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## The "Americanization" of Global Education: A Comparative Study of American and Italian Students at John Cabot University in Rome, Italy

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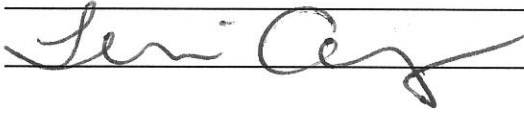
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**The “Americanization” of Global Education: A Comparative Study of American  
and Italian Students at John Cabot University in Rome, Italy**

A Thesis

Presented to the Department of International Studies

College of Liberal Arts and Sciences

and

The Honors Program

of

Butler University

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for Graduation Honors

Chiara Brighid Evelti

May 7, 2018

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## I. Acknowledgements

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*Grazie di cuore!*

## II. Abstract

In 1492 Christopher Columbus set sail for India, going west. He had the Niña, the Pinta and the Santa Maria. He never did find India, but he called the people he met ‘Indians’ and came home and reported to his king and queen: ‘The world is round’. I set off for India 512 years later. I knew just which direction I was going. I went east. I had Lufthansa business class, and I came home and reported only to my wife and only in a whisper: ‘The world is flat’. (Friedman 1)

With the turn of the century, the rise of globalization has greatly impacted, and continues to impact, the development of nation-states’ economies and native cultures. For Friedman, this international phenomenon generates the idea that countries are now on a similar playing field, whether that be culturally, economically, or politically. While it is hard to defend the latter, globalization has seemingly “flattened” the world by way of bringing individuals of different cultures, ethnicities, races, genders, and nationalities closer together. All in all, this process of globalization “...suggests, some worldwide processes have begun to shape each and every walk of our lives” (Manicas and Odin 7). Moreover, as citizens of this internationalized community, we see a specific type of cultural globalization through increased opportunities in travel, the rise in number of international organizations, and the concept of borderless education. For the purpose of this study, I seek to highlight one essential component of the aforementioned cultural globalization: the rise of global education and the so-called “Americanization” of classrooms abroad.

As a dual citizen of Italy and the United States of America, it is important for me to examine the relationship that these two countries possess in the realm of education

with a more critical viewpoint, observing the impact that certain channels of American education have on native Italian culture, language, and schooling. Consequently, one of the most important aspects in this research is the growth in study abroad programs for undergraduate students, especially in regard to Americans studying abroad. Through personal interviews with Italian and American students alike, I compare the experiences of these students at one particular American university in Rome, Italy: John Cabot University. These conversations combined with academic research generate the scale to which Americans interact with the “local” in their host countries, as well as the education that Italians feel that they are receiving. All in all, with recent developments by prominent universities, such as New York University in Asia (Lewin 1), in creating American campuses abroad, it is manifested that this topic is becoming more relevant than ever in discussions on international education and the use of soft power in higher education.

### **III. Introduction**

In March of 2018, “Republican Florida Sen. Marco Rubio called on his state’s schools to close their Confucius Institutes, citing ‘China’s aggressive campaign to *infiltrate* American classrooms, stifle free inquiry, and subvert free expression both at home and abroad’ ” (Allen-Ebrahimian 1). While the example of Confucius Institutes is deeply different, both historically and politically, from that of John Cabot University, this quote presents the dichotomy of global education, especially in the eyes of governing states and their political agendas. Hence, I pose this question: Is the establishment of American universities abroad another “campaign to infiltrate” foreign countries?

classrooms? When is it appropriate to create foreign campuses in native countries? Why is it done?

Although the U.S. seems to crown itself as a prominent champion for global education through an extended array of study abroad programs, many critics feel that the country places American values first over native cultures' thus, obscuring the local norms present when creating American institutions on foreign territories. Furthermore, the establishment of campuses abroad is a key step toward satisfying the linguistic, cultural, and educational ties that are upheld in the United States on a global platform. In order to fully embrace globalization, though, these campuses must represent more than just cultural replicas of the home campus, offering deeper cultural connections rather than stereotypical enrichment opportunities; they must induce reflection on distinct cultures, welcome the critiques of social, and political assumptions, and develop the capacity to build an education on common ground. The more these institutions act as centers of transnational and cross-cultural discourse, the more power they will contribute to the establishment of a global vision (Bloom 1). Therefore, while the presence of American universities abroad is a great measure of international cooperation and global awareness, it fails to preserve and protect the native culture that is present, further promoting a measure of soft power from the United States.

