traits and pushes the students through the experiences that enable purpose building. This process is difficult and often frustrating, but "[t]here must also be some level of serendipity", when "the search has borne fruit and that fruit provides a compass for her life" (Kashdan & McKnight, 2009). Backpacking offers a unique opportunity for experiential learning through independence, travel, and social connection to new

communities abroad. This practice may be an amazing tool to help especially the youth develop purpose when the education systems fail to inspire them.

3.3 Backpacking

3.3.1 Backpacking as a Practice

Backpacking can be seen as a form of simplistic traveling, a low-cost method of independent travel where individuals travel to multiple destinations for several days, "taken by travelers who typically prefer low-budget accommodation, longer holidays, itinerary flexibility, meeting other travelers, and social and participatory holiday activities" (Chen et al., 2019). While often associated with traveling and sightseeing, backpacking extends beyond those terms, as it is not just a way of traveling, but also a journey of self-discovery and personal development. This flexibility can be seen in the "drifter" construct that many researchers often associate with backpacking, as they can flexibly "roam internationally, living with the indigenous population and taking odd jobs to keep themselves going" (Cohen, 2011). Zhang et al. agree with these definitions, as backpackers are generally considered by scholars and researchers to be a socially constructed community, suggesting that they form a unique group style as well as sharing similar behaviors and values (Zhang et al., 2019).

Furthermore, backpacking has been seen to be related to personal growth. Chen et al. attribute this personal growth to self-determination theory (SDT), where "people's satisfaction with their basic psychological needs of exploring, absorbing, and mastering their surroundings would positively contribute to their various self-developments," and "[b]ackpacker personal

development can be related to the satisfaction of backpackers' various travel needs" (Chen et al., 2019). Their research involves the impact of developing certain constructs, such as skill and capability, on an individual's personal growth. The most common constructs that affected backpackers the most were skill, capability, and emotion (Chen et al., 2019). Moreover, these improvements in skills that led to a greater sense of self-efficacy also improve one's sense of self-esteem. Caulkins et al.'s findings support this research through investigating the "general" and "substantive impacts" individuals can receive from backpacking, especially in a therapeutic setting (Caulkins et al., 2006). Specifically, both authors establish the impact backpacking has on increasing self-efficacy, additionally showing "how an increase in self-efficacy in backpacking may transfer to other aspects in life" (Caulkins et al., 2006). While the authors present a positive correlation between backpacking and personal development, notably in the form of self-efficacy and self-esteem, they do not include any definitive links between personal growth and purpose development.

However, Teas et al. lay out a discussion regarding the relationship between personal growth and purpose development, introducing arguments developed from basic psychological needs theory. This theory states that satisfaction of relatedness, autonomy, and competence is necessary for optimal physical and psychological functioning. They mention a positive association between competence and relatedness satisfaction and purpose in life, where competence satisfaction is described as a feeling of fulfillment and achievement that arises when an individual believes that they have successfully demonstrated a level of proficiency in a certain interest or activity (Teas et al., 2022). Furthermore, the discussion also presents how an individual's satisfaction with autonomy and freedom in their life are correlated to high levels of personal growth when they also have high levels of competence satisfaction. These conclusions

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seem to be closely related to Chen et al. and Caulkins et al.'s findings on self-esteem and self-efficacy, as they all involve an individual's belief in their own ability to accomplish certain tasks and goals. More importantly, although not formally established in research, we can construe a more concrete relationship from these scholars between the effects of backpacking on purpose and our conclusions established from the literature on purpose. While our analysis on purpose provides understanding that purpose is a central and stable intention that stems from deep introspection and mature sense of the world, which can be the key to living a fulfilling life, we can reason this with Teas et al.'s attribution to basic psychological needs theory; an individual's ability for deep introspection and to view their life in a mature sense ought to be backed up with a basis of satisfactory physical and psychological living. In other words, the optimal functioning for an individual, which comes as a result of competence and relatedness satisfaction, acts as the link to developing purpose in life.

3.3.2 Cultural Differences in Backpacking

Despite how some aspects of backpacking as a method of purpose development and personal growth can be universalized and generalized beyond borders, there still lies some cultural differences on backpacking as a practice. Most research done on backpacking has been largely non-region specific. This research design has resulted in a lack of nuance and analysis between backpacking between different cultures. However, more current research on various backpacking cultures have unraveled many similarities and differences between Western and East Asian backpacking practices, particularly Chinese in our context.

Although backpacking seems to have a relatively fluid definition, there seems to be even more discourse between cultural influences in the field, as backpacking can be affected by the cultural background of the participants (Chen et al., 2019). In generalized terms and most Western backpacking cultures, there seems to be a notion of the "drifter" construct, which is defined as "roam[ing] internationally, living with the indigenous population and taking odd jobs to keep themselves going" (Cohen, 2011). However, Chinese backpackers take on a different perspective when it comes to defining their identities as backpackers; Zhang et al. argue that Chinese backpackers often differentiate themselves from so-called "tourists" and rather would label themselves ''backpackers", indicating this identity as a backpacker is an important source of meaning-making for this group of individuals (Zhang et al., 2017). Furthermore, for Chinese backpackers, identity construction is more of a fluid and continuous process, while Western backpackers have often seen more personal development through backpacking due to the satisfaction of their travel needs and motivations, like self-cognition and self-improvement. Considering how our research question digs into the influence on how backpacking influences East Asian youth, it is important to consider which culture the Taiwanese associate more with, especially in the scope of backpacking. The advantage of analyzing the cultural differences for backpacking is that it allows us to view correlations between one's motivations. Consequently, on top of seeing the influence that backpacking has on East Asian youth, we can also identify which individuals would benefit the most from backpacking compared to other forms of developing purpose based on features like personality, motivations, and one's needs.

3.4 Conclusion

The emphasis on academic and career success in East Asian education can cause a significant amount of stress and confusion for students seeking direction in life. Furthermore, several researchers have suggested that purpose development is closely linked to exploration, discovery, and interaction with the world beyond the classroom. The East Asian education scheme does not heavily promote any of these ideas and leads many to feel lost, especially after college entrance examinations. Backpacking emphasizes exploration of communities around the world that may provide highly different perspectives on life from the one in which they live. Furthermore, independent travel often builds one's confidence and self-efficacy to make large changes in their life direction that leads to more fulfillment and satisfaction. These experiences are often a catalyst for finding purpose. Our group believes that further research on the explicit connection between backpacking and purpose, specifically in East Asia, could lead to backpacking and independent travel as a remedy to the issue of feeling lost and purposeless.

4.0 Methodological Section

4.1 Outline

4.1.1 Objectives

Our project aims to help our sponsor better understand how backpacking impacts the development of purpose and self-identity in Taiwanese youth. We have specifically designed our study around the relationship between backpacking, purpose, and Taiwan education to involve a wide range of methodologies, leading to our research question: "How does backpacking influence purpose and self-identity development in Taiwanese youth?" To answer this question, our team has identified four main objectives:

(1) Understand the dynamics of backpacking in Taiwan.

(2) Understand how Taiwanese education potentially inhibits purpose development.

(3) Understand how backpacking influences purpose development in Taiwanese youth.

(4) Understand the long-term effects of backpacking on personal growth and development in Taiwanese youth, including impacts on attitudes, behaviors, and perspectives.

4.1.2 Overview of Methods

Our team utilized a multi-method research design, which consisted of archival research, interviews, surveys, and ethnographies. We conducted the research between the 13th of March and the 1st of May in 2023, primarily in the city of Taipei, Taiwan. Our desire to utilize four methods stemmed from triangulation, as described by Berg and Lune, and to oppose the notion that "methods impose certain perspectives on reality" (Berg & Lune, 2017). By utilizing multiple methods collecting different data, we aimed to "relate them so as to counteract the threats to validity identified in each" (Berg & Lune, 2017).

We conducted archival research in the form of a literature review that synthesized the current knowledge of East Asian education, backpacking, and purpose. This method gave us the proper background knowledge that helped us develop the overall methodology of this project. We aimed the interviews, surveys, and ethnographies at a demographic of backpackers in Taipei older than eighteen and any ethnicity, although we expected the sample to potentially skew towards the young adult age range. The use of interviews and surveys helped contribute to completing all four objectives as we directly received information from these participants about their experiences in backpacking, education, and purpose development. The use of ethnographies helped our team with the first objective, specifically, of understanding backpacking experiences in Taiwan.

Since arriving in Taiwan, our team attempted focus groups as a method, as it would have allowed our team to gain insight from many people at once and to also witness them discuss, compare, and contrast their ideas. This method of data collection would have given us a way to quickly see potential trends and differences that backpackers may have; however, difficulty arose

with arranging these groups. Our proposed approach to use Meetup.com and other resources to gather backpackers at a location to run these groups was deemed infeasible due to logistical challenges. Our team failed to reach and gather enough participants to run these groups effectively and interact with a diverse sample, which is a requirement for focus groups (Berg & Lune, 2017). Thus, after failing to locate sufficient participants in week two, our team decided to remove this method and instead focus on conducting surveys and interviews.

4.1.3 Overview of Data Collection and Analysis

We collected data for interviews in the form of audio recordings, which we transcribed and translated from Mandarin to English. Our team conducted surveys using Qualtrics, which included both qualitative and quantitative portions. We analyzed the interview transcriptions and qualitative portions of the surveys using Voyant Tools. To demonstrate the trends in the data, we visualized the quantitative data using various graphs and charts. Each team member recorded their ethnographies through journal entries, detailing their experiences. We will discuss the data collection and analysis for all methods in detail in the following sections.

4.2 Methods

4.2.1 Archival Research

Our team started with archival research to grasp the current knowledge in the field regarding the subject areas of East Asian education, experiential education, purpose, and backpacking. Not only will the important aspects, discoveries, and limitations of each field be extensively studied, but their relationships will be highlighted as well. We utilized archival data

to identify any gaps that need to be filled to answer our research question as well as point us in the direction of choosing the best methodology to attack our problem. Prior research gave us a sense of what data and results to expect, as well as showing contrast to the study that we will be completing.

Archival research informed our literature review, including pertinent sources regarding the four key concepts with a focus on sources after 2000. Each field underwent consistent growth, especially in the last twenty years, which pushed our team to focus on the newer sources. Most sources are peer reviewed from well-renowned and credible journals. Our team must have understood the subtopics that each field is broken down into to fully understand their contribution to the project as well as any disagreements amongst authors or unexplored and unanswered questions.

The research on East Asian Education focuses on the foundational system, the culture it creates, and mental health effects. These topics prove foundational to understanding the motivations behind our research question and why this problem regarding purpose truly exists in Taiwan. Researching purpose and its definition, benefits, and how it develops provides the basis for the entire study. The City Wanderer Association aims to assist Taiwanese youth in finding purpose, and grasping the true essence of purpose is of utmost importance. Additionally, it contextualizes our study by showing why finding purpose matters and can benefit the Taiwanese population in a general scope. Our team analyzed the underlying mechanisms that allow individuals to find meaning, which opens the doors to backpacking and experiential education as a possible answer to this problem. The research on backpacking and experiential education

instilled confidence in our group regarding the potential of backpacking as a means for self-growth and discovery.

A common limitation of archival research is selection bias. To combat this problem, Ian Lustick recommends that "grant[ing] explicit consideration to the historiographical terrain at the outset of the study, identify[ing] the particular approach or school of historiography whose work is most convincing, and indicat[ing] its distinctive (even if implicit) theoretic commitments and biases" as a strategy (Lustick, 1996). Lustick is conveying that including different schools of thoughts from a variety of authors when evaluating their ideas, in contrast to cherry picking and presenting only the few sources that may paint the desired picture makes a stronger argument. Our team utilized this "triangulation" method when creating our literature review and discussing each field of study. Furthermore, we explicitly look for peer-reviewed sources from credible authors to combat potential bias as well.

Our extensive research on these fields led us to formulate our research questions and problem statements and serve as an important part of our methods in a guiding role. Our literature review allowed us to formulate the following methodology and gives us a basis for its success.

4.2.2 Interviews

Our team primarily used one-on-one interviews as a method of data collection, allowing us to directly interact and receive information from the backpackers we met. According to Berg and Lune, interviews are particularly useful "when investigators are interested in understanding the perceptions of participants or learning how participants come to attach certain meanings to

phenomena or events" (Berg & Lune, 2017). This approach was well-suited to address our research question as purpose is a concept that is inherently abstract; subsequently, our aim was to gain insight into how individuals come to formulate their own understanding of purpose. Conducting interviews afforded our research team with opportunities to elicit direct responses and obtain in-depth information from backpackers, including inquiries pertaining to causal relationships regarding purpose.

Our team employed a semi-structured interview methodology, which involved a predetermined outline of questions and topics to be discussed. However, we provided ample room for the interviewees to elaborate on their experiences and offer their own perspectives. Around half of the interviews were conducted in Mandarin and half were conducted in English. The in-person interviews took place across Taipei at various restaurants, cafes, and hostels depending on the interviewee's preference. For example, our team met one participant at a poke restaurant in Taipei and ran the interview over lunch. In addition, we conducted numerous virtual interviews with participants who either responded to our surveys or were unavailable to meet in person. The Lonely Planet Taiwan guidebook served as a great resource for locating these hot spots. The members of our team that are fluent in the language acted as the interviewers and translators during and after the interview. For all interviews, we recorded, translated, and transcribed them for analysis.

However, interviews are not perfect, and according to Lune and Berg, bias can occur because "[m]emories fade, or change, so you can't be sure about what they reported having done in the past. Intention is not the same as action" (Berg & Lune, 2017). We combated this issue by

interviewing a large number of participants as diversely as possible within the Taiwanese backpacking population.

Additionally, our team identified common lodging locations for backpackers throughout the city through connections provided by Sunny, our contact for The City Wanderer Association. We conducted an initial phase of interviews with the first participants to refine our questions and seek guidance on locating backpackers in the city. Following our preliminary phase, our team compiled a list of locations, which included hostels and common backpacking locations and landmarks. Furthermore, we also identified various means of contact, such as backpacking organizations, Facebook groups, Meetup.com groups, Instagram pages, and Reddit forums, and posted our survey at these locations, either virtually or with a poster containing a QR Code. Participants were given the option to provide their contact information, which we used to arrange interviews. In addition to survey responses, our team also connected with backpackers around Taipei, who then referred us to their friends. We also received contacts from our sponsor, which we used to snowball our sample. We consistently employed snowball sampling to increase our sample size, attempting to interview those who we saw fit our study's target demographic.

In our interviews with backpackers, we explored their experience within the education system, including their feelings towards the system, whether they took any gap years, and how the experiences influenced their attitudes towards life. Furthermore, we inquired about their backpacking experiences and took a comprehensive history of their trips. Our team was particularly interested in the types of experiences they engaged in and the motivation behind each trip. As we gained a better understanding of each interviewee's background in education and backpacking, we gradually introduced the topic of purpose into the conversation. This was

often a challenging subject to broach due to its abstract nature. However, our team slowly transitioned to the discussion of purpose by building upon the prior two subjects and following any leads from the interviewee. Most interviews lasted approximately one hour, and participants were receptive to discussing difficult questions about their experiences.

To uphold the principles of ethical conduct throughout our interview process, our team took careful consideration to addressing informed consent, confidentiality, and sensitivity for some questions. In advance of conducting any interviews, we obtained informed consent from all participants through written or verbal means, and participants were fully informed of the study's objective as well as any potential risks or benefits associated with participation. To maintain confidentiality, all recordings and data were securely stored in a password-protected folder, and all personal information was promptly deleted once the study had concluded. We also approached sensitive topics, such as experiences with the education system or purpose, with a deep regard for the interviewee's perspective and emotions.

4.2.3 Surveys

To provide a broader perspective and increase the sample size for our study, our team utilized surveys as a quantitative data collection method in addition to our qualitative interviews with backpackers in Taipei. Surveys allowed us to reach a wider group of participants beyond those who were able to participate in face-to-face interviews. This method proved useful for capturing data from those who had time constraints that made it difficult for them to participate in an interview. In addition, the use of surveys enabled us to identify differences within the population of Taiwanese backpackers, and to observe larger trends related to the development of purpose and other topics. Importantly, surveys also facilitated the identification of potential new

interviewees, as participants could leave their email addresses to express interest in a follow-up interview.

We utilized the online survey tool Qualtrics to build, distribute, and analyze survey responses. The surveys encompassed many of the questions that were asked during the interview, in addition to scale-based questions, such as Likert scales and numerical ratings. The diverse nature of the questions in our survey resulted in a range of response types. For the multiple-choice questions, we utilized bar charts to visualize the distribution of responses. The other questions were in the form of open responses, which were viewed in text form.

To collect data from our target individuals, it was first necessary to distribute surveys to potential respondents, who were required to have an internet connection and device to access the survey. To maximize outreach and obtain a large sample size, we provided access to the survey link through various channels, such as email, a scannable QR code, and Facebook Groups. Our team actively sought opportunities to distribute survey links, such as asking interview participants to complete the survey and distributing posters to hostels located in downtown Taipei, such as the Meander Hostel, Dongmen 3 Hostel, Owlstay Flip Flop Hostel, and Star Hostel Taipei Main Station. Our team also took advantage of ethnographic outings to distribute survey links to backpackers. By employing these strategies, we aimed to obtain a substantial amount of data from a diverse group of participants.

To analyze and interpret the data collected, we entered the text from the field collection forms into Voyant Tools. For the other qualitative and open-ended data, we used the tool's automatic coding feature to generate interpretations and analyses, including word clouds and text classification. After we interpreted the data, we organized and visualized them into charts and

graphs based on our needs. For quantitative data, bar charts were very useful in analyzing the most frequent responses for ratings and multiple-choice questions. This visualization technique allowed us to see where the population surveyed lies in terms of opinions, bias, and any extremities. Word clouds covered the open-response data, which presented the most frequently occurring words in our set of responses. These visualizations allowed us to explore the connections between different themes, topics, and trends that we observed from the responses.

We also considered the ethical considerations when conducting our surveys, namely addressing informed consent and confidentiality. We obtained informed consent by placing a preliminary question at the start of the survey. Participants who did not consent were directed to exit the survey. We also made sure to inform participants of the study's objective as well as any potential risks or benefits associated with participation. To maintain confidentiality, all responses were stored in a password-protected folder.

4.2.4 Ethnographies

Our team also conducted an ethnographic study to gain a deeper understanding of Taiwanese backpacking culture. Our goal was to explore aspects of backpacking in Taiwan that may not have been readily apparent through our other methods. Naturally, this purpose led us to attempt backpacking from a firsthand perspective, such that each member could learn the trials and tribulations that we previously heard of during our interviews. These ethnographic methodologies provided unique insights into the backpackers' mindset and contributed to a better understanding of the practice. Berg and Lune corroborate this way of thinking with examples from their work that "demonstrated the power of ethnographic fieldwork to reveal hidden elements of otherwise poorly understood subcultures within our own societies" (Berg & Lune,

2017). Backpacking is a niche area and not well understood beyond the initial definition articulated from our archival research, or "traveling with just a backpack." Our motivation with conducting ethnographies was to uncover potentially hidden details or significant aspects of backpacking that may have been overlooked while we conducted our other methodologies.

Our team devised plans to traverse the northeast and east coast of Taiwan via bicycles, commencing in Songshan Station in Taipei and culminating at Hualien Station in Hualien. This ethnography was executed over three days of biking and one day of travel to return to Taipei. We planned all aspects of the trip to simulate the backpacking experience, including planning aspects including renting bicycles, booking hostels and lodging, and packing food and supplies. Each team member was responsible for their own itinerary and departed from the group for a significant portion of the day. During this phase of our study, one team member, Alex, endeavored to cycle most of the route, while Randy and Abby heavily relied on trains to facilitate the journey. Consequently, Alex faced a more physically challenging journey, whereas Randy and Abby had more opportunities to engage with local culture and interact with the community.

To facilitate our trip, we utilized the services of Mathew Bike in Taipei city for our bike rentals and booked hostels at each stop of the trip. The itinerary included stops at Fulong Village, Luodong Township, Hualien Township, and Xincheng Station, resulting in very long and arduous biking sessions of approximately six hours a day for the initial two days. The subsequent two days consisted of relatively less biking due to fatigue and injury, affording our team more opportunities to interact with locals. The goal of the trip was to adopt a simple yet efficient mode of transportation and simultaneously avoid rushing through the journey, as well as engaging with

the local culture and community. With a part of the day dedicated to biking, our team had ample time to explore the beautiful nature of Taiwan and interact with locals along the way and at every stop. We concluded the ethnography by boarding a train back to Taipei.

We documented our journey through journal entries before, during, and after the trip. We coupled our records with photos and videos of memorable moments throughout the trip. The journal entries not only documented the individual challenges faced by each member but also provided space for introspection. Each member had their own identity or confidence struggles that were confronted through this experience. The goal of designing this ethnography was to emulate the backpacking experience through independent and minimalistic travel. This experience necessitated tackling and resolving challenges that one may encounter along the way and assuming self-responsibility. We dealt with similar dilemmas that backpackers encounter daily, and through this experience, our team grew and developed, akin to backpackers, deriving significant growth from the trip.

Upon gathering the data from our ethnographies, we comparatively analyzed the journal entries with the results of the interviews and surveys to comprehend the possible disparities and the underlying reasons. The data was presented in a narrative form, where the outcomes of the survey and interviews were reinforced by individual findings from each member through evidence documented in their journal entries.

Although ethnographic research entails fewer ethical concerns than our other methodology, we still must consider them. The primary ethical concern involves the preconceptions that our team may have held while conducting the ethnography. Our expectations

and awareness of researchers posing as backpackers may have affected our immersive experience and potentially skewed our findings.

4.3 Limitations

4.3.1 Limitations of Interviews

In this section of our study, we encountered several limitations, the most significant of which was the geographical constraint that confined our sample to Taipei. This constraint posed a challenge as it rendered the sample of backpackers that we interviewed unrepresentative of the broader Taiwanese backpacking population, preventing any generalization of our findings. Additionally, arranging interviews with backpackers at hostels was challenging due to their intermittent presence. The language barrier posed another potential issue; even though two members of our team were proficient in Mandarin, their lack of familiarity with the cultural context of Taiwan hindered our ability to fully grasp and communicate important information. To address this problem, we used Google Translate and dictionaries. Nevertheless, it is possible that some information was still overlooked. Furthermore, according to Berg and Lune, interviewees may not always be truthful, and we were wary of this fact, especially surrounding more sensitive topics (Berg & Lune, 2017).

4.3.2 Limitations of Surveys

One of the primary limitations of our survey was its under-representative sample, which resulted from challenges in distribution. Despite our efforts to distribute the survey to various sources, such as select hostels, Facebook groups, and Instagram users, our sample size was still

limited; this may have led to the survey being only partially representative of the entire backpacker population. Moreover, surveys themselves are prone to biases – in our situation, response bias – which can affect the accuracy of the data collected, even with a representative sample size. Thus, while our survey data may offer valuable insights and corroborate findings from our interviews, the results should be interpreted with these limitations in consideration.

4.3.3 Limitations of Ethnographies

The inherent unpredictability of ethnographies is a well-established fact. Due to the dynamic nature of the experience, even small changes in timing or decision-making could have altered the entire course of the study. As Berg and Lune note, uncontrollable factors in the field may pose challenges while conducting the research, including failure to observe desired actions, behaviors, or events due to natural circumstances (Berg & Lune, 2017). Our team also encountered a high degree of variance in each of our experiences, with some reporting less fulfilling experiences, waste of time, and unmet expectations. Furthermore, as researchers conducting the study, our personal goals and expectations may have influenced the way we approached the trip, potentially leading to a loss of authenticity in our experiences. These factors must be considered when interpreting the results of our study.

5.0 Findings

Throughout the course of our study, our team has identified many concepts regarding backpacking, the topic of purpose, and their underlying relationship. These ideas were consistently supported by our interviews, surveys, and ethnography and demonstrate how backpacking can almost always influence purpose in a meaningful way. However, we generally struggled to answer our second objective of relating Taiwanese education to a lack of purpose in a consistent manner, and as such, our findings do not touch on this objective.

We start by presenting the outcomes of our survey on the impact of backpacking on personal growth and purpose development. The survey received twelve responses, with participants varying in levels of backpacking experience and demographic backgrounds. We explore how backpacking affects personal growth and purpose development as well as identify any patterns or commonalities in respondents' experiences. While our small sample size prevented us from performing a comprehensive statistical analysis, the survey outcomes support much of our findings from our interviews, as they offer valuable insights into the positive impact of backpacking on personal growth and purpose development.

We then move onto our first finding, which discusses a characteristic of purpose that deviates from established literature on purpose. Specifically, we discovered that individuals' sense of purpose is often fluid and highly personalized, contrasting with the more single and stable definition of purpose put forth by researchers such as William Damon. We observed that purpose shifts naturally over time, with many of our older participants indicating that they hold multiple purposes concurrently.

Our discussion continues with the topic of backpacking and personal growth, particularly in terms of confidence and self-efficacy. The facet of personal growth is a salient aspect that reinforces backpacking's advantages as a transformative practice. Nearly every participant attested to the positive impact of solo travel on their overall strength and resilience to hardship, notably in planning and navigating unforeseen circumstances. More importantly, this newfound ability carried over into their everyday lives, especially in making decisions regarding their careers and life direction. The results of our interviews, survey, and ethnography strongly corroborate this perspective, further emphasizing the transformative effects that backpacking can have on personal growth.

Our third significant finding addresses the relationship between backpacking and purpose, which we initially believed would have a direct connection. Backpacking proved to be beneficial as it allows individuals the time and space to reflect on their lives and helps them move in the right direction, as well as find solutions to problems. However, our findings revealed that not every interviewee found a clear purpose during their travels. Moreover, a few interviewees have demonstrated that travel and exploring the world has remarkably become one of their most prominent purposes.

Finally, our ethnographic findings shed light on the experiences of backpackers, highlighting the challenges, rewards, and personal growth that accompany solo travel. Our bike trip around Taiwan presented us with a multitude of physical challenges, the need to navigate unfamiliar cultures, and the opportunity for profound introspection. We will delve deeper into our personal experiences, providing an in-depth look into the daily realities of backpacking, revealing how solo travel can truly foster personal development and self-discovery.

5.1 Survey Findings

Our survey received responses from twelve participants, comprising individuals with varying levels of backpacking experience and demographic backgrounds. The age range of the participants was between twenty-three and forty years, with participants hailing from Taiwan and other countries. It was observed that many participants had intermediate and experienced – as opposed to beginner – levels of backpacking experience, and some had solo travel experience as well. Additionally, most participants who currently reside in Taiwan were educated in Taiwan. Due to the small sample size of only twelve participants, we were unable to perform a comprehensive statistical analysis as we previously planned.

Overall, the survey findings indicated that backpacking has a positive impact on personal growth and purpose development. Specifically, regarding the impact of backpacking on purpose and personal growth, most respondents reported positive or very positive impacts, with only a small minority reporting neutral or negative impacts, as seen in Figure 2 and Figure 3 below. Furthermore, aside from the topic of backpacking, most respondents who took a gap year reported a very positive impact on their purpose development. Additionally, most respondents reported positive or very positive impacts from education on purpose development.
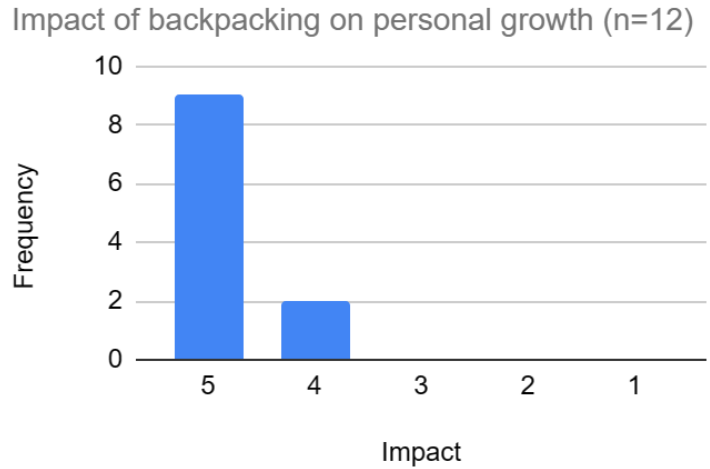
Figure 2: Survey responses on respondents' impact of backpacking on personal growth
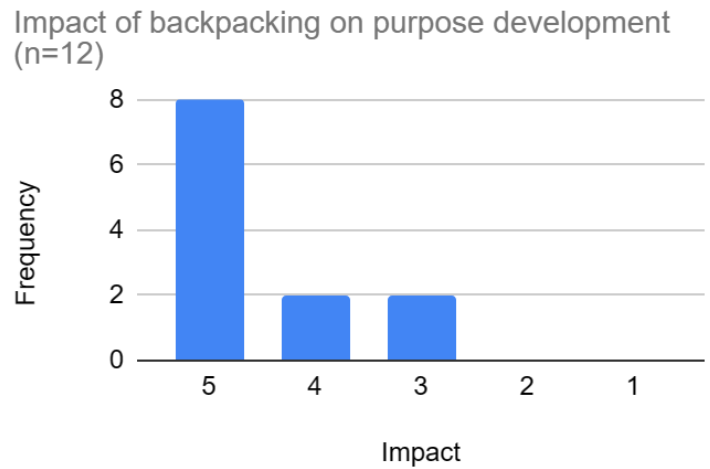
Figure 3: Survey responses on respondents' impact of backpacking on purpose development

The open-response questions revealed that most backpackers who traveled solo reported a positive impact on finding their purpose. The respondents who reported a positive impact on purpose development mentioned that meeting new people, interpersonal communication, and

experiencing different cultures opened up new perspectives, while others mentioned learning from hardships and accidents. All respondents who experienced transformative experiences during their backpacking trips mentioned meeting other people, seeing new perspectives, and becoming open-minded as key factors in changing their viewpoints or purpose in life. Additionally, all respondents reported positive impacts on personal growth, becoming more courageous, confident, or free. We also generated a word cloud from our question asking respondents to describe backpacking in five words, as seen below in Figure 4. The most frequently used words to describe backpacking were experience, love, and joy, indicating that backpacking can foster self-discovery and personal growth.

Figure 4: Word cloud of survey responses on respondents' five words to describe backpacking

5.2 Purpose is Fluid

Damon and other researchers in our literature tend to argue that purpose is a singular and central stable component of someone's life. However, our study revealed that this concept is not applicable to most of our interviewees. We found that Damon and other researchers in our literature tend to argue that purpose is a singular and central stable component of someone's life. However, our study revealed that this concept is not applicable to most of our interviewees. Several variables, including personal development, shifting circumstances, and changing priorities, can affect one's pursuit of purpose. Furthermore, our group met many passionate people who could be described as having multiple purposes simultaneously, making purpose a much more fluid phenomenon than we had initially thought.

5.2.1 Purpose Changes

Having to start over from scratch is something most people dread, but some individuals are brave enough to realize that their current life situation or purpose does not align with their desires. In such a situation, they need to have the confidence to upend their life and start anew. Purpose is subject to alteration often due to unfulfillment or a large wakeup call that prompts one to undertake a comprehensive re-evaluation of their life. Their situation might have been stable at one point, but nonetheless, purpose changes.