As the primary case study for this thesis, John Cabot University prides itself as a union amongst Americans and international students, though it is catered more toward Americans than any other national group. For example, in the spring of 2018, 58% of the student body is American and 25% is Italian out of 1,285 degree-seeking and visiting students enrolled ("Enrollment Profile" 1). I chose to study this university in particular



because it has a significant exchange partnership with Butler University, so it was easier to connect with Butler students who had studied there during their undergraduate careers. Additionally, it is one of the more prominent American universities in the country, and as it is not a satellite campus for a domestic American university, it is interesting to study how this independent institution functions in this interconnected world. The President of John Cabot University (JCU) claims that, “The model of JCU is quite unique because it brings together...visiting students from more than 160 universities in the United States who come to study in Rome for a semester of academic year, with our own degree-seeking students from all over the world” (Pavoncello 112). When read, this statement seems to re-emphasize the primary purpose of the institution’s goal to cater toward Americans, centering around their individual semester or year abroad. As researched through my review of academic literature and student interviews, this kind of program tends to disrupt full-time students that complete their three to four-year undergraduate programs at the institution.

While it is JCU’s mandate to use an American curriculum, the institution is not necessarily seen as a positive program in the eyes of Italian residents, as they see it as an evident example of ethnocentrism: “Ethnocentrism is an attitude...constituting a readiness to act in favor of in-groups and in opposition to out-groups” (Kinder and Kam 219). For example, only speaking English, promoting the growth of pubs and fast food chains near the area, and taking courses with only American students limits the idea of cross-cultural interaction for visiting students from the U.S.: “The curricular argument is that study abroad enhances education through experiences not available on the home campus such as foreign language fluency and cross-cultural learning” (Twombly et al

14). While JCU does offer a number of foreign language courses, it uses English to engage with students, moving away from this idea of “foreign language fluency”. For Americans, why are there American universities in Italy when there are excellent Italian institutions that would provide them with authentic Italian educational experiences, cheaper tuition costs, and total cultural immersion programs? Ultimately, is not that the scope of studying abroad?

Through my interviews with ten Italian students and ten American students, I observed the experiences behind the concept of an “Americanized” global education, citing historical timelines of U.S.-European interaction, as well as theoretical studies on the expansion of global education. For young adults who want to succeed in the international community, Westernized norms have become sought-after traits, as the English language eliminates linguistic barriers. More importantly, I will examine this quote, studying the truth and the falsehoods behind American global education initiatives: “When students return from studying abroad, many are clearly able to articulate aspects of their role in the world as American citizens, something they could not easily identify before” (Dolby 152). In the end, whether or not American students feel more connected to the international community lies mostly in their experience abroad and their interaction with native cultural customs.

#### **IV. History**

For many scholars, the concept of global education appears to be a practice that is relatively new to the modern world, rising out of the ashes of the World Wars and expanding through the globalization of nation-states. Conversely, history tends to debate this, as many European and Asian institutions provided global exchanges well before the

twentieth century, introducing a multitude of programs: “It is also the case that all of the universities in the world today, with the exception of the Al-Azhar in Cairo, stem from the same historical roots—the medieval European university and, especially, the faculty-dominated University of Paris. Much of the non-Western world had European university models imposed on them by colonial masters” (Altbach 4). Similarly, many universities were funded and supported by European governments and religious groups, working and speaking a common language—a linguistic norm remnant of the dominant Roman powers in the Old World (4).

While it is more common and accessible now than it was a few centuries ago, global education is not unknown in the history of human migration, but the rise of the American university, on the other hand, is a much more recent creation: “The structure of the American university itself, so influential worldwide, constitutes an amalgam of international influences. The original colonial world, imported from England was combined with the German research university idea of the 19th century and the American concept of service to society to produce the modern American university” (4). After its conception, the prestige of the American university boomed through U.S. intervention abroad and the involvement of the U.S. in world affairs. For example, World War II brought a plethora of changes across national borders, producing migrants from the affected territories, as well as American economic growth through technological and political advancement: “Since World War II, American universities have occupied an unchallenged position of preeminence in the world. Owing to high education attainment, vigorous governmental support of scientific research, and a massive influx of scholars from Europe seeking refuge” (Clotfelter 1). For scholars of international relations, World

War II is a clear example of an event that triggered a global reputation for the United States, solidifying its status in the latter half of the nineties as an example of modernity, innovation, and intelligence. Clotfelter also expresses the possibility that higher education has become a prominent export of the U.S., as many countries look to this Western territory as a way to improve themselves and modernize their societies (1).

Concordant with the rise in prestige of American universities, higher education institutions in the United States decided to explore transnational scholastic opportunities themselves, beginning as early as 1879: “Early examples of U.S. students studying abroad as part of their U.S. college or university degree included ‘summer camps’, initiated at Indiana University in 1879 in ‘Overseas Study’ with academic credit first given in 1890; the ‘Princeton in Asia’ Program, started in 1898; and then a broader group of programs at the University of Delaware in 1923” (Highum 1). Historically, the rise in popularity and availability of study abroad programs for American college students was a result of the U.S.’s involvement and intervention abroad. As citizens witnessed the complexities of international conflict on a daily basis, whether that was on the battlefield or through the media, World War I and II engaged Americans with international affairs and foreign cultures. For example, many scholars accredit the growth of study abroad programs with the strategic promotion of foreign languages at universities, as the U.S. government and other public entities valued foreign languages as forces of diplomatic power: “With the arrival of World War I and II, the U.S. government began to take an active interest in the teaching of foreign languages in an attempt to create a globally competitive citizenry and as a strategy for war readiness” (6).

After the end of the World Wars, government interest in foreign language knowledge only expanded, as officials sought students to assist them in translating diplomatic documents and in understanding the intricacies of a post-World War II world. As a result, official government programs were created to further student involvement in international relations, using students as political tools to help magnify American involvement abroad. One of the more notable programs that has withstood the test of time is the Fulbright Program, as students are selected yearly to participate in studying and teaching abroad: “Following the end of World War II, the Fulbright-Hays Act of 1946 led to the promotion of study abroad through the exchange of U.S. and international students, professors, and scholars” (6). Accordingly, many American study abroad programs benefitted from government support, including the Bipartisan Commission on the Abraham Lincoln Study Abroad Fellowship Program in 2005 (Dolby 143). This specific project emphasized “global competence” and “national needs” as core values for American study abroad students, promoting values of economic competitiveness, national security, and participation in the international community (143). This was also combined with the establishment of organizations such as NAFSA: Association of International Educators, the American Council on Education, and the Forum on Education Abroad in 2003: programs created to increase the number of American students overseas (143).

More recently, with the entrance into the twenty-first century, the global community became more critical of the role the United States played in international affairs, as a result of interventions in Iraq and Afghanistan: “...the aftermath of 9/11, and the ensuing United States occupation of Afghanistan, and then Iraq, led to intensified public interest, and debate on the contours of American identity, heightening awareness

of the relationship between nation and self among student who were preparing to travel abroad” (144). This newfound critique does not explicitly state the downfall of American ideals, cultures, and practices, but rather, shows the concerns that many have in embracing the American education system, as it could symbolize imperialist notions, as well as pro-capitalist stances. Alternatively, for American students seeking to study in a foreign country, their country’s politics do seem to present a barrier toward interacting in native cultures of their host counties. As a result, it is possible that many students might turn to American universities because of language barriers, political preference, as well as just overall cultural comfort.

## **V. Global Education**

As discussed in the introduction of this paper, globalization is seen as the act of crossing national borders through trade, education, culture, politics, and almost every aspect of human interaction within the international community. In connection to education, Altbach and Knight define globalization “as the economic, political, and societal forces pushing 21<sup>st</sup> century higher education toward greater international involvement” (290). Consequently, global education brings “the world” to the classroom, allowing students to use sources, tools, and academics from different countries to better prepare themselves for the professional world after school. While this may include the availability of research and academic works to students, it also presents the use of languages, such as English, as certain ubiquitous tongues of academia: “The results of globalization include the integration of research, the use of English as the lingua franca for scientific communication, the growing international labor market for scholars and scientists, the growth of commercial firms of multinational and technology publishing,

and the use of information technology” (291). For many universities, global education is seen as a way to better prepare citizens for professional careers, introducing students to different perspectives and interpersonal interactions. In this light, many proponents of global education see it as advantageous for institutions to produce individuals that are well-versed in cross-cultural communications and international affairs: “...higher education must come to be identified not only as responsible for preparing citizens for societal roles and for fostering the pursuit of knowledge, but also as responsible through its structure and mission for elevating perspective above parochial, national, and ideological concerns toward the common pursuit of a more informed, accountable, just, and peaceful world” (Bloom 1).