Our first encounter with this idea was from our interview with Perry, who was once a hardworking and high-achieving student but felt lost and unfulfilled throughout college. Perry felt trapped by the circumstance and scared to start over:

"Like me personally, I'm also a top student at school. I feel a lot of pressure. I feel like

they can't deviate from what I'm doing right now. Like I can't change so it's like I've done

this thing is locked in two or three years and I feel like I also can't really escape and

change nowadays. It's like to wait or my parents were to be happy or yeah, I have to

restart all over from scratch" (Perry, personal interview, 28 March 2023).

In this quote, Perry expresses the pressure she felt to conform to her current path, despite

realizing her purpose had shifted. She describes feeling trapped and powerless, as though her life

was on a predetermined trajectory, and the only way to escape was to start over completely.

We met and interviewed Gerald who shared a similar experience about his changing

purpose. Having resided in Taiwan for seven years, he elaborated on the underlying reasons for

his initial relocation to the country:

"And then, yeah, I went to school for that [and] took out a lot of loans. I worked really,

really hard. And the career just didn't work out for me. So when the opportunity came up

to leave this place and go to Taiwan, I just thought, hell yeah, I got nothing here. There's

no reason to stick around and keep trying to do this" (Gerald, virtual interview, 10 April,

2023).

Gerald displayed multiple large changes in purpose during his life, this example being one of the

first. He continued to change and search for the right purpose because even when he arrived in

Taiwan with a new job, he quit soon after: "I worked in research there for a bit and the team was

fairly successful. We published four research articles. It was going along but then I realized this

is not the purpose that I want" (Gerald, virtual interview, 10 April, 2023). Gerald's purpose

changed frequently, and he has worked on many different career paths to try to satisfy his ever-changing desire.

Recently, Gerald decided to return to the United States after reevaluating his purpose, with life the primary driving force behind his decision being the pursuit of a more fulfilling life: "Am I gonna go for 30 more years in Taiwan like this? I don't think I'd have a great purpose if I did that. I've accomplished what I wanted. That's why I'm back in the states" (Gerald, virtual interview, 10 April, 2023). He has accomplished his purpose in Taiwan and headed back to the US to start from scratch with a new purpose.

Gerald's story serves as a compelling example of how purpose can frequently change, and it can be difficult to find the right path that aligns with one's values and goals. However, by taking the courage to start over and pursue a new purpose, one may find more happiness and fulfillment in life. His story highlights the importance of self-reflection and adaptation in finding one's purpose, which is a significant aspect of personal growth and development.

5.2.2 Multiple Purposes Throughout Life

One aspect of purpose that is absent in academic literature pertains to how purpose naturally changes as individuals grow older and their responsibilities to society and the people around them undergo a shift. Our team initially encountered this concept during our interview with Kerry, an older woman whom we met at the Backpackers Hostel in Taipei. As a backpacker during her youth, a teacher for a significant portion of her life and now a traveling musician, she experienced many different purposes throughout her time. When asked about her purpose, she told us of her current purpose which was to bring joy through her accordion. Coincidentally, we

stumbled upon her playing the accordion on the streets as we strolled together to the MRT, Taiwan's subway system, which was an amazing sight to behold. However, she stated that although this purpose was an essential part of her life, her primary purpose in Taiwan was to be near both her sons. She asserted that accompanying and spending time with them brought her immense joy, and in Taipei, she could fulfill both her purposes.

We begin to understand that individuals can have many purposes that bring them fulfillment and satisfaction, and these purposes can also be influenced by the roles they hold. Kerry shared her experience as a teacher and how guiding her students to improve not only academically but also in their lives was a passion and purpose for her. At the same time, she also held the purpose of being a mother, wife, and daughter. Kerry was not tied to a single purpose, as she fulfilled all these roles concurrently. Additionally, these purposes were fluid and evolved as she encountered life events such as divorce or the passing of her mother, prompting her to reassess her purposes and responsibilities. While Kerry was our first interviewee, she was also the oldest, providing valuable insights into the nature of purpose over a longer period (Kerry, personal interview, March 16, 2023).

Furthermore, our understanding of the changes in purpose over time deepened with our encounter with Skye, a 28-year-old English teacher in Taipei who had spent several years teaching and was about to complete his bachelor's degree. He shared his experiences about his many backpacking excursions along the Appalachian Trail in the US, New Zealand, and Taiwan and offered some insight that "when I was young, I just wanted to travel more. And then I always have gotten older, it's like, maybe I want more, I can kind of appreciate how education, a better job is more important than like, when you're younger" (Skye, personal interview, March 30,

2023). We also interviewed Ned, an English teacher from another country in Taiwan, who had a similar sentiment to Skye: "As I start to get older I appreciate more having a family close by and starting my own" (Ned, personal interview, April 12, 2023). Ned shared with us that he recently began to feel this way and was considering moving back to the States in pursuit of this potential newfound purpose.

From these interviews, our team discovered that time can have a significant effect on purpose and that an individual's life may be characterized by multiple purposes that change over time in response to changing circumstances. Our interviews suggest that the role of purpose and meaning in life is unique and dynamic for each person. This challenges the notion that purpose is a fixed and singular goal that one relentlessly pursues.

As time and circumstances change, so do our purpose and ideals. Through different experiences, encounters with others, and challenges we face, our perspectives can shift, resulting in a change in our priorities and beliefs. It is important to understand that purpose is not a singular, fixed concept, but rather a multifaceted aspect of our lives that naturally aligns with our current situation and desired objectives. By embracing the natural changes in our purpose and values, we can better align them with our lives, resulting in a more fulfilling existence.

5.3 Backpacking for Personal Growth

5.3.1 Backpacking as Form of Challenge

Backpacking forces you out of your comfort zone and offers a variety of possible experiences, requiring you to leave your current situation physically and geographically. This

experience already offers an element of challenge that daily normal life fails to provide. Furthermore, backpacking in any form creates challenges that need to be conquered to have a successful travel. Planning is the most basic challenge every backpacker faces. While backpacking, there are many factors that one needs to keep track of to successfully navigate one's journey and stick to their plan.

The form of travel heavily affects the experience. Utilizing a motorcycle or car offers more freedom and less rigid plans, while trains and public transport have set schedules, meaning backpackers may have to follow a strict plan to arrive on time. Already, the traveler is faced with many logistical decisions that they must deal with to ensure that they can make it to their destinations and accomplish their plans smoothly.

Furthermore, physically intensive forms of travel such as hiking, cycling, and walking require self-awareness and anticipation to make plans happen. One must be aware of their own physical condition so that they can properly know when a plan must be aborted or changed. Additionally, backpackers must be aware of their physical condition and anticipate the challenge ahead. The physical exertion experienced when backpacking compels individuals to engage in proactive decision-making and consequently develops a heightened sense of situational awareness. However, the prospect of encountering physically demanding tasks that may exceed an individual's capabilities poses a significant risk, further compounding the importance of meticulous planning and preparation.

Adapting to new situations is often challenging as backpacking trips rarely go completely as planned. Dealing with unexpected situations requires finding solutions to problems that arise. Skye, during his hike around Taiwan, faced this problem in spades:

"[While] I was hiking, I came to a massive landslide. And I was like, probably half a kilometer long. There's a huge landslide. And I was like, two days in. I didn't have that much food. And I was like, Well, what do I do? The map just showed me to go through it. So then I had to, like, there was a lady who had a house there. So I had to ask her, but I had to ask her through like a friend to call because we didn't have [a] mutual language. And then she said, Okay, later, we'll have these like these two older people, like showed me the route that we had to get around, to hang around there for a day until these two older people came around, and they didn't speak any English is two older farmers, and I speak any Chinese and then they ultimately they showed me around. So that was really wow. It was a good experience" (Skye, personal interview, March 30, 2023).

Skye serves as a testament to the difficulty and unpredictable nature of backpacking, having to fight with all available resources to overcome the challenge. Skye encountered a problem that may have discouraged many other backpackers, yet he persevered and overcame the challenge, allowing him to continue his original plan despite a completely unexpected disaster. Backpackers must anticipate and prepare for the possibility of unforeseen setbacks and believe in themselves to overcome these obstacles.

5.3.2 Building Strength and Confidence

Backpacking can present a variety of challenges and unforeseen circumstances, but successfully overcoming these hurdles can ultimately enhance one's confidence, especially in the scope of managing the unknown. The ability to navigate through logistical nightmares, physical obstacles, and personal fears can significantly impact an individual's self-efficacy, leading

backpackers to take on even greater challenges with a newfound sense of determination and resilience.

Skye initially only had the courage to take on the Appalachian Trail because his brother joined him, however they soon realized that they had different goals from hiking the trail and had to move at their own pace, effectively making his journey a solo trip. Skye spoke about what he gained from the trip as "before I left, I would have had to leave with somebody to help me" (Skye, personal interview, March 30, 2023). He states that one of his biggest improvements is "just being able to manage the world by myself" (Skye, personal interview, March 30, 2023), which has led to increased self-confidence in taking more grandiose and thus challenging tasks.

Similarly, Mo, a more introverted and shyer traveler, has begun to overcome his fears through backpacking. He spoke about being able to engage with strangers more proactively after embarking on his backpacking adventures. "That's definitely getting easier with traveling and meeting more people and doing things you've never done before... I think that just makes you more... So that's definitely something for me, which shows that I'm growing and my confidence" (Mo, personal interview, April 12, 2023). The trait of becoming more conversational with strangers is also a common form of gaining confidence from our interviewees, as another interviewer, Junyuan, expressed the sentiment that "[she has] become a bit more comfortable interacting with different people. Like I feel more confident in initiated conversations. And that's, that's kind of like a bit of like, development, like a soft button" (Junyuan, virtual interview, April 20, 2023). She highlights the fact that the act of engaging with individuals from diverse backgrounds can enable one to cultivate a greater sense of ease and self-assurance when interacting with others, thereby facilitating personal growth and development.

However, the growth and progress of these traits may not always be immediately apparent following one's expedition. Interviewees commonly recounted tales of starting with smaller journeys as a precursor to attempting more ambitious trips. Backpackers typically begin with baby steps outside their comfort zone before they can plan riskier and less certain trips, thus highlighting the incremental nature of developing confidence. Perry's journey is a prime example of this gradual progression, as she started with small expeditions around Taiwan and incrementally worked her way up to larger and more challenging trips. Her first trip to Hualien might have only involved purchasing a train ticket and booking a hotel, but the act itself was still a significant accomplishment to manage all these tasks alone. Subsequently, she ventured beyond her homeland by joining a group headed for Vietnam, where she produced a documentary film. Afterwards, she had the courage to hitchhike alone around multiple European countries. She recounted to us the progression of her confidence after each trip, transforming from a shy and introverted girl to a self-assured woman possessing a strong sense of identity.

Julia followed a similar process, taking small steps for pushing herself out of her comfort zone and "building [her] confidence little by little", eventually traveling to Seychelles, Dubai, and Maldives (Julia, personal interview, April 12, 2023). The gradual progression of building long-lasting and true confidence comes from time and pushing oneself to new heights each time, which can be addicting and lead to falling in love with self-development through travel. Backpacking engenders personal fortitude, even if it requires multiple expeditions to discern a significant difference.

5.3.3 Confidence Outside of Backpacking

The enhanced self-confidence and strength acquired through backpacking may manifest themselves in a variety of other contexts beyond the immediate travel experience, thereby creating a ripple effect of positive impact. Our team observed this in terms of individuals being able to authentically express themselves and feeling at ease in risky or unfamiliar situations. This strength often translates into the ability to start over and pursue more fulfilling career paths, even when met with criticism from family and friends.

As an example, Skye struggled in school and never believed he could succeed in a classroom setting, stating, "I was the type of kid whose favorite class was gym" (Skye, personal interview, March 30, 2023). However, after completing the Appalachian Trail, Skye felt empowered, stating "of course, I could have done anything by myself" (Skye, personal interview, March 30, 2023). This newfound confidence allowed him to pursue goals he never would have thought of achieving in the past and ultimately become an English teacher in Taiwan while pursuing a four-year online bachelor's degree to further his career ambitions. Skye's backpacking experiences taught him that he could overcome challenges and succeed in areas he had previously struggled in. The hardships and obstacles he faced while hiking instilled a sense of resilience and determination in him, bringing out new confidence to pursue future ventures.

For Perry, she felt immense pressure that she had to overcome: "I'm also a top student at school. I feel a lot of pressure, I feel like I can't deviate from what I'm doing right now. Like I can't change so it's like I've done this thing is locked in two or three years, and I feel like I also can't really escape and change nowadays it's like to wait or my parents were to be happy or yeah, I have to restart all over from scratch" (Perry, personal interview, 28 March, 2023). However,

this feeling of entrapment began to fade and become less condemning after her travels and she felt confident enough to make her own choices: "I'm brave enough to choose a different way because when I was traveling, I also always do solo traveling so no other people can bother my decisions. I can choose the real stuff I really want to see" (Perry, personal interview, 28 March, 2023). She describes it as a direct effect of her travels and how freedom of choice during backpacking is something that she wanted and is now confident enough to want in her life. Her experiences gave her the power to escape her parents' expectations. Perry says it best with one of the most powerful quotes of the study coming from this interview. She says, "I want to be me. Because now I want to be 'character A', but later, maybe five years later, I want to be 'character B'. So the issue is that, am I brave enough to be '[character] A' when I want to be? Maybe society or my friends [and] family will be pissed off by my choice? But do I care about them? Or I will choose my own option?" (Perry, personal interview, 28 March, 2023).

Perry quit the career path that her parents wanted for her after working as a product manager for a large software company. She had the courage to quit a stable and high-paying career to dive into the unknown and try new career paths. When asked if backpacking had any effect on starting over, she answered with, "Yeah, I think [it] gives me confidence to go into something unknown" (Perry, personal interview, 28 March, 2023). The effect of backpacking on Perry has been unbelievable in terms of making her choose a more conscious and self-fulfilling life path free of external expectations, despite heavy judgment.

The way backpacking instills confidence and transforms into life-changing decisions for so many backpackers underscore the potency of solo-travel as a form of personal growth. The unexpected situations, stress, and risk involved in backpacking come together to create a sense of

achievement and pride upon conquering them. As a result, backpackers become stronger, more self-aware, and more confident individuals who can handle any problems that arise in their lives.

5.4 Backpacking for Purpose Development

5.4.1 Backpacking for Reflection

As previously stated, backpacking allows individuals to leave their daily lives behind and immerse themselves in new surroundings. By gaining a fresh perspective on their lives and physically experiencing new locations, people are often able to find solutions that they previously thought were insurmountable. This self-reflection can lead to personal growth and a deeper understanding of one's place in the world. In addition, stepping out of your comfort zone and navigating the challenges of living in a new place can act as a catalyst for personal growth. It requires adaptability, resiliency, and problem-solving skills, which enhance confidence and self-reliance.

Mo, reflecting on his own experiences, shared how a gap year likely would have been beneficial towards his life direction when he was in school, as he felt the path he followed was fruitless. He expresses his regret years later that he did not take the opportunity to do so:

> "But I still, I would say, I regret not going abroad or doing a gap year or an exchange or whatever. Because that might have like, given me some new ideas, because I was just there at the end of school with no idea" (Mo, personal interview, 12 April, 2023).

Having traveled extensively, Mo has come to realize the value of backpacking in clearing the mind and opening oneself up to new possibilities.

Similarly, Skye embarked on his backpacking adventure along the Appalachian Trail in search of purpose and self-reflection. During his time on the trail, he made significant realizations and began to see his life begin to move in a positive direction:

> "Like, I kind of felt like, somewhat lost in those three years between high school and that, and then after that, it kind of everything felt a bit more productive. And like, I was kind of aiming towards things or doing things that were more interesting than just working at a factory" (Skye, personal interview, 30 March, 2023).