Global education has also been criticized as a practice that assimilates distinct cultures into more dominant societies, blending cultures into more imperialistic notions: “...the term is used to talk about the alleged emergence of a homogenous world culture and the extinction of cultural difference and specificity” (Manicas and Odin 8). Likewise, it symbolizes the emergence of a unified educational policy that encompasses academic practices by a cultural entity that has been deemed superior: ideas that stem, once again, from preconceived hegemonic cultures, mostly deriving from Western societies, such as the United States. “The revitalized role of international players in educational politics contributes to the deterritorialization of the education policy process and to the ‘national’ territory losing its centrality in such processes...” (Verger et al. 15). The outcome of global education is hard to quantify or measure, as it is purely experiential and personal, but in regard to research, it has enabled scholars to become more globally competent in their studies: “No matter where the students study in universities, they will share

knowledge taught in other parts of the world; they should know the latest developments in their disciplines; and they will have similar methods of doing their research” (Manicas and Odin 173).

In the analysis of global education as a phenomenon of globalization, another key term is used to describe the evolution of international academia: internationalization. According to Altbach and Knight, “internationalization includes the policies and practices undertaken by academic systems and institutions—and even individuals—to cope with the global academic environment” (290). In this light, internationalization is the product of globalization in the realm of education, as universities and colleges continue expanding their institutional scope to other communities outside of their native lands. More specifically, this comes in the form of university branch campuses, franchised foreign academic programs, or independent institutions (Altbach and Knight 290). Cantwell and Maldonado-Maldonado explain it as a process where local and global forces coming together, creating a new platform for higher education: “Globalisation is seen as an over-arching social and economic process where as internationalisation is understood as the ways in which institutions of higher education respond to globalisation” (290). Internationalization is what fuels the fire for American university expansion overseas, addressing global trends with nationalistic mindsets. Examples, such as economic advantage, allow the home states to enhance the scope of global education: “the motivations for internationalization include commercial advantage, knowledge and language acquisition, enhancing the curriculum with international content, and many others” (Altbach and Knight 290). This could also include study abroad experiences, curriculum advancement with new global major concentrations, such as international



relations majors, or language classes (293). Through internationalization, universities can embrace transnational education with new initiatives to boost interest in international affairs, engaging students with the world outside of their textbooks.

In regard to overseas experiences, there has been an evident trend in education, such as enforcing imperialistic notions by the Global North toward less developed countries. Additionally, there are a variety of challenges that come into play when analyzing branch campuses or campus partnerships abroad. For instance, “transnational initiatives operate within the north-to-south dynamic and are almost without exception dominated by the partner institutions in the North—in terms of curriculum, orientation, and sometimes the teaching staff” (Watanabe and McConnell 81). In international relations, this is best exemplified by the dependency theory, where there are states on the periphery, or the Global South, that fuel the economic development of states in the center, or the Global North. Moreover, countries in the Global North, which include the United States, attract more students and monetary value because they are English-speaking and outwardly modernized societies. The countries on the periphery have weaker resources and lower academic standards in comparison to the options that the Global North presents with an infinite amount of specializations, research opportunities, and campus involvement (Allen-Ebrahimian 7). If a country’s academic system is more successful in attracting international talent and interest, how do the other countries compete? Altbach and Knight argue that universities, in addition to being accredited and registered in their home countries, must find a manner to ensure quality assurance across borders: “Regulatory frameworks for quality assurances or accreditation, even when they exist usually do not apply to providers outside the national education system” (300).

While there are several challenges in attaining registration and accreditation, institutions that seek multinational higher education initiatives must also compete culturally. In regard to branch campuses or campus partnerships with local institutions, “history shows that the export of education institutions and the linking of institutions from different countries generally represented a union of inequality. In almost all cases, the institution from the outside dominated the local institution, or the new institution was based on foreign ideas and nonindigenous values” (Allen-Ebrahimian 17). As discussed previously, the presence of multinational higher education programs has colonial roots, especially between Europe and its colonized territories, whether it was the British in Asia, the French in Africa, or the Catholic Church in Latin America (16). In today’s world, while overarching powers have left their former colonies, imperialism is not as tangible as it once was; the influence of one’s culture over another’s has partaken in more psychological aspects rather than physical. As a result, scholars have coined this process as “cross border supply”, or the franchising of education (Altbach and Knight 291). This capitalist notion of global education reinforces the aforementioned dependency theory by presenting a competitive range of universities, programs, or providers: “By any measure—such as flows of international students, franchises of academic programs to foreign providers, international accreditors or quality guarantors, or controlling partners in ‘twinning’ arrangements—these countries reap the main financial benefits and control most programs” (294). For example, the University of Indianapolis first began its study abroad program in Greece as a partnership with a Greek university in Athens, but later established an independent branch campus within the country (298). Nowadays, it does not seem to disturb students when their alma maters pursue international projects, as it is

seen as advantageous and progressive in generating worldwide prestige. Oppositely, the innate imperialistic notions produced through these initiatives are seen as a culmination of globalizations' darker side: the occlusion of cultures to replace them with superior economic counterparts.