Following his first backpacking experience, Skye became more confident in his goals, which at the time was to travel more. Solo backpacking offers ample time for self-reflection and introspection. Being alone in a new place away from distractions allows one to gain insight into themselves as well as their long-term goals. The simple act of walking, biking, or waiting on a train plays as a framework for introspection, fostering productive self-talk and relaxation.

Nancy's desire to travel was driven by a similar desire for self-reflection: "So I will assume the purpose for travel is the most important things for me is I want to do the self realization" (Nancy, personal interview, 6 April, 2023). She found a purpose in meeting new people and experiencing new culture as a means of fueling her current goals of traveling more and listening to the stories of exciting people.

Furthermore, exploring new places, encountering new people and cultures can broaden one's perspective and reveal new opportunities to pursue. Connecting with others from other backgrounds can provide unique insight and guidance that would otherwise be unavailable. Julia describes how her travels have ignited a passion for various countries, cultures, and ways of life.

Her experiences have left her enamored with each place she visits, and she speaks with great

excitement about the different possibilities for living in these diverse locations, whether it is

admiring the vast landscapes of Sweden or taking cheap flights to Australia. She shares, "The

world is literally at your fingertips. With each step forward, two more doors open in front of you.

It's up to you to take that leap of faith" (Julia, personal interview, 12 April, 2023). Julia's story

highlights the transformative power of travel, demonstrating how exposure to new places,

people, and cultures can broaden one's horizons and offer a newfound sense of purpose and

direction.

5.4.2 Backpacking & Travel as a Purpose

Backpacking can provide many tools for pursuing and developing purpose, but for many,

it fails to directly lead them to finding their purpose. However, there is a case where backpacking

directly influences purpose - when travel becomes a purpose and passion. Falling in love with

new places, experiences, people, and cultures can lead to a lifelong passion for travel.

Julia, a very experienced traveler who has explored Europe and South-east Asia by

herself, has made travel a central part of her life. She "owe[s] everything to traveling... I've never

been happier. I've never been more confident" (Julia, personal interview, 12 April 2023). For

Julia, travel is a passion that will exist alongside her career; she plans to continue taking short

trips on her off days, taking the cheapest flights, and maximizing her time towards travel and

encountering new experiences.

Other interviewees have shown similar passions for travel. Perry describes how "makes

[her] feel alive", while Nancy, who has backpacked throughout all of Europe, sees meeting new

people and experiencing culture and history through travel as a lifelong purpose (Perry, personal interview, 28 March 2023). For Nancy, even meeting our team fulfilled part of her purpose as she enjoyed interacting with foreigners who were not from Taiwan and learning about them.

Throughout our study, we have met numerous travel enthusiasts who view backpacking as more than just a hobby. For them, backpacking is a genuine love and lifelong passion to dive into the unknown and walk away with unforgettable experiences.

5.5 Ethnography Findings

Our bike trip around Taiwan led each of our team members in different directions. During our travels we faced physical hardship, conquered many of our fears, met new people, experienced Taiwanese culture in a new way, and reflected on our own lives. We had an all-encompassing experience that really hit on many aspects of the backpacker condition that we had hoped to. See Appendix I and Appendix J for a full log of reflections.

In our team's travels, the most salient memories came from times of high difficulty and potential risk or from interactions with people and local cultures. One of the most difficult and frightening moments of the trip involved Alex solo-biking the last 20km from Taipei to Fulong Station on the first day. There were what could be described as extreme hills on very narrow roads that were often occupied by large freight trucks. At certain points Alex felt like his legs had become mush and could not handle the mountainous terrain or even biking on a relatively flat surface anymore. Getting off the bike would mean cramping up and an inability to properly stand. At some point on the large forty-five-degree incline, he had to give it up and just walk the bike up the roads and bridges with tiny shoulders while cars and motorcycles flew past. There

was no reasonable return path at this point, no real way to call for help, and he had to just trust in himself and carry on. It was terrifying. To make matters worse he arrived at a three-kilometer tunnel, and it just felt like a bad idea to keep walking due to poor visibility. He concluded that he had to bike it and after completing twenty-five percent of the way, his legs could not keep going and he had to sit down on the side of the road with his bike as cars and motorcycles flew past.

"That was maybe some of the scariest moments in my life in that tunnel. I was mentally defeated and felt like there was no way that I made it through that tunnel."


Figure 5: Image of the tunnel that Alex had to bike through near Keelung City

Eventually, he overcame those thoughts, got up, and rode through the rest of the tunnel. The feeling of joy when he finished was spectacular. There was one very tall overpass near the end that went downhill, and underneath was an entire town.

"It was gorgeous, and going down the hill felt like I had earned every moment of it. I must have been flying at 40km just bombing this hill, feeling the air fly past. I felt free and strong like I had just conquered my limit of what I could do."

Furthermore, ending the day by checking into the hostel felt much more rewarding than a normal travel day.

"I remember finally arriving at the hostel. It was dark outside, and I had barely finished biking with any visible light left. I was relieved. I was caked in dirt and had biked for 8 hours that day, and all I wanted was a nice shower and to put on some new clothes. I didn't have the time nor effort to even go see the beach like I planned. It sucked, but I felt really good afterward."

The ethnography had a profound effect on each team member and strongly confirmed many of the findings presented previously. Specifically, due to how the team spent portions of the day together, we highly recommend solo traveling as the best form of backpacking for personal development and reflection. Time spent together often made the group more reclusive from interaction with strangers and allowed for less time to be spent on self-realization. Furthermore, due to the difficulty of the physical portion, we discovered firsthand the correlation between conquering a very difficult task during backpacking and growing confidence and strength to be alone and solve problems.

6.0 Recommendations, Future Works, and Conclusion

Throughout the course of our project, our team had the privilege of engaging with a diverse range of individuals during our time in Taiwan. Our project provided an opportunity to deepen our understanding not only of backpacking but also of the human experience. We gained insights from both Taiwanese and foreign residents regarding their personal journeys and quests for self-discovery. While the Taiwanese interviewees shared their experiences exploring the island and venturing abroad, foreign residents elaborated on the reasons behind their extended stay in Taiwan and the country's allure to them. During our study, we had the pleasure of not only exploring backpacking and purpose, but also enjoying the culture, people, and experiences that Taiwan has to offer.

Through our interviews, we gained novel insights and unique perspectives on the nature of purpose, meaning, and personal growth. Our initial interview served as a catalyst for discovering new concepts that may not have been previously documented in scholarly research. We learned that every individual has a very different relationship with purpose, meaning, and growth. While we discussed many overarching patterns, we acknowledged the diversity of experiences and stories among backpackers and individuals searching for their next life step. Our surveys reflected this as many questions resonated with different people. Our research also illuminated the transformative effects of backpacking on personal development, including increased self-confidence, self-efficacy, and enhanced interpersonal skills through exposure to novel and challenging situations.

Overall, our study provides insights and knowledge that can help Taiwanese youth break free from the predetermined path and live fulfilling lives by discovering their purpose and identity. By shedding light on the benefits of backpacking for personal growth and development, we hope to inspire others to explore the world and themselves through independent travel.

6.1 Recommendations

With these ideas in mind, the patterns and overarching ideas present themselves in such a way that they can help as wide a range of people as possible. Based on our findings, our study has several implications for The City Wanderer Association. We have four recommendations on how the organization can incorporate backpacking into their programs as a means of promoting purpose and personal development among Taiwanese youth. We suggest that City Wanderer proceed with these recommendations in mind to reach the most people and maximize the experience that they can provide for their program.

Recommendation 1: Design a New Program Centered Around Physical Challenge or Social and Culture Immersion

Our first recommendation is to develop a new program that considers the two primary backpacker archetypes uncovered in our study: those who seek out physical challenges and those who prioritize social and cultural immersion. By creating programs that cater to both these groups, City Wanderer can attract a more diverse range of participants and enhance their overall experience. Engaging in physical challenges can rapidly instill confidence and self-efficacy, while cultural immersion can broaden worldviews and cultivate a passion for travel and meeting

new people. Furthermore, being in a country where the primary language differs can significantly impact personal growth and the ability to connect with strangers.

Recommendation 2: Incorporate Risk and Difficulty in the Journey

Our second recommendation is to integrate risk and difficulty into their program. Our study indicated that the degree of risk and difficulty experienced during backpacking trips often had a significant impact on the amount of personal growth participants achieved. These challenges can foster resilience, problem-solving abilities, and an aptitude for adapting to unexpected situations. Furthermore, including these challenges into the journey can create a more meaningful and unforgettable experience for participants.

Recommendation 3: Solo Backpacking Over Group Backpacking

Our third recommendation for City Wanderer is to prioritize solo backpacking over group backpacking. As highlighted by many of our survey respondents, solo experiences such as interacting with locals, hitchhiking, and facing challenges alone can yield the greatest benefits. Traveling solo can intensify all facets of backpacking, and participants may encounter more opportunities to push themselves and achieve personal growth. By promoting solo backpacking, participants can have an exceptional and meaningful experience, especially compared to that of group backpacking.

Recommendation 4: Use Backpacking as a Tool for Personal and Purpose Development

Our last recommendation is to leverage backpacking as a tool for personal and purpose development. While backpacking may not provide an immediate sense of purpose, it can offer participants dedicated time to contemplate their life and aspirations. Moreover, the impact of backpacking on purpose may be more substantial in the long haul, as participants apply their experiences to shape their future direction. By advocating backpacking as a channel for personal and purpose development, it can support participants in uncovering their passions and forging a more substantive sense of self.

6.2 Future Work

Our suggestions for future work primarily involve strengthening the concepts that our team has uncovered during this study. This could be achieved by increasing the sample size of both the survey and the interviews in Taiwan to confirm and provide further evidence for the validity of the findings presented here. Additionally, gathering data from a larger number of Taiwanese backpackers could potentially alter or affect the findings, as our sample tended to split about fifty-fifty between foreigners. This limitation should be further investigated. Furthermore, conducting an ethnography over a longer period would provide a more authentic first-hand perspective of backpacking and serve as further confirmation of the larger findings from the ethnography.

From the beginning of our project, we were interested in comparing backpacking in the Western world versus the Eastern world. It would be fascinating to conduct a similar study in a

Western region of the world and if the findings match up or if there are differences that align more with our archival research.

Lastly, while our study did uncover the various ways in which backpacking can influence purpose, we did not delve into whether having a sense of purpose leads to greater happiness or fulfillment in life. This could be examined through surveys or interviews that specifically ask about individuals' subjective well-being and whether they feel that their sense of purpose contributes to their overall happiness or fulfillment. Additionally, longitudinal studies could track individuals' sense of purpose and subjective well-being over time to see if there is a correlation between the two. These types of studies could provide valuable insights into the relationship between purpose and happiness and potentially inform interventions aimed at increasing individuals' overall well-being.

6.3 Conclusion

Our study aimed to understand the effects of backpacking on the development of purpose and self-identity. Through conducting archival research, surveys, in-depth interviews, and ethnographies, we have discovered that backpacking can have a significant impact on personal growth and development. Our findings demonstrate that purpose is a fluid and unique concept, and backpacking can help individuals move towards the correct direction and reflect to find solutions to problems in their lives. Additionally, backpacking can foster confidence and self-efficacy, which translates to everyday life, especially towards future career decisions and life direction. Although the relationship between backpacking and purpose is not always direct, some individuals have also found that travel and seeing the world have become their most forefront

purpose. To summarize all our findings, we have come up with four recommendations for how The City Wanderer Association might incorporate backpacking into their program to promote future purpose development among youth in Taiwan. Backpacking can be limitless towards one's growth, as one of our interviewees beautifully describes:

"The world is literally at your fingertips. With each step forward, two more doors open in front of you. It's up to you to take that leap of faith."

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Appendix

Appendix A: Interview Questions for Taiwanese Backpackers

1. What is your experience with backpacking? How many backpacking trips have you been on?

2. Why do you backpack? What is your intention/goal?

3. Can you describe what a typical backpacking trip looks like? (e.g. How many locations per trip? What do you do everyday? Where do you stay?)

4. When and why did you embark on your first backpacking journey?

5. Have you experienced any change or have any takeaways from your time backpacking?

6. Are you a college student/did you attend college?

7. What is your opinion about the school system here? Did you like it? Did you learn a lot? Are the skills useful? What happened when you left/finished?

8. Did school lead you to a passion or purpose?

9. Were you lost/purposeless at any point in time? During school? What led you out of it?

10. What do you do for a career?/What is your career path?

11. How did you find this path/what led you here?

12. If you don't have one, are you actively trying to find one?

13. Does traveling/backpacking change your view on the world? On yourself?

14. Did backpacking help you find a purpose?

15. Are you actively searching for purpose while backpacking?

16. Do you think backpacking helps develop purpose?

Appendix B: Interview Questions for Taiwanese Backpackers (Mandarin)

1. 背包旅行是一种怎样的体验？您参加过多少次背包旅行？

2. 你为什么背包？你的意图/目标是什么？

3. 您能描述一下典型的背包旅行是什么样的吗？（例如，每次旅行有多少个地点？你每天做什么？你住在哪里？）

4. 您何时以及为何开始第一次背包旅行？

5. 您在背包旅行中经历过任何变化或收获吗？

6. 你是大学生/你上过大学吗？

7. 你对这里的学校制度有什么看法？你喜欢它吗？你学到很多吗？技能有用吗？你离开/完成时发生了什么？

8. 学校是否让你找到了激情或目标？

9. 您是否曾在任何时候迷路/漫无目的？上学期间？是什么让你摆脱了它？

10. 你的职业是什么？/你的职业道路是什么？

11. 你是怎么找到这条路的/是什么让你来到这里的？

12. 如果你没有，你是否正在积极寻找一个？

13. 旅行/背包旅行会改变您对世界的看法吗？在你自己身上？

14. 背包旅行是否帮助您找到目标？

15. 您在背包旅行时是否正在积极寻找目的？

16. 你认为背包旅行有助于培养目标吗？

Appendix C: Survey Questions for Taiwanese Backpackers

Start of Block: Consent

Q1 Hi! We are Alex, Randy, and Abby, a group of three American college students from Worcester Polytechnic Institute working on a research project with the City Wanderer non-profit organization in Taipei to help Taiwanese youth find purpose and meaning in life. Your story can help our team learn about backpacking and how it influences purpose, personal growth, passion, and meaning in life.

Our team has learned that the achievement-based education system in Taiwan can limit students' ability to explore their passions and find what is right for them in life and we're exploring backpacking as a means to help these students develop and find purpose. Our focus is on the impact of backpack traveling on young people, particularly on how it can help build one's sense of self in the world, foster global citizenship, and encourage a sense of responsibility for the world. We hope that our research can help the City Wanderer organization to develop new and exciting programs using backpacking to help more lost youth find purpose and meaning in their lives.

We would appreciate your taking the time to complete the following survey. It should take about 10-20 minutes of your time. Your responses are voluntary and will be confidential. Responses will not be identified by individual. All responses will be compiled together and analyzed as a group. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact our team, at gr-citywanderer@wpi.edu.

o   Agree (1)

o   Disagree (2)

End of Block: Consent

Start of Block: Background

Q21 First Name (Optional)

_____

Q22 Last Name (Optional)

_____

Q23 Age (Optional)

_____

Q27 Nationality / Country of Residence

_____

Q31 Backpacking Experience

o   Beginner (1)

o   Intermediate (2)

o   Experienced (3)

Q25 Have you attended school in Taiwan?

o   No (1)

o   Yes (2)

End of Block: Background

Start of Block: Education

Q29 Young adults in Taiwan tend to feel like they are missing purpose which can in part be attributed to the strict and achievement based education system. Our study is investigating the effects of backpacking on purpose development and whether this activity really helps youth find their way.

For this study, "purpose" will be defined as an intention to accomplish something that is meaningful to yourself and others. Backpacking is lightly referred to as more freeform minimalistic independent travel in this study.

Please try to answer the following questions with these definitions in mind.

Q2 Rate the impact that your education has had on your personal purpose development.

o 1 - Negative (Prevented/Inhibited finding purpose) (1)

o 2- Somewhat Negative (2)

o 3 - Neutral (3)

o 4 - Somewhat Positive (4)

o 5 - Positive (Helped finding purpose) (5)

Q15 Please describe your experience in high school and university. Please mention where (location) you went to school and tell us the relationship that you had with school. If school had an effect on your mental health or your life decisions please describe that as well. (Optional)

_____

Q33 Did your experience in school influence your sense of purpose in life or help develop passion? If so, how and what specific parts of your schooling had the most impact in your personal growth and development? (Optional)

_____

Q11 If you've taken a gap year during high school or college, rate the impact that your gap year has had on your personal purpose development

o 1 - Negative (Prevented/Inhibited finding purpose) (1)

o 2- Somewhat Negative (2)

o 3 - Neutral (3)

o 4 - Somewhat Positive (4)

o 5 - Positive (Helped finding purpose) (5)

o I have not taken a gap year (6)

End of Block: Education

Q16 Please describe your backpacking experience. What places have you visited and for how long? What did you do? Did you go alone or with others? (Optional)

_____

Rate the impact that backpacking has had on your personal purpose development.

o   1 - Negative (Prevented/Inhibited finding purpose) (1)

o   2- Somewhat Negative (2)

o   3 - Neutral (3)

o   4 - Somewhat Positive (4)

o   5 - Positive (Helped finding purpose) (5)

Q35 Rate the impact that backpacking has had on your personal growth and development.

o   1 - Negative (1)

o   2- Somewhat Negative (2)

o   3 - Neutral (3)

o   4 - Somewhat Positive (4)

o   5 - Positive (5)

Q30 Has backpacking influenced your purpose in life, helped you find meaning, or empowered you in any way? Did it spark a new passion or change your viewpoint on an issue? If so, why and how? (Optional)

_____

Q39 Was there a key moment, experience, or interaction during your backpacking experience that was transformative? If so, what happened and why do you think it had such a large impact? (Optional)

_____

Q37 Has backpacking influenced your personal growth and development in any way? Has it empowered you to become more courageous, confident, and free? (Optional)

_____

Q8 If you have ever felt lost or purposeless, please rate the impact that backpacking had on this feeling.

o   1 - Negative (Helped you become less lost) (1)

o   2- Somewhat Negative (2)

o   3 - Neutral (3)

o   4 - Somewhat Positive (4)

o   5 - Positive (Made you feel more lost) (5)

Q34 Have you ever felt lost in life or purposeless? If so, do you know why? (Optional)

_____

Q17 Please describe the role that a purpose, larger goal or passion has had in your life. If you do have a purpose, what caused you to find it? (Optional)

_____

Q19 What motivates you to go backpacking? Why do you backpack? (Optional)

_____

Q36 Please use five words to sum up your experiences backpacking.

_____

End of Block: Purpose & Backpacking

Start of Block: More Information

Q38

 Our team: Alex (far left), Randy (middle left), and Abby (far right) after an interview with Kerry (middle right) about her story and travels in Taipei, Taiwan.

Q26 Our team would love to have a follow up interview to learn more about your story. You can help empower us to help even more young adults find purpose.

Email (Optional)

_____

End of Block: More Information

Appendix D: Survey Questions for Taiwanese Backpackers (Mandarin)

Start of Block: Consent

Q1 您好！我們是 **Alex、Randy** 和 **Abby,** 來自美國的三位大學生，目前台北與「城市浪人」非營利組織合作進行研究項目，旨在協助臺灣青年找到生命中的目的與意義。我們的團隊發現臺灣的成就導向教育體系可能限制學生探索自己的熱情所在以及生涯方向。因此我們藉由背包旅行，協助這些學生探索和尋找人生目標。我們的研究注重於背包旅行對年輕人的影響，特別是在如何幫助建立個人對世界的認知，培養全球公民意識，並鼓勵青年承擔世界責任。我們希望此研究能幫助「城市浪人」開發新穎的計畫，並結合背包旅行，協助更多年輕人找到人生目標與意義。

從背包客那裡獲得反饋對於過程至關重要。感謝您抽出時間完成以下問卷。大約需要 **10-20** 分鐘的時間。您的回答不是強制的，這是一個匿名的問卷，且內容會被保密。所有回復將匯總在一起並作為一個整體進行分析。如果您有任何問題或疑慮，請通過 **gr-citywanderer@wpi.edu** 聯繫我們的團隊。

o   同意 **(1)**

o   不同意 **(2)**

End of Block: Consent

Start of Block: Background

Q2 名

_____

Q3 姓

_____

Q4 年齡

_____

Q5 國籍**/**居住國

_____

Q6 背包旅行經驗

o   初步接觸 **(1)**

o   有些經驗 **(2)**

o   很有經驗 **(3)**

Q7 你是否有就讀過台灣的學校？

o   否 **(1)**

o   是 **(2)**

End of Block: Background

Start of Block: Education

Q29 台灣的年輕人往往覺得自己沒有目標，這在一定程度上可以歸因於嚴格的、以升學為基礎的教育體系。我們的研究正在調查背包旅行對找尋目標的影響，以及這項活動是否真的能幫助年輕人找到自己的路。

在這項研究中，"目的"將被定義為一種穩定而普遍的意圖，即完成對自我有意義並且對自我之外的世界產生影響的事情。在這項研究中，背包旅行被輕描淡寫地稱為更自由、簡約的獨立旅行。

請記住這些定義並嘗試回答以下問題。

Q2 您認為教育對您的個人目標和生涯規劃的影響。

o　　1 – 非常負向 (1)

o　　2 – 有點負向 (2)

o　　3 – 普通 (3)

o　　4 – 有點正向 (4)

o　　5 – 非常正向 (5)

Q15 請描述您在高中和大學的求學經歷。請提及您上學的國家，並描述您對學校的想法。如果學校對您的心理健康或您的人生決定有影響，請一併說明。您在學校的經歷是否影響了您的人生目標？如何影響？

_____

Q33 您在學校的經歷是否影響了您的人生目標感或有助於培養您所熱愛的事物？如果是，請描述學校教育的哪些具體部分對您的個人成長和發展影響最大？

_____

Q11 如果您在高中或大學期間曾休過學，您認為這段期間對你個人目標發展的影響

o　　1 – 非常負向 (1)

o　　2 – 有點負向 (2)

o　　3 – 普通 (3)

o　　4 – 有點正向 (4)

o　　5 – 非常正向 (5)

o　　我沒有休學過 (6)

End of Block: Education

Q16 請描述您的背包旅行經歷。你去過哪些地方，待了多長時間？你做了什麼？你是一個人去的還是和其他人一起去的？

_____

您認為背包旅行對您的個人目標發展和迷失感的影響。

o　　1 – 非常負向 (1)

o　　2–有點負向 (2)

o　　3 – 普通 (3)

o　　4 – 有點正向 (4)

o　　5 – 非常正向 (5)

Q35 您認為背包旅行對您的個人成長與發展的影響。

o　　1 – 非常負向 (1)

o　　2–有點負向 (2)

o　　3 – 普通 (3)

o　　4 – 有點正向 (4)

o　　5 – 非常正向 (5)

Q30 背包旅行是否影響了您的人生目標、幫助您找到意義或以任何方式賦予您力量？是否使您有了新的熱愛的事物，或改變您看待問題的方式。如果是， 請詳述。

_____

Q39 在您的背包旅行經歷中，是否有過具有改變性的重要時刻或經歷？如果是，請詳述這個事件，並提及它為什麼會產生如此大的影響？

_____

Q37 背包旅行是否影響了您的個人成長和發展？是否使您變得更加勇敢、自信和開放？

_____

Q8 您認為背包旅行如何對您的迷失感造成影響。

o   1 – 非常負向 (1)

o   2 – 有點負向 (2)

o   3 – 普通 (3)

o   4 – 有點正向 (4)

o   5 – 非常正向 (5)

Q34 您是否曾有過失去目標和迷惘的感覺？如果是，請描述原因。

_____

Q17 請描述一個目的、更大的目標或熱情在您的生活中所扮演的角色。如果你確實有一個目標，是什麼促使你找到它的？

_____

Q19 您去背包旅行的動機為何？

_____

Q36 請用五個詞來形容您的背包旅行。

_____

End of Block: Purpose & Backpacking

Start of Block: More Information

Q38 我們的隊伍: Alex (far left), Randy (middle left), and Abby (far right) after an interview with Kerry (middle right) about her story and travels in Taipei Taiwan.

Q26 電子郵件（選填：如果您願意進行面談，可以留下您的電子郵件，以了解更多關於您的研究經歷）

_____

End of Block: More Information

Appendix E: Interview Consent Form

Informed Consent Agreement for Participation in a Research Study

Investigators: Alexander Sun, Abigail Boafo, Randy Huang

Contact Information: gr-citywanderer@wpi.edu

Title of Research Study: The Influence of Backpacking on Purpose and Self-identity Development in East Asian Youth

Sponsor: City Wanderer Education Association

Introduction

You are being asked to participate in a research study. Before you agree, however, you must be fully informed about the purpose of the study, the procedures to be followed, and any benefits, risks or discomfort that you may experience as a result of your participation. This form presents information about the study so that you may make a fully informed decision regarding your participation.

Purpose of the study:

The purpose of this study is to research the relationship between Taiwanese education, purpose/meaning in life, and backpacking. This involves researching what effect Taiwanese and East Asian education has, what backpacking looks like, and purpose development.

Procedures to be followed:

Interviews will be conducted face-to-face with the team utilizing either Mandarin or English. Conversations will be recorded using a tape recorder or smartphone. These interviews are expected to range between 20 minutes to an hour depending on the amount of time it takes to cover the topics. They will be conducted in a semi-structured manner with a couple of predetermined concepts, however each interview is expected to be unique in the questions asked.

Risks to study participants:

Foreseeable risks involve discomfort and sensitivity regarding a subject's past/current experiences with schooling, backpacking, purpose/meaning, and other potentially sensitive personal details and experiences. If the participant is not comfortable with answering questions about these topics then they should ask to move on from the question or choose not to participate.

Benefits to research participants and others:

There are no benefits to research participants.

Record keeping and confidentiality:

Your responses are voluntary and will be confidential. Responses will not be identified by individual. All responses will be compiled together and analyzed as a group. Records of your participation in this study will be held confidential so far as permitted by law. However, the study investigators, the sponsor or its designee and, under certain circumstances, the Worcester Polytechnic Institute Institutional Review Board (WPI IRB) will be able to inspect and have access to confidential data that identify you by name. Any publication or presentation of the data will not identify you.

Compensation or treatment in the event of injury:

Due to the complete minimal risk of injury or harm, no compensation is available in the event of injury. You do not give up any of your legal rights by signing this statement.

For more information about this research or about the rights of research participants, or in case of research-related injury, contact:

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact our team, at gr-citywanderer@wpi.edu.

Your participation in this research is voluntary.

Your refusal to participate will not result in any penalty to you or any loss of benefits to which you may otherwise be entitled. You may decide to stop participating in the research at any time without penalty or loss of other benefits. The project investigators retain the right to cancel or postpone the experimental procedures at any time they see fit.

By signing below, you acknowledge that you have been informed about and consent to be a participant in the study described above. Make sure that your questions are answered to your satisfaction before signing. You are entitled to retain a copy of this consent agreement.

Study Participant Signature

_____

Study Participant Name (Please print)

_____

Signature of Person who explained this study

_____

Appendix F: Interview Consent Form (Mandarin)

参与研究的知情同意书

调查员：Alexander Sun, Abigail Boafo, Randy Huang

联系方式：gr-citywanderer@wpi.edu

研究课题：背包旅行对东亚青年目的和自我认同发展的影响

主办单位：城市游子教育协会

介绍

您被要求参加一项研究。然而，在您同意之前，您必须充分了解研究的目的、要遵循的程序以及您可能因参与而体验到的任何好处、风险或不适。此表格提供了有关该研究的信息，以便您可以就您的参与做出充分知情的决定。

这项研究的目的：

本研究的目的是研究台湾教育、人生目的/意义和背包旅行之间的关系。这涉及研究台湾和东亚教育的影响、背包旅行的模样以及目标发展。

应遵循的程序：

面试将使用普通话或英语与团队进行面对面的交流。对话将使用录音机或智能手机录制。这些访谈预计在 20 分钟到一个小时之间，具体取决于涵盖主题所需的时间。他们将以半结构化的方式进行，包含几个预先确定的概念，但是每次访谈所问的问题都应该是独一无二的。

研究参与者的风险：

可预见的风险包括对受试者过去/当前的学校教育、背包旅行、目的/意义以及其他潜在敏感的个人细节和经历的不适和敏感。如果参与者不愿意回答关于这些主题的问题，那么他们应该要求从问题中继续或选择不参与。

对研究参与者和其他人的好处：

研究参与者没有任何好处。

记录保存和保密：

您的回答是自愿的，并且会保密。回复不会被个人识别。所有回复将汇总在一起并作为一个整体进行分析。在法律允许的范围内，您参与本研究的记录将被保密。但是，研究调查员、申办方或其指定人员，以及在某些情况下，伍斯特理工学院机构审查委员会 (WPI IRB) 将能够检查和访问通过姓名识别您身份的机密数据。任何数据的发布或展示都不会识别您的身份。

受伤时的补偿或治疗：

由于受伤或伤害的风险完全最小，因此在受伤时不提供任何赔偿。签署本声明并不代表您放弃任何合法权利。

有关本研究或研究参与者权利的更多信息，或研究相关伤害，请联系：

如果您有任何问题或疑虑，请通过 gr-citywanderer@wpi.edu 联系我们的团队。如果您对作为研究对象的权利有任何疑问，可以致电 508 831-6699 或发送电子邮件至 irb@wpi.edu 联系 IRB 办公室的 进行讨论。

您参与这项研究是自愿的。

您拒绝参与不会导致您受到任何处罚或您可能有权获得的任何利益损失。您可以随时决定停止参与研究，而不会受到处罚或失去其他利益。项目研究人员保留在他们认为合适的任何时候取消或推迟实验程序的权利。

通过在下面签名，您承认您已被告知并同意参与上述研究。确保您的问题在签名前得到满意的回答。您有权保留一份本同意协议的副本。

研究参与者签名

_____

研究参与者姓名（请打印）

_____

解释这项研究的人的签名

_____

Appendix G: Survey Responses

Age (Optional)

1) 40
2) 37
3) 27
4) 38
5) 38
6) 27
7) 37
8) 31
9) 39
10) 27
11) 23
12) 30

Nationality / Country of Residence

1) Usa/taiwan
2) Taiwan
3) Usa
4) Taiwan
5) Chile
6) France
7) French
8) Taiwan
9) Taiwan
10) Taiwan/Britain
11) Republic of China
12) Taiwan

Backpacking Experience

1) Experienced
2) Intermediate
3) Beginner
4) Intermediate
5) Experienced
6) Intermediate
7) Experienced
8) Experienced
9) Intermediate
10) Intermediate
11) Beginner
12) Intermediate

Have you attended school in Taiwan?

1) No
2) Yes
3) No
4) Yes
5) No
6) No
7) No
8) Yes
9) Yes
10) Yes
11) Yes
12) Yes

Rate the impact that your education has had on your personal purpose development.