While I am not discussing a branch campus in my study, John Cabot University in Rome, Italy was originally associated with Hiram College in the United States, but became an independent university in 1991: "John Cabot University is a US accredited American overseas liberal arts university, operating in Rome since 1972 as an American four-year college, with the authorization of the Italian government" (Pavoncello 112). Furthermore, since its establishment as an American university in Rome, the university has been authorized by the Italian government's Ministry of Education, as well as the United States Department of Education. To further launch its American identity, "John Cabot University is incorporated as a not-for-profit organization in the State of Delaware and is licensed to award its degrees by the Delaware Department of Education" ("Accreditation, Licensing & Memberships Information" 1). On paper, JCU is very much an American university, but the institution prides itself on its multinational identity, as well as its English-dominated classrooms. Likewise, the university's president, Franco Pavoncello, greatly values the American culture that is promoted throughout the university: "The world is full of beautiful languages and there are more people speaking Chinese or Spanish than English, but it is an objective fact that when people around the world who don't share the same languages speak to each other, they do it in English, the undisputed language of globalization" (Pavoncello 113). Even more appealing to American students is the relatively discounted tuition JCU possesses in comparison to

many campuses in the United States. For the fall of 2017 and the spring of 2018, tuition and fees were \$11,050 (“Students Paying in Dollars Fall 2017 and Spring 2018” 1). JCU has also received international praise for its location and campus, as it was awarded the top spot for Top 15 U.S. Universities with international campuses: an excellent location for undergraduate students with “foreign-language-phobia” (Kraska 1). Furthermore, from these statistics arise ideas that universities abroad are becoming more and more similar to universities in the United States. Whether this is happening by chance, by force, or by the pressures of internationalization, that has yet to be concretely established with time. This paper argues that American expansion abroad is more in line with U.S. soft power than many might see:

In this view, societies historically used to be culturally homogeneous, but increasing migration has led to mixed cultures in many societies, and thus to the rise of multiculturalism. Given that the United States, as the largest settler society with a long history of immigration from different regions of the world, can be seen as having pioneered this trend, the emergence of multicultural situations elsewhere in the world, notably in Europe, can also be called Americanization. (Manicas and Odin 8)

As multinational and international initiatives for global education take flight, many scholars, such as the ones cited above, have critically analyzed whether the Americanization of higher education benefits any certain population, and whether it obstructs native cultures.

## **VI. Methodology**

As this study is a comparative analysis of the viewpoints of American students versus Italian students in regard to John Cabot University, I used an interpretative group of methods to analyze students' connection to this phenomenon of globalization. I organized and conducted interviews to hear students' perspectives, speaking with a total of twenty students to get a more inclusive perspective of American and Italian students at John Cabot University in Rome, Italy. Through the Center for Global Education at Butler University, I was connected with ten current Butler students that had studied abroad at JCU over their undergraduate career. Additionally, I was linked with the directors of international affairs at John Cabot, who put me in touch with ten current Italian students that were pursuing degrees at the university. In total, I spoke with twenty students, ten of each nationality, about their experiences at the university and their motivations behind choosing to study in Italy.

Furthermore, my research is more qualitative in scope, using the snowball sampling technique for the interviewing process: a technique where participants assisted me in finding additional subjects to speak with. I asked a series of thirty questions that were a combination of informative and experiential-based questions, reflecting on the students' motivations to attend JCU and their perception of foreign students: a topic that was dependent on their nationality. In order to maintain the privacy of the interviews, each participant signed a consent form before the meeting in order to maintain anonymity. These documents further outlined the possibility of audio recordings during the interviews for my own quality assurance purpose. I recorded the audio of every interview with student approval in order to go back and collect quotes for the study.

Overall, the questions centered on the students' experience, their interest in Italian or American affairs, and their studies at John Cabot University. The total duration of each interview varied from thirty minutes to one hour, depending on the subject's participation and the length of their response to the questions. I chose to conduct interviews in order to gain more personal perspectives on this phenomenon, hearing the real voices of students involved in this international experience. The interview questions were broad enough to allow students to reflect on their undergraduate experience, as well as giving them the opportunity to personally reflect on their studies abroad. There were two sets of questions for each group, and even though they were very similar, they had to be separate because of different locations and programs. I included an example of the questions in the Appendix.