1) 5 - Positive (Helped finding purpose)
2) 5 - Positive (Helped finding purpose)
3) 4 - Somewhat Positive
4) 4 - Somewhat Positive
5) 4 - Somewhat Positive
6) 3 - Neutral
7) 3 - Neutral
8) 2- Somewhat Negative
9) 4 - Somewhat Positive
10) 3 - Neutral
11) 4 - Somewhat Positive
12) 4 - Somewhat Positive

Please describe your experience in high school and university. Please mention where (location) you went to school and tell us the relationship that you had with school. If school had an effect on your mental health or your life decisions please describe that as well. (Optional)

1) High school (IB in Atlanta), emory uni in atlanta. High school was great, uni sucked.
2) The school's experience has little impact on my life goals, but in the process of learning, let me learn to explore and solve the problem of problems
3) I went to uiuc for college. It is a high achieving university. Still i feel that everyone could find a space they fit in. I look back at it fondly even though it was hard. For high school I went to east aurora high school. High school was not for me but college got better. High school was more cliques . It was harder to fit in or find that group you belonged in.
4) Taiwan. High school exams have more ducks, and many things do not know where the meaning of learning is. The participation of the school community helps to study, interpersonal exchanges, team cooperation, communication and coordination, and organizational ability. High school had been suspended from school, went abroad as an exchange student for one year, promoted the language ability, and re -examined many frames of educated from childhood under the impact of different cultural thinking. It was

found that there were different possibilities. Not good, change your own life values. Before going abroad, I planned to read the group, and after returning to China, I renamed 3 categories.

5) I went to medical school in Chile. The atmosphere is really bad, most people only want to make money and have kids. No other projects

6) I was attending high school nearby Paris and left for a year as a rotary exchange student to Finland in Jyväskylä. When I came back home I have done my last year of high school by myself at home because I realize that I didn't like how French teachers were talking to us (students) and how they were teaching. I didn't like going to school but I continue to university to get a diploma and a chance to success in the field I want to work in. Even if I didn't like school I came back on the bench 4 years after working full time to get a master diploma and now I have a different vision of the utility of school and like it a little bit more.

7) Went to school and university in France. Had a good relationship in university cause was my choice but didn't like mandatory highschool because of too many useless things to learn

8) High school and university are in Taiwan. The impression of studying in high school is only constantly studying and exams. Although universities do not have to study, it seems to be because high school kept studying before. Therefore, the goal of life is to find it slowly through your own exploration.

9) I am currently engaged in teaching positions. The university is studying teaching. I have learned about it. In fact, I am very grateful to my learning path, but if there is another choice, I will choose a master's degree to study overseas.

10) I study in Taiwan's city high school and national universities. In the early days of high school, I was very happy. The academic pressure was still tolerated. I started to contact the school clubs and meet my friends. However, since the second year of high school, the pressure of academic work has become heavier, more and more tutoring subjects, and emotions have been in a tight situation for a long time. In high school, I did not have a special idea about the future. I felt that the college entrance examination was the end of this stage. After I went to college, I felt the feeling of "wide vision" for the first time, came into contact with students from all over the world, discussed different issues. During this period, because of the subsidies of state and schools, I traveled to many countries. My enthusiasm for humanitarian issues.

11) My high school belongs to the technical and vocational system, so I choose not to go to a general university, even if I think I can choose, the choice of the Department of Technical and Vocational Department is limited to a certain range during the test (unified testing). It's too narrow, but I can't change anything. I hope I can make those best choices, but when I look back, the best choice is to give me more choices, rather than walking on the planned path.

12) I went to school in Taiwan. Although the schools in high school were very important, the interaction between students was very good. Everyone helped each other, and many class activities were a happy environment. There are many educational resources to use in college schools, but at that time they did not try their best to study. They were mainly doing community activities. The school was a very free place.

Did your experience in school influence your sense of purpose in life or help develop passion? If so, how and what specific parts of your schooling had the most impact in your personal growth and development? (Optional)

1) High school yes. The international environment made me determined to explore the world.
2) Interpersonal communication with classmates, adapting and resistance to setbacks are the opportunity to learn in school experience
3) Well rotary came to speak at my school and that inspired me to travel. It impacted me to get out of my comfort zone and thrive in a new environment.
4) The participation of school community activities and the training of organizational activities, learn from entertainment many textbooks that have not taught, but more practical and used in life, such as communication and coordination ability and the ability to adapt.
5) No
6) I studied Tourism at university as travelling, geography and history was taking a really big part of my passions, that makes me going to travel throughout Europe and some other part of the world by myself to explore our world and new culture.
7) A bit in that way that I then promised myself that don't want to wake up every morning to do something I don't want and don't like, like at school!
8) In my junior year, the school had a workplace internship. At that time, I chose to go to Singapore for an internship. Because of the geographical location of Singapore, I had the opportunity to travel everywhere, and I also started a journey I want to travel around the world.
9) Above
10) The school provides many subsidy plans for pioneering vision. Therefore, I also came into contact with different social issues and made me find the field I want to devote to it.
11) I used to be interested in mechanical manufacturing. Most of them originated from the military industry or manufacturing related industries. I was related to the mechanical drawing of the mechanical drawing when I was in high school. Industrial manufacturing, a small number of computer numerical control courses used in modern industries, are actually very few, but because of this, I chose to find other interests such as photography editing copywriting ...
12) In high school and college, I participated in related courses and communities in Japanese and Japanese, which helped cultivate my love of Japanese related knowledge.

Did your experience in school influence your sense of purpose in life or help develop passion? how and what specific parts of your schooling had the most impact in your personal growth and development?
1) High school yes. The international environment made me determined to explore the world.
2) Interpersonal communication with classmates, adapting and resistance to setbacks are the opportunity to learn in school experience
3) Well rotary came to speak at my school and that inspired me to travel. It impacted me to get out of my comfort zone and thrive in a new environment.

4) The participation of school community activities and the training of organizational activities, learn from entertainment many textbooks that have not taught, but more practical and used in life, such as communication and coordination ability and the ability to adapt.
5) No
6) I studied Tourism at university as travelling, geography and history was taking a really big part of my passions, that makes me going to travel throughout Europe and some other part of the world by myself to explore our world and new culture.
7) A bit in that way that I then promised myself that don't want to wake up every morning to do something I don't want and don't like, like at school!
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12) In high school and college, I participated in related courses and communities in Japanese and Japanese, which helped cultivate my love of Japanese related knowledge.

If you've taken a gap year during high school or college, rate the impact that your gap year has had on your personal purpose development

1) 5 - Positive (Helped finding purpose)
2) I have not taken a gap year
3) I have not taken a gap year
4) 5 - Positive (Helped finding purpose)
5) I have not taken a gap year
6) 5 - Positive (Helped finding purpose)
7) I have not taken a gap year
8) I have not taken a gap year
9) I have not taken a gap year
10) I have not taken a gap year
11) I have not taken a gap year
12) 5 - Positive (Helped finding purpose)

Please describe your backpacking experience. What places have you visited and for how long? What did you do? Did you go alone or with others? (Optional)

1) All over taiwan. Usually it was great but even on "bad" trips, i learned things and remember the trips fondly. I traveled both alone and with others
2) Australia, Canada, Singapore, Japan, China, Thailand, and Vietnam, most of them go together with 1-2 people
3) I went on exchange with rotary. I wouldn't call it back packing but it was fun
4) In the case of a more special living abroad, the first backpack travel was to plan a weekly holiday during a year of high school. After the state exchange students, after obtaining their school curriculum teachers, receiving family parents, and receiving Rotary Club's consent, they visited and listened to their school curriculum, participated in one of them, borrowed their reception families interact with them, and interacted with them. Participated in the regular meeting of some other exchange students, and was invited to give a lecture at several regular meetings, and shared my country-Taiwan, so that more people can recognize us. The second, third, and fourth time is special. During the two years of work in Australia, in order to collect the qualifications for the second signing, I found the Woofing of the animal husbandry & racetteor on the Internet (unpaid -to -work and changed the night). Feeding animals and plants (such as chickens, horses, cattle, sheep, pigs, broccoli, tomatoes, peas and the like), clean up animal horses/cow dung, pick up eggs, during the period, while feeding the pregnant mother and horse Gongda grab or eat the food of the pregnant mother and horse with a special nutritional product, which was kicked by the unhappy male horse; he was chased by the greedy pig every day. He was not waiting to eat because he was blocked by the pig. Pig bites; the nervous bulls over the head of the long horns, which are generally not easy to encounter. And with my boyfriend, when driving from Brisbane to Melbourne, spending a week, stopping the gold coast along the road, Byron Bay, marijuana, Sydney, and Canberra, stopped on the rest area on the way to sleep on the car; In addition to the attractions recommending food, you will buy and eat with the trend. Most of the cars have their own card -type gas stoves to cook instant noodles, or buy special special meat products in the period, and use free public barbecue stove barbecue in the park. Free public shower. There is also the WH visa before returning to China. After planning a month -to -road trip, driving with her boyfriend, starting from Melbourne, stopping along the way, like Adre, for a week, I met when I visited the high school. After repairing the car; stopped Alice Spring, Uluru, and Valley of the Wind (forgot the correct name, only remember to be the landform of Hayao Miyazaki). In addition to visiting the Italian friends I met in Brisbane, I also participated in 3 days and two nights camping for 3 days and two nights. Group activity; then go to Airlie Beach. From here, I went to Whiteheaven Beach (Delling Beach) to participate in two days and one -night sailing tour. The Dutch friend I met with the camping, drinking and breakfast together at nightclubs; then stopped Nosa Beach and visited the hidden Celestial Beach; then returned to the roommates and friends before visiting Brisbane, and then returned to Melbourne. There are some special attractions in the middle that forgotten the name. There are pit, deserts with stories, and echo valleys. On the top, take a tent about a rest area (getting up the boyfriend that the tent zipper is opened, and the wild kangaroo skips from the side; before and after participating in TOUR, you will live in the backpack inn, which is convenient for rest and washing.

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5) I travel through Asia for 18 months, 6 of them with my boyfriend and then 12 months by myself
6) My goal in life is to travel all around the world and visiting the most countries I can but not just having a step in one and counting it as one, I discover the most I can of the culture and the sights before counting it. I travelled actually to 35 countries, mostly in Europe as I am a French backpacker and distance is really small between European countries. I went also to Canada and the USA, and to Asia in Cambodia and Vietnam. My next trip is already plan and it would be in Latin America for this summer. Usually I spend at least one or two weeks in the country I visit. I visit obviously the most known sights, however I try to go out of the building path to experience something typical from the country and not doing the same as all travellers. I always wanted to travel but my family and friends didn't have time and/or money, so I decided to travel by myself for the first time in 2015 and now I continue and it is the best way to discover at my own rythm, taking my own choice and as I sleep in hostels I have met so many solo backpackers that now are my friends who I can visit in their own country. Travelling alone is the best thing you can do because it is easier to go and speak to a stranger backpacking too.
7) Mostly alone in south east asia. And also in europe.
8) Since graduating from university, I have been traveling. At present, I have traveled to 30 countries. I just traveled with my ex -boyfriend when I first started. In recent years, I have traveled alone. Most countries travel, if they can stay for a month; countries living for more than a year: Singapore, Germany, Australia.
9) In 2019, he traveled to Britain and Iceland for 21 days in 2019, participated in the Icelandic international volunteer activities and completed the marathon.
10) I am currently walking in 61 countries, almost all backpacks. I have shot documentary in Vietnam, take a stool in Turkey, and spend Christmas in the village in Fiji.
11) Kaohsiung, Yilan, Taipei, at most 1 week, all alone
12) Kansai, Japan, stayed for 5 days, sightseeing, one person.

Rate the impact that backpacking has had on your personal purpose development.

1) 5 - Positive (Helped finding purpose)
2) 5 - Positive (Helped finding purpose)
3) 5 - Positive (Helped finding purpose)
4) 5 - Positive (Helped finding purpose)
5) 5 - Positive (Helped finding purpose)
6) 5 - Positive (Helped finding purpose)
7) 5 - Positive (Helped finding purpose)
8) 5 - Positive (Helped finding purpose)
9) 4 - Somewhat Positive
10) 4 - Somewhat Positive
11) 3 - Neutral
12) 3 - Neutral

Rate the impact that backpacking has had on your personal growth and development.

1) 5 - Positive
2) 5 - Positive
3) 5 - Positive
4) 5 - Positive
5) 5 - Positive
6) 5 - Positive
7) 5 - Positive
8) 5 - Positive
9) 4 - Somewhat Positive
10) 5 - Positive
11) 4 - Somewhat Positive
12) 4 - Somewhat Positive

Has backpacking influenced your purpose in life, helped you find meaning, or empowered you in any way? Did it spark a new passion or change your viewpoint on an issue? If so, why and how? (Optional)

1) I love to see how people live, especially well away from tourist sites
2) Yes, in the process of changing the situation and the process of getting along with people, it is a rare experience learned during the backpack travel.
3) It has helped me force myself to understand and be tolerant of differences. Be more open-minded and prepared for the obstacles life throws at you is what back packing or traveling does for you. It sparked a sense of adventure for me.
4) yes. Because during the journey, even if the itinerary is planned beforehand, there may still be many accidents that can train the ability of strain and fault tolerance; and the old and new friends I encountered during the journey often harvest many different life stories and experience sharing in the exchange and sharing. , To open up the horizons, I also see more possibilities.
5) Yes. Gave me the power to stand up by myself no matter how other people felt about my decisions
6) Backpacking by yourself is opening your mind to the world, to new culture, to new way of living. I met people from litteraly all other the world and thanks to that now I am doing voluntary work for minor migrants who are coming to France. I also help thought an humanitarian association little kids in Cambodia. It opened my mind at a point of the only thing I want to contribute to is the help everyone. And that's what now I am doing for my work. Nature also took a big part of my consciousness and trying to keep the planet safe is part of my job too.
7) Yes, I just realised that another kind of life is possible, more out of the system
8) Yes, the personnel and things I encountered in the backpack travel help me, understand myself better, and slowly find my favorite appearance. Perhaps it is a dialogue, or observed that different people are facing different reactions of things. Let me learn to use it. Look at everything at different angles and face different challenges.
9) I think as long as it is traveling, through contact with different people's affairs, deal with everything by themselves, people will grow up, and understand themselves better, and

whether they will find new love affairs. I don't think it will be, but I will know more about my body and mind.

10) Backpack travel made me see a lot of different ways of lifestyle, so that I could experience local life in a very comfortable way. The people and things I was in contact with during the trip often inspired me and made me realize my errors.

11) The interest in I found photography was to travel to Yilan alone. I took the camera, no matter the weather, no matter where they were, listening to music, feeling the light through the pedestrians and the landscape. I realized the difficulties and struggles of life. It is not worth mentioning in the torrent of time, do hard work without leaving regrets, is the answer to life.

12) No

Was there a key moment, experience, or interaction during your backpacking experience that was transformative? If so, what happened and why do you think it had such a large impact? (Optional)

1) No, it was cumulative

2) Don't think about it for a while

3) When I went to st Peter Hof palace. I had always wanted to go since I was a little girl. It was truly fulfilling and an unforgettable moment.

4) When high school exchanged abroad, the first time I planned for myself, let me know that I can have such an independent and independent and planning organization, and interact with and coordinate with different reception families. Visiting and increasing the elasticity of new things. The most important thing is that because the travel planning is from zero to the existence, visiting and visiting all the time to find information and coordinate the arrangement of different cities, families, schools, and other helped rotation clubs. With support, I found that I could have the opportunity to enjoy such independent choices. When I followed Taiwan, because I was educated since I was young, I needed to worry about others and do not show too special and so -called gifts. The feeling of compromise and being controlled by the elders (parents and teachers) is completely different, it is a kind of pleasure and freedom!

5) Being by myself as a woman in other countries that don't appreciate women. For example India

6) When I traveled to Cambodia I went to a small village and a dozen of kids wanted to stay with me and holding my hands during all the day I was discovering the place where they live. It was a part of the country where none of the travellers were going to so I was tge first tourist and European they could meet. I was 16 years old at that time and I realized that I do not want to give birth but if I want to be a mother it will be by adoption to help and give love at least one or two poor and lonely kid. Now it's been 10 years I travelled there and my mind never changed and that's why at the moment I am helping as I can thought an association to this country specifically.

7) Not really a key moment. Year after year, each return back in the normal life after backpacking trips became more and more difficult, so I've decided to change my life

8) When I first arrived in Australia, the people who met my life and work were not smooth, and I broke up with my ex -boyfriend. Finally, I chose to stay. A person slowly find a favorite job, build his own circle of friends, and find his love. The work and life are

balanced, understand what you want, and understand what you feel when you find what you love very much. Even if you are tired, you will still do it, just because he will bring you infinite Happy!

9) Participating in international organizations is a way to help you open his eyes faster, because there are common themes in the group to discuss in -depth discussions and have a deeper understanding of the topic discussions.

10) When I went back to Palestine with my friends, I accidentally involved a small struggle. For the first time in my life, my life was so close to death, but I also deepened the enthusiasm of I want to invest in international development and refugee shelter.

11) I watched the little girl and grandmother on the train, looking at the sunset outside the window, and said that the summer vacation was very happy, hoping that I could see my grandmother next time. I saw this scene so familiar, reminding me of me in the past, in fact, I used to be the same as, enjoying what I want at the moment.

12) No

Has backpacking influenced your personal growth and development in any way? Has it empowered you to become more courageous, confident, and free? (Optional)

1) Yes, yes.
2) Definitely
3) Yes. It has made me more independent and confident. When you are on your own you rely have to rely on yourself and be your biggest ally. It promotes/forces independence and that is not q bad thing.
4) Definitely!
5) Yes. Courageous confident and free. Now I came to study in Taipei with the determination that I can do it and it's going to be great
6) I enjoy being alone since I began backpacking, I am living alone and I never feel lonely. In my home country I am kind of afraid to call someone and speak on the phone even for asking for a pizza. However, when I am traveling I am more confident and go to speak to everyone in the street and in hostels.
7) Probably yes!
8) yes
9) Yes ~ Because I completed my own plan, I felt nothing could not be done.
10) Backpack travel makes me more brave to talk to people, and more calm and cautious in emergency situations.
11) Maybe, I just think that the surface of the matter will no longer become single, and I will no longer care about the gains and losses of those things.
12) More brave

If you have ever felt lost or purposeless, please rate the impact that backpacking had on this feeling.

1) 5 - Positive (Made you feel more lost)
2) 4 - Somewhat Positive
3) 1 - Negative (Helped you become less lost)
4) 1 - Negative (Helped you become less lost)

5) 3 - Neutral
6) 4 - Somewhat Positive
7) 4 - Somewhat Positive
8) 2- Somewhat Negative
9) 4 - Somewhat Positive
10) 4 - Somewhat Positive
11) 2- Somewhat Negative
12) 3 - Neutral

Have you ever felt lost in life or purposeless? If so, do you know why? (Optional)

1) Yes, because i was lost and purposeless.
2) The conversion in work has conflicts on your ability and content in work
3) Backpackong helped me see how from q distance big problems are actually quite small
4) yes. I want to do not be recognized, accepted or respected. Many different ideas are often required to be as obedient as others, and don't seem to make problems and trouble. It is obviously not wrong, but it seems to be innovative and special. It is denied that it is different.
5) Capitalism and patriarchy
6) Because of my work
7) Yes
8) yes. Don't understand yourself and lose yourself.
9) After graduating from a master's degree, he entered an enterprise to engage in adult education and training. It is not his own love. He rushed to confuse before he was transferred, but he courageous and re -examined the teaching position. He was very happy to return to the field of love.
10) I was confused because I didn't admit the ideal master's degree university. At that time, I was traveling in Fiji. In addition, my mobile phone was stolen, my physical condition was not good, and my physical condition was very tight. Many beautiful scenery, meeting friendly people, aware of their limits, and found that in such a helpless state, they accidentally have a sense of liberation, enjoy the journey without care, and face the future.
11) I don't know what my future can be achieved
12) Yes, I have always been confused

Please describe the role that a purpose, larger goal or passion has had in your life. If you do have a purpose, what caused you to find it? (Optional)
1) Teaching. It was just lucky
2) At present, it is mainly to complete things in hand execution
3) Well part of my has always love helping my community so i entered the health care field after college
4) Knowing that it is not the same, it is not sin, and live your own wonderful. So far, I have lived abroad for the same thinking or behavior. In different countries and cultures, there may be different interpretations and coping, and different ways to be treated will have different stories and results.
5) Be happy is my main purpose

6) I don't really understand this question, maybe I already answered previously
7) No answer
8) Turn the focus back to yourself and bravely try different new things. When you find that you are really happy and hot, a greater goal and dream will appear.
9) I know what I do to sleep and forget to eat, and I feel like.
10) I met my first love in a journey. He was a Syrian refugee because he let me start contacting the issue of refugees and now work in related fields.
11) Because I was disappointed with reality, I turned towards all the things I saw in my eyes.
12) No found

What motivates you to go backpacking? Why do you backpack? (Optional)

1) To see how people live in places i never would have seen otgerwise. Also, to solve unforeseen problems
2) I want to try more different things to improve my pressure resistance and frustration
3) When you go to a new place you attain new eyes. Traveling has made me want to engrave as many new places as possible working my short life span
4) Like traveling, people who like to know different, see more things, and create more memories can also discover more stories.
5) Freedom and getting know me and the world before it gets ruined
6) I love discovering new things : Landscape, people, culture, language, food, way of living... It is the easiest and better way to meet people from another culture of mine
7) Feeling free and pursuit of happiness
8) Learn how others use to live.
9) explore the world
10) Understand and experience the cultures of various places, relax the body and mind
11) Want to see different scenery and humanities
12) Want to travel

Please use five words to sum up your experiences backpacking.

1) Explore, adventure, patience, uncertainty, joy
2) Experience, sharing, enthusiasm, stability, joy
3) Incredible hard life changing purposeful thankfulness
4) Open, elastic, casual, full of hope and love, and loads are not necessarily full, but experience is free
5) Freedom joy confidence love empathy
6) Enjoying - meeting - amazing - discovering - adventurous
7) Surprising Disturbing Beautiful Addictive Intense
8) Take a car, camping, bravery, smile, love
9) Independence, sense of accomplishment, nature, observe, complete yourself
10) Be cautious, simple, diverse, adventurous, warm
11) Reflecting the loss of reality
12) Terrible hotel

Appendix H: Interview Quotes

Skye:

"Yeah, I would say that'd be accurate. Like, I kind of felt like, somewhat lost in those three years between high school and that, and then after that, it kind of everything felt a bit more productive. And like, I was kind of aiming towards things or doing things that were more interesting than just working at a factory."

"I guess, yeah, independent, but not necessarily alone. Like to be able to travel independently and like, know how to navigate the world with other people like, yeah, just confidently like, it's good question. Yeah, like not necessarily alone, but just being able to manage the world by myself, but still be around other people. And like, you can rely on other people, but like various different people in different situations, versus maybe I, before I left, I would have had to leave with somebody to help me. But then, after the AT, of course, I could have done anything by myself. And I met people along the way."

"I went for the safe route a couple of times, I had to do the safe route twice. And then I could do the less safe route. Maybe I'm like, unfairly critical of that, because I had to do that. And you say, being critical of my young, immature self, but I mean, of course, sometimes you have to do that. I know. It's hard today."

"When I was young, I just wanted to travel more. And then I always have gotten older, it's like, maybe I want more, I can kind of appreciate how education a better job is more important than like, when you're younger, like, oh, whatever at all. So and, ya know, so in a way it kind of worked out well, that I do in university a lot more mature as a much more mature student. It'd be nice to be done."

"I was hiking, I came to a massive landslide. And I was like, probably half a kilometer long. There's a huge landslide. And I was like, two days in. I didn't have that much food. And I was like, Well, what am I get it? It was the the map just showed me to go through it. So then I had to, like, there was a lady who had a house there. So I had to ask her, but I had to ask her through like a friend to call because we didn't have the mutual language. And then she said, Okay, later, we'll have these like these two older people, like showed me the route that we had to get around, to hang around there for a day until these two older people came around, and they didn't speak any English is two older farmers, and I speak any Chinese and then they ultimately they showed me around. So that was really wow. It was a good experience. And then, interestingly, I went back I was in that neighborhood a few years, maybe half a year ago, and I went back I could talk to Lady a little bit. So now I could speak a bit and you say she could remember me and I asked her what tribe she was from. So it was good experience. So definitely that has motivated me to learn Mandarin for sure. versus maybe I just lived in Taipei I wouldn't be as because you don't. You don't need to rely on it as much"

Perry:

"Makes me feel alive. Because I think it's very interesting. And I can think differently."

"I want to travel because I want to know about these people. "

"I want to I like to try a different way to travel if I just being a traveler, being a tourist, you know, buying stuff. Like everyone buys place? Oh, all people goes. And I think it's kind of boring"

"And like I think all of us also feel very personal. Like Me personally, I'm also a top student at your school I feel a lot of pressure I feel like they can't deviate from what I'm doing right now. Like I can't change so it's like I've done this thing is locked in two or three years and I feel like I also can't really escape and change nowadays it's like to wait or my parents were to be happy or Yeah, I have to restart all over from scratch"

"I am I'm brave enough to choose a different way because when I was traveling I also I also I always do solo traveling so let's no other people can bother my decisions. I can choose the real stuff I really want to see."

"Yeah, I think give me confidence to go into something unknown."

"I want to be me. Because now I want to be character a bit later, maybe five years later, I want to be character B. So the issue is that can Am I brave enough to be a when I want to be? Maybe society or my friends family will be pissed off of my choice? But am I care about them? Or I will choose my own option?"

"So again, I choose what I want. I think it's the process that I can I will need to practice more and more like the first time I'm not familiar with but a second time sort of time. I have no I have enough competence to say that I really want this don't stop"

Nancy:

"so I will assume the purpose for travel is the most important things for me is I want to do the self realization"

"at that time there was a really famous word 'out of your comfort zone'"

"for me, a really freshman in university and nice year the out of your comfort zone. I feel so interesting."

"is it's a story in 2017 also the same year I participated city wander in the Instituto University every September every December we have a really great active co mannerism don't die show them I saw. So you see a marathon for runners they are running for 24 hours in soochow University. So at the time I am volunteer for Polish for Polish athletes and paste them is oh

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Andrew. So we are when he finished the his 24 hours wrangling and this is a very great and excellent active I really like it and after that I met Andrew in our should have our restaurant hunting in we just coincidence we meet and we chat for three hours. And the next year he comes to Taiwan and then we still just have a talk and just celebrating too so when the first year first year I met him and I checked with him and I feel that is almost I think it's almost my first time to I touching touching the different culture with European my first time is when I was just child my English teacher really for a second really just culture connecting is is this time. So after that, like one month after When I one day I was when I woke up and I think so work is so big, but my room is so small. So that is a really impression and really important things for me. So after that I started to researching how to go to Europe because before that I've never traveled myself and I've never traveled to another country so I started to searching how to go outside and I I just asked my wife my friend and we are just getting together to go to the rural village my first time to visit you after they were not back from there and I have a teacher called Surinder Singh I'm not sure if you met him he's really good at Check Connect the thing is them is gems gems the gems is a professor I really respect and we are in very close relationship we're now why study because every time when he's on the class and"

"all the challenge I've started to feel some difference after I finish our assignment"

Julia:

"I just think that traveling is such an important part of your life and finding out who you are and testing your limits. And just I wouldn't be where I am today without it. And without having that initial push"

"like I was encouraged outdoor. But I'm very grateful for that. Because I probably would never move to Germany, I would have never met no one has never found myself in this regard. However, now that we are doing this sabbatical slash gap year, I feel so much judgment and pressures, especially from my mom. Because it's the unknown. It's the I'm starting over. I don't have a job lined up. I'm not working."

"And I always find that one foot in front of the other to do one small change one small step. So far, I never would have been where I am. Now if I hadn't taken one little step and done like a little day trip to somewhere to some other city in Germany first and going somewhere else. And even if it's like texting someone over the internet, and then you meet up or you don't meet up, but just one small step at a time. Especially if you're unhappy and feeling lost or staska. One Small Change every once awhile doesn't even have to be every day at first, to make yourself feel better. Like okay, maybe you really want bubble tea from this one place because you've heard something good, but you can't find a friend to go with you. You go alone. And oh, oh my goodness, you're sitting alone, or you went alone. But you found that cup of tea and whether it was great, or it was the worst thing you've ever had in your entire life, you took that step. And then you're take small little steps more and more. And you try new street food. And just those little things really add up in my experience and make such a big difference. Such a big impact.

And I find that they're crucial and essential. And like, if you take those little steps you find yourself saying or rather not saying as much anymore. I can't do this. No longer say I can't just say maybe not right now. But like, on the weekend, I could take the like oh, you before we can maybe maybe I could take the train to wherever the city they went to this past qualia. Yeah, maybe you try a different city for a couple of days. Or even if it's just for a day trip, like you find yourself doing small little things that build up to a much bigger, much more impactful big thing."

"And I pushed myself out of my comfort zone. And I started taking more risks. And like I was building my confidence little by little. But one thing about me the beginning of 2021 to 2020 Was I weighed about 70 pounds more than I do right now. 78 pounds, like I lost a lot of weight. And it was progressively because I changed my relationship with food. Because I identified more with traveling and I was walking more I was like just experiencing new cultures, new cuisines, and I was just in awe. And I also think that just leaving the stage, leaving the self is really helpful. I used food as a crutch before. And then I use travel as a crutch or like a confidence booster."

"I owe everything to traveling. To put it simply like I cannot. I've never been happier. I've never been more confident, even when I'm bloated because I'm about to get my period like right now I might I feel like I'm like a whale, it, I still feel good and I'm still wearing clothes that I feel confident in."

"But I I just I love traveling. And I when you solo travel, you become more accustomed to pushing yourself outside of your comfort zone. And you are forced to interact more. And I actually felt like when we started dating, I became more reclusive. And I stopped taking as many risks. But I was okay with that. Because I wouldn't have gotten where I was without it. But now we're doing it again. And we're doing it together. And when we were in this one restaurant in Bali, there was this girl next to us who didn't know what to order. And we were like, This is our second time here. We got this last time. And that was so good. And we're gonna get this again. And we ended up talking with her for a couple hours Chiara. And just having the confidence to speak to a total stranger next to or to ask questions, or just like pet a dog in the park. Like, just the little things, or this one older guy earlier a couple days ago talking to us about what was the better Japanese restaurant to eat at the little things add up. And the little interactions to me make the best possible experiences."

"Because once you Expand your horizon, like everything opens up"

"feel like you've unlocked so many doors"

"And it's just with each step forward, there's like, two more doors open in front of you. And there's just you realize that the world is literally at your fingertips. And it's up to you to just take that leap of faith."

Mo:

"But I still, I would say, I regret not going abroad or doing a gap year or an exchange or whatever. Because that might have like, given me some new ideas, because I was just there at the end of school with no idea."

"the bubble. And now Now we've been on this adventure that we've had right now, almost three months now. And there's so much more memorable stuff than in like the four years that I've worked, right, because at some point, everything's new in the job, and you keep doing it. And then depending on the job for me it was it gets stale, and like every day is kind of the same. So there's nothing memorable, and you just forget for months because nothing happened. And if you have something like that going on, and a lot of people then just work until they retire in a job. They might not like that much. Like I always say, for people in German, Germany, because now I'm 27. And like your retirement age, people like born in the 80s 90s. But now is 67 until you get your pension and whatnot, if it even exists. When we get to that point. That's another four years, I could change my professional life three times who cares. But that's also the thing, like just starting over something when you don't like it is so much better than just be foolish, if you don't like and being miserable in your environment."