Lastly, I concluded the interviews for both sets of participants with a question to examine the language-barrier for the respective students. For American students from Butler University, I asked: If there was not a language barrier and you spoke/studied Italian, would you go back and attend an authentic Italian institution versus JCU for your study abroad experience? I also asked Italians if they would change their decision to attend JCU: Would you go back and go to an authentic Italian institution? If you had the opportunity, financially, would you have preferred to study in the U.S. and attend an American university? I will examine the responses to these questions later on, but I included them because the students provided a lot of insight into the various barriers in traveling, as well as in studying languages.

## **VII. Student Experiences**

In crossing transnational borders, higher education also happens to integrate cross-cultural interactions into the experiences of students overseas, allowing study abroad students to immerse themselves physically and mentally into another culture: “Some aspects of human culture are universal, some are national, and others are particular to social classes or small groups. Culture is never static, and different cultures interact in different ways” (Nye 84). In living in new countries, it has been shown that American students have opened their minds to diverse languages, societies, and cultures, allowing them to view their identity and nationality from an external perspective. Oppositely, when choosing their programs, it is argued that many American students tend to stick with what is more familiar, culturally, to what they know in the United States: “If the provider is a top ranked American university, students are more likely to consider the program as better than domestic programs and will be attracted to it” (Clotfelter 170). When asking the Butler University undergraduate students why they chose Italy as their study abroad destination, all ten of them acknowledged that they liked the idea of being in a foreign country without having to worry about using a foreign language in classes. This will be further discussed in the following section on language learning, but it highlights the importance of comfort in maintaining one’s national identity with studying overseas.

### **A. Study Abroad Motivations**

During my interviews, many students, such as Samantha and Madison, said that they chose to go to JCU because former Butler students had recommended it to them. Another student, Maria, emphasized that the positive experiences of other Butler students at JCU

made her feel more comfortable going abroad: “I knew other Butler people that had gone there and had really enjoyed the experience, so it made me feel better going abroad, knowing that there were other people that had gone there”. Additionally, a few students expressed that they really wanted to travel and experience living outside of the United States. For Joan this included experiencing a more global perspective of the world: “You realize things are more global, and I think you are more aware of how things affect different areas. Just because before I would always think, you know, you see things on the news and you notice how it affects you, but you don’t take into consideration that people are the same everywhere. So, if something happens in the United States, odds are that there is some ripple effect in other countries, and you don’t think about that as much”. The Butler students also expressed a plethora of desires to learn more about Italian history, art, and European culture when choosing JCU’s program in Italy, connecting with the mission of using international exchanges to open the minds of American students.

In comparison, the Italian students that I interviewed shared similar views in regard to their experiences at John Cabot University, such as wanting a global academic experience with a piece of home. Eight out of the ten that students that I spoke with had already previously studied in the United States during their high school years, as it is common for Italian students to take their fourth year (out of five) of high school abroad. Because of this, many students emphasized a desire to go back to the U.S. to study, but because of ties to home or the burden of finances, they saw JCU as the best option: “When I came back from studying abroad, I was ready to go back to the U.S., but then I realized that I don’t really want to leave my country. I discovered John Cabot University and to me it



was the best option” (Eleonora). Clara even said that, “For Italians, it’s the convenience of studying in Italy, but for me, it’s not something convenient. I would have loved to have studied abroad. It’s the bargain you get because you spend less money, but also, a lot of people from John Cabot are directly from Rome”. While the Butler students were leaving the comfort of their homes to go abroad to study, many claimed that studying at an American university made it easier to study in a foreign country. In contrast, Italian students felt that getting an American degree made students more marketable for employment post-graduation: “You want to have that distinct degree. When you go looking for a job in the future, employers will look at your degree and say, ‘Oh cool! We had so many Italians that went to an Italian university, but you went to an Italian-American university, that’s great!’ Therefore, you have more doors open for you” (Cristina). Comparatively, Italian students emphasized the desire to incorporate English into their daily lives, but wanted to maintain the same lifestyles and culture that they had in their home country.

### **B. Language-Learning**

In regard to language-learning, English was the most discussed topic in my interviews, as both sets of students included it as the central aspect of their experiences at JCU: “English is the Latin of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. In the current period, the use of English is central for communicating knowledge worldwide, for instruction even in countries where English is not the language of higher education” (Altbach 9). The Americanization of higher education is frequently tied to the transformation of dominant research languages, as it evolved from Latin to German, and French to English (Clotfelter 232). The rise of English as the language of globalization has made a staple in international education, as

schools across the world include it in grade school, elementary school, and high school curriculums. For example, in Italy, students study English throughout elementary and secondary education, beginning in the first grade: “The most widely studied foreign language in the world, English is also the most widely used second language. In many countries, it is the required second language, and it is the second language of choice almost without exception” (Altbach 10).