"I was like, for example, starting my studies in physics and then like dropping out like, again, I have like three semesters later, basically. And I wasn't rolling to four semesters because I was just Still getting like, like child support from the state as long as I was under 25. But at work during the whole time, and I was kinda afraid to do it. But I knew this was not it. Because like, starting over society makes it feel like, yeah, you failed it is, you're so bad, you start need to start something. But now like my mind, change, and I'm just like, it's my life. I need to be happy doing what I'm doing, or what, like, preferably doing what I want. And so a lot of people I think, also give us a judgment for I just being out of my quitting."

"I think the biggest problem was studying the judgment of other people and you will let it get to your head. Because now, like a friend of mine, I also worked in the gym like I was like personal training. And I worked in the gym. In that gym like I was only like, part time for 10 hours. And all the main employees for students in fitness, economy, Health, Science, whatever. Like none of them wanted to work in their job anymore after it was done because the gym would treat people socially. And one of the guys he's my age started in physio school last year. So like a totally new thing. It's related but like a totally new thing at 26. So he's going to finish I think I think it might finish it there. There's a new professional, and he was constantly like, do I want to do this and it's like you are miserable. And what you're doing right now, like, if you continue this job and fall, back people's opinions, just do what you want to do. If it's gonna make you more happy, and if it doesn't, then start something new. And third, because like life is long enough that you can always work, you can always, it's the same thing that was when we were planning on moving like, I'm okay, washing dishes, can like sustain our travels or whatever. Like, if it's just a means to an end for a while, you can do whatever, I've done some very stupid jobs, like on the side, but you just have to find your passion. And if your passion can make you money, even better, it's for both of us, it is the job that we have. And a lot of people don't find that. And then just stay in the path of going. I think that's what makes starting over. So scary is the unknown setback for your mom.

And a lot of people just struggle with anxiety. And like everyday life, nobody talks about it, everybody has it to some extent. And the unknown is very scary, but the anxious."

"for me, I gotta say, like, I'm a very introverted person. I would say like, I'm not someone that speaks loud in public and this approach of just approaching someone but just like, being out and about and also we're like, maybe her American, more extroverted persona is also like, getting off on me, but for example, like little things like we were sitting in Sweet in a restaurant. And we talking to the girl off working there like, first like being like, like, Would you hire for us? Again, we drive to Norway. Now we want to move there but like, read like a restaurant like maybe it wasn't changed, they will come back and work here. And then she was like, Oh, you're going to Norway, these two girls over there out from nowhere. And then I had the courage to just like walk up and be like, Hey, I heard you from Norway. And like, Where you from? Do you have any recommendations, and we just talked to them, we linked up on Instagram. And now just like, like talking to strangers, gets easier. I'm not doing it. But I'm doing it more than before. Like, for example, there was one girl in Bali, that on the pin, the dive shop that rolled the ankle. And I was just like, I am physically like, do you want me to have a look at it. Just stuff like that, where I can come out more out of myself and approach people. Something I always spoke with my wife. That's definitely getting easier with traveling and meeting more people and doing things you've never done before. Like, for example, here, like, we tend to walk away from restaurants when they only have a Taiwanese menu. I don't know what to order, or what to say what these even are. But sometimes we just like, just get it and then we do something. And I think that just makes you more. Right? Some ways. So that's definitely something for me, which shows that I'm that I'm growing and my confidence. And um, I have one word in German. But I don't have the English translation in my head right now. But I will say that because I really don't have the word right. I will just castling"

"Word I looked up was self efficacy. I'm sorry, I'm not a native speaker. But that is like really it because like the small things where you just show yourself, you can manage it like you're like I can barely maybe managed to take the metro with no idea and go to our place and check in. Just like the small victories you get along the road as almost dying on scooters, but managing to get the full four hour drive in and return to thing pay extra because we damaged it but like, surviving, like, Okay, I really did this today. Like we really like she managed to drive the car, the non existing road on the wrong side of the road. But the road was actually like so narrow, they only had one route one side, and like stuff like that. Okay, we survived. We got this like, we like, let alone manage to rent something in a foreign country. And like, I'm 27 But I'm still also always saying like we did this adult thing."

Junyuan:

"Like you know, I tried to do Different things, like hitchhiking is definitely a step up out of my comfort zone. Like, imagine that I remember my first time hitchhiking. It was really by myself. It was it was in Cyprus. I didn't know how to hitchhike, to be honest. But I just saw people with pictures like, you know, holding a holding a cardboard and just saying that your destinations,

standing by the spider road. And I was like, Okay, I'm gonna do this. So I start hitchhiking. And through that I how do I say, Guys, it's just, I got to talk to different people know different peoples, a lot of people who pick me up or they used to hitchhike, and now they're doing different things. So they kind of emphasized with my journey and really wants to understand what I want to understand. I want to I want to explore in this country. So I have, I have a few experience routes, which really, really nice, because they will just take me to the plate, the places they like the most, on the way. And yeah, I feel like it's, it's not really, it doesn't really help me find what I want to do in my life isn't like, it doesn't really say like, oh, this is my career goal. This helped me shape it is a bit more like how I have become like, a bit more comfortable interacting with different people. Like I feel more confident in initiated conversations. And and that's, that's kind of like a bit kind of like, development, like soft button."

"So I went to Palestine. I know a little bit, a little bit about the, you know, the conflicts between Palestine and Israel. So I kind of knew what to expect. But like, when you actually saw the protests, when you actually got caught up in the protests, that's a different story. So I have, you know, stun grenades right by my side, like people throwing stun grenades, people throwing tear gas, and then the scum trunk and everything. There was like, That was that was really a life changing moment, because, you know, like, I'm a humanitarian worker, like what I'm making, I'm actually an advocate. So sometimes when I'm trying to tell people like these people Refugees are, you know, they're persecuted. They're there, they're faced with violence. They're, you know, they're fearful, but but at the same time, like, I really don't know what they, what they feel I can't, I cannot. Like I cannot How do I see this? Like I wouldn't, I would never be able to feel the way they feel just because of my background. But in that moment in Palestine, I somehow can relate to the feeling of someone, once someone wants to hurt you. And, yeah, that just make me in a way, like reinforced the my desire to pursue my career in this kind of humanitarian field. Because I know the reason why, why I do this, I know that the reason why people have to flee, and I feel like that responsibility that I want to protect those people and just do our do my bits and in helping them."

"I think a lot of backpackers, they really want to, for example, just experience what is like, experienced local cultures in thing. But sometimes you feel like whether or not that's just as far as you can go. And it's not something that's what local people actually oak actually experiencing in their daily life. For example, you will get to experience the most exciting part of the festival, but you don't get to experience the daily life, the probably boring daily life that they are actually going through, or that the kind of other side of the society that these people are actually have to be faced with. I don't know if that makes sense. But I feel like backpackers we we tend to highlight the exciting part the most interesting part. But when I when I when I travel, I actually try to embrace those appear to be boring or mundane or like that side. But to me, that's actually interesting. Because if that's how the local people live their life, I don't mind just spend eight hours in my day just be with them and showing in, in the park."

"It definitely, it definitely helped me build my confidence. And it Yeah, it's just like, I didn't realize that I could. I could just, yeah, like, I could just someone stop and I can quickly just tell them, I need to go this and that. And then, and then quickly make a decision about whether or not to go into the car with this person. And to be able to have small conversations with possibly over 5060 drivers. And they all come from different backgrounds. I have ones have kind of like very,

very fancy sport cars, and I have to have so many truck drivers also pick me up. So you, you need to be able to talk to different people like from truck drivers to like, family with a two year old to someone who's definitely what maybe no, like, quite successful in their career career, and then to be able to make conversation with everyone at them. And yeah, it's it's definitely helped me build my not only confidence, but also social skills as well."

"I, I genuinely believe in like, the more you travel. I mean, I guess, I guess it probably doesn't hold true to anyone. But like, for me, the more I travel, the more grounded I am. Like, I definitely feel like, every time I travel, every time I get to experience I get to see different cultures, societies, people, and their way for thinking their history and everything. It's not just about okay, now I know more about this, and that it's a bit more like, oh, okay, this is a different way of style of leaving, of living. Or this people think in this way, this is the people that this is their cultures, and then it's very different to what you know, what I'm comfortable with, but it's okay. As well really just made me realize that we are actually, you know, one in one in 7 billion people like, and, and, yeah, and I really want to just know more about everything. And and I feel like I feel like a lot of times that when we talk about like, oh, to know about more international affairs and everything, we only talk about certain countries, and then and then not every country gets to say or to appear on your social media feed or anything you don't know a lot about them. And like, to me personally, I the reason why I travel is really just the reason why quite fixating on traveling to every country is really just because I know there's something for me to say I definitely, but definitely a lot for the for the place to offer. And I just want to be able to see it and then and then in a way that's like, I know that I will definitely become a different person after that journey. I want to use the word humble. But I'm not really short about like how I could justify that word, but it's basically just about every time you you go to go to a place, you may or may not change your idea about the place, you may or may not be challenged, you may or may not just realize that, oh, you step out of the comfort zone. And then I usually come out and becoming a more grounded person, if that makes sense."

"Like, we go through a place, we come back, we exchanged notes. And I was like, Whoa, I didn't, I didn't even think about what you're thinking. And we're seeing the same thing. We're experiencing the same thing. We're coming from similar backgrounds, how come you have to complete different perspective and I and so sometimes I feel like that's, that's very, that's very interesting as well."

"Yes, I think it's so it's because I'm actually an advocate and advocate is a talk about refugee issues in Taiwan. And I just, I don't know, it's something that I just give it the pressure give to myself that I feel like I wanted to know more. So that when other people asked me if, is there any, are there any alternatives? Are there an alternative to this? And there are different ways of supporting refugees, different situations here and there, different supporting systems that we can, we can learn from as a Taiwanese that I wouldn't be able to know all that on this. I get those information. I be there. I feel that and I see I see. I see how people do support and do this kind of supporting work. I feel like that right now when I travel that I sometimes will just look up refugee organizations or to see if there are any events or anything that I can join. So I could just that could be part of my trip. And then tying back to my my passion and my role as an advocate is just that kind of definitely affects what when I, when I go to country right now like or just definitely see the situations of a refugee situation in that specific country. And learning new

information I think is just make me become, like, more resourceful I don't think of right now I definitely don't think there's only one way to support refugees or one way to do things is because I know, five or 10 or 15 different ways, solely because I've been to these countries, I've studied a little bit about how the system works there. And then I talk to people, and I get, you know, some, some sort of support them some, some don't support them. And it's because of this experience makes me a bit more resourceful in terms of like, when people ask me things, I could provide three or four different different situations, and for them to learn more about their options."

Appendix I: Alex's Ethnography Journal Entries

Pre-trip Reflection

Pre-travel Reflection

I'm excited to do something very
difficult w/ a decent amount of risk.
It's a good feeling when you finish
something and you know what you did
was hard. You feel strong & accomplished
I would like to find something in myself
that I didn't know was there....

Topics I want to address
- career choice & others' expectation
  - what do I want for myself?
  - Why do I want it?
- Process much of college & my relations
  with people
  - am I happy w/ who I currently am?
- My own perceived limit vs. what I can
  actually handle.

Day 1 Reflection

Day 1 Reflection
Very very difficult day...
My muscles are very sore 4 I have a couple
of open wounds. Day started not too bad,
but got very difficult very fast. At some
points my legs got very exhausted and
this was before any of the hard cycling.
The day became most stressful once
Randy left and the super 45° incline
scared the living daylights out of me.
I thought if I kept biking on that narrow
road I would get hit for sure. I had
to adjust and bring my bike to the sidewalk.
It was still really hard to walk a lot of
the time, but I had too, because I sure as
hell wasn't turning back.
· BMDM ·

I didn't see a way back honestly.
I kept going and at some point
there was no more sidewalk so I just
walked my bike on the side of the road up
the crazy hill. It was hard and terrifying
But I felt strong after. Same w/ the
tunnel. I got maybe 20% in and
couldn't bike anymore. I also couldn't stand
and was cramped to all hell. So I just sat
in there and waited.___ At some point I pushed
past my limit and finished the tunnel I was
never so happy to see sunlight. The next tunnel
was easy. I had conquered it mentally.
Then I had maybe the best experience
of my life.

BMDM

I bombed this gorgeous & tall "overpass"
and below it was just the city as the sunset.
I was speeding down at 34 km/h and I
felt so incredibly free like I was flying.
The hardest tasks behind me & the future
didn't feel so daunting anymore...It may have
been the best I ever felt. I had never smiled
like that. The rest of journey was still difficult
& the sun going down didn't help. I took a big
rest at this bus stop on the freeway. I kept
yelling at myself and pushing as hard as I
could to make it. And eventually I did and
that felt so great.... I was covered in
dirt & simple things like a shower felt so great.
I felt like I triumphed over my mind.

With this day I felt like I could
do anything. Nothing could be scarier
or harder or bring me closer to
death than the hills & tunnels &
63 kM of covered ground.
Everything (career problems esp.) felt
so small and easy. _ _
I had no reason to be scared of
the unknown because I would make
it through no matter what. _ _
I was strong enough & capable of so much
more then my brain let me. It just
takes time. 8 hours of difficult
treacherous biking. & ~~50 k·~~ 90+kM
over 10+ hours left.

Day 2 Reflection

Day 2 Reflection

I felt a lot of the consequence of the prior day. (Very tired legs), Biking was hard even though it was supposed to be an easier day. I got my ass kicked & I had to keep it together mentally. I had to really push myself, but it was worth it. Yilan was beautiful & I met many supportive people which made it worth it. I remember having to push myself to really finish the ride. I met a very nice hostel owner and had a nice chat w/ Darren a Singaporean lad. I also remember the wind that literally stopped me on the bridge. That was mentally tough to push through. I also remember the nice smile from the construction lady. That left a last impression.

BMDM

Day 3 Reflection

Day 3 Reflection
The biking was not memorable... It was easier, but my right leg had a very bad pain flare up - likely from over use of the muscle in the last 2 days. I remember the most from the the bun lady in the morning who told me about her life, why she chose Taiwan, why steamed buns, what English. I had this genuine interaction w/ her that was amazing. Saw w/ the alcoholic, that was a crazy experience. His story, both his less. The way he cried when I gave him attention & told him I could stay. Or when we listed to 少年啊關天空. I saw his tears & I promised him not to gamble or to drugs in Hualien station. The hostel owner was also very nice again & food recommendation was good. · BMDM ·

Day 4 Reflection

Day 4 Reflection

Short bike → Long tram → short but difficult bike.

I felt like I had conquered and triumphed. My leg hurt so bad at the end & the wind got really bad & then the pouring. It's like the world that want me to beat the trip, but I did.

I felt so happy & strong when done.

I could conquer this easy stuff no problem

Post Trip Reflection

I feel like I answered many questions
I feel confident In doing very difficult
things... I feel more sure that as long
as I apply myself properly I can do and
achieve the things I want.

So many stressors and things have calmed
down. I feel more relaxed and more able to
dive into work. I feel lees scared of
the future & I care significantly lees
about what people think about me
(from all the cars passing and looking).
I feel better & proud that I was able to
do all of that.

Accomplished & Stronger...

ffi

· BMDM ·

Appendix J: Photos from the Ethnography

Alex and a local that he met at Hualien station. They spoke for almost two hours and shared many laughs and a couple tears.

The view from one of the most aggressive inclines on the trip near Keelung City.

Alex's bike in front of a beautiful beach in Yilan.

Alex's bike on day one near Shilin, Taipei.

Treacherous three-kilometer-long tunnel that Alex had to bike through near Keelung City.

Randy picking up his bike from Mathew Bike.

Abby in a public park at Luodong, Yilan.

Alex, battered, beaten, and soaking wet from the rain, returning his bike on day four.