When discussing the use of English over Italian at JCU, Butler students’ responses on their linguistic experiences varied. When first discussing their interest in Italy, Joan said, “I didn’t want to go somewhere English-speaking”. Conversely, Madison was attracted to this particular study abroad program because she liked the idea of experiencing Italian culture: “I wanted to go somewhere that spoke a different language because I wanted to be fully immersed in a different culture”. As Butler University does not offer Italian courses, five students really wanted to incorporate language classes into their courses abroad. One student, Caroline, emphasized her desire to adapt to the Italian culture, saying that while students at JCU had to speak English in class, she wanted to interact with Italians by using some basic Italian phrases or words: “They had to speak English, which I didn’t like because I kind of wanted to learn Italian. I took an Italian class, and it was cool to learn their language”. For the ones that did take Italian language classes, they emphasized the importance it played in interacting with natives: “I was able to communicate with people more effectively, and even if I couldn’t understand them completely, I could kind of go along with it” (Caroline). Throughout my interviews with the ten Butler students, they unanimously agreed that they were surprised at how mundane English was throughout Rome. Hayley even said, “I was surprised because

most everybody was fine with you using English. It was not a problem at all in Rome”.

Others, such as Joan, even explained that they were amazed at the presence of a variety of languages in the city: “I didn’t go out of my way to try and learn any Italian, but it was kind of nice, walking around, you hear so many different languages, not just Italian”.

For the Italian students, the use of English is important in their academic experiences, as it allows them to interact with not only Americans, but students from all over the world. Roberta even stated that, “The best is having an international community because, every time, you can exchange opinions, and so, you don’t just listen to Italian perspectives or American perspectives, you have Chinese perspectives or Colombian perspectives...”. This sentiment is further echoed in Tsuneyoshi’s study on American universities in Japan: “The use of English brought a diverse population into the classroom, not just in regards to language, but in terms of training, expectations, and cultural background” (79). In the class setting, the Italian students were not very critical of American study abroad students’ use of English, as they came to JCU with the main purpose of using English in the classroom. Two students, though, expressed that there was a linguistic imbalance between the native English speakers and the rest of the classmates. Even though this is common throughout study abroad programs around the world, as the native speakers welcome language learners to their country, this is one of the rare cases where the natives are the language learners in their own country: “I feel that sometimes they (the American students) fit better because they are more fluent. For example, in the political classes, they know how to explain the concepts better. I see when the Italian students are having difficulties” (Francesca). This does not distract from JCU’s larger mission of preparing culturally competent and internationally aware

students, but rather allows for a greater number of American students to experience these programs. Altbach re-affirms that, "...countries are increasingly offering academic programmes in English—to attract international students unwilling to learn the local language and to improve the English language skills of domestic students and thus enable them to work in an international arena" (10).

### **C. Cultural Competency**

On topics of cultural competence and awareness, JCU students, both American study abroad students and Italian degree seekers, discussed the university's promotion of multinational interactions. When discussing American study abroad programs, "universities often promote study abroad as a part of an effort to expand students' worldview and to improve American students' ability to negotiate a global workplace in a world that is in the throes of the multiple, conflictual forces of globalization" (Dolby 141-142). When I asked what they liked most about Italian culture, Butler students' responses varied from food and history to quality of life: "They walk like there's nowhere to be, which was kind of nice because you slow down and look around to see what is around you" (Joan). Likewise, many students gained a broader perspective on their own American identities, analyzing their country's role in international affairs, as well as their culture's norms. When asked, all ten of the Butler students defined American culture as "fast-paced", which was interesting to compare to their perceived notion of Italian culture being more relaxed. Joan also discussed that she felt that Americans were more obsessed with the media, coining the attitude as "information overload": "You are always connected. Here (in the U.S.), you are always on your phone and you see the news somewhere, or a headline. I feel like we are all so consumed with any type of information

that we can get our hands on”. These perspectives were collected after students returned from their study abroad experiences, making it even more noteworthy, as they reflected on their actions and experience from a distance: “When students return from studying abroad, many are clearly able to articulate aspects of their role in the world as American citizens, something they could not easily identify before” (Dolby 152).

In order to delve further into their interactions with native Italians, I asked if they talked or spent time with Italians outside of the classroom. While most said no, or that they limited their interactions with natives by talking to coffee shop owners or waiters, there was one student who said that he made it a point to interact with Italians every day: “It was nice being able to go up to a store owner and just talk about their lives and how it is different in Italy. I would also show up to the same restaurant every couple of weeks, talk with the store owners, and just chat about life” (Jack). Some students also expressed their acknowledgment of “tourist traps” or locations that are not necessarily authentic, but rather, catered toward the American tourist: “At the end, I was able to tell which restaurants were not as authentic as other Italian restaurants, as their menu items were more suited to what Americans thought Italian food was like” (Rachel). Throughout my interviews with these students, I noticed that only one of them had established connections with Italian friends or additional relationships with Italians while abroad. Most of the students developed friend groups that were predominately composed of American students, or other study abroad students from around the world. Therefore, Hayley expressed that she wished that she could have immersed herself more in the culture: “I would’ve loved to be more integrated into the culture and have friends from Italy. For the time that I was there, I did get an experience about what it was like to live

there”. In addition to this, when asked whether they had attended any American restaurants, bars, or other businesses, eight of the students said yes, as Trastevere (the neighborhood where JCU is located) is a very touristic location, allowing international restaurants to cater toward the global student body. One student further discussed it, presenting her opinion on this “cultural invasion”:

I think, with one of my good friends that I met abroad, we both realized quickly that that is where all the study abroad students are. So, we kind of stayed away from those because by doing that you are doing the same thing that you could do at home. That’s not actually what a twenty-one-year-old Italian student would spend their weekend-night doing. I came here to get a new experience and see how people live their life here. (Samantha)

Similarly, many of the Italian students that I spoke with also reiterated the importance of gaining a global perspective of the political world through John Cabot University: “Once you are here, and you find yourself in such a dynamic, stimulating, and culturally-diverse environment, you will be amazed. You will realize, first of all, things about yourself and your culture, but also other people, and how other people approach life and studying” (Eleonora). Roberta even said that, “There are more American study abroad students than full-time students. The majority of my American friends at John Cabot are study abroad students”. Cristina, on the other hand, echoed the stereotypical sentiment of natives toward American visitors, viewing them as too obnoxious and disconnected to completely understand Italian culture: “I prefer to hang out with Italians because they understand the culture. Americans are too loud”.

The perceptions of American study abroad students varied, but I would argue that through my interviews, Italian students were much more pessimistic and critical of American students than Butler students. For example, Michael expressed a very negative attitude on the presence of American study abroad students at JCU: “I am not trying to generalize them as a whole because some of them are great, but there is a lot of them that are quite full of themselves and are not trying to adapt to Italians at all. Every night, they are drinking and partying. Study abroad is just party-party for them and travel-travel”. Others echoed these thoughts, explaining that study abroad students from the U.S. do not actually spend a majority of their time in Italy, taking weekends off every week to travel to other European countries. Many coined this as the “travel bug”, as countries in Europe are so close together, allowing Americans who may or may not have traveled abroad before to take advantage of every moment to visit other locations.

Additionally, before asking the Italian students to analyze their preconceived ideas of American culture, I asked them to define their own Italian identity. This question, for Americans and Italians alike, was surprisingly the most difficult throughout the interviews, as describing one’s own culture is intricately challenging because it is not something most humans typically examine on a daily basis; it is a permanent trait that does not seem very permeable or volatile because it is a status that many have inherited naturally. While all ten Butler students described Italian culture as “laid back”, Italians chimed in by describing their culture as “bureaucratic”, “less stressed”, and “relaxed”. Conversely, Butler students described their American culture as “fast-paced” and “anxious”, while Italians viewed Americans as “confident” and “stressed”. For example, Michael emphasized the transient topic of time, saying that Americans “are so on-time

and precise, while here in Italy, it's all on your own time". To further examine how these stereotypes unfold, I asked about the presence of American services and locations, as Trastevere is known to be a very prominent tourist location for Americans: "Honestly, I feel like Trastevere is a Little America because many restaurants and many bars are specifically targeting the American students around here that come to John Cabot. For instance, I might walk to campus and see signs that say, 'get your American to-go coffee': something that is definitely not Italian in theory" (Eleonora). This attraction of Americans toward Italy is not a recent phenomenon, as throughout the centuries, Americans have been fascinated with European culture and history as a result of cheaper transportation options and easier travel policies. One of the Italian students, Lorenzo, explained a different side to the story, stating that Italians are as fascinated with American culture as Americans are with Italy. For him, John Cabot blends both of his worlds: "There is a misperception that people think that being at an American university abroad might be different because of the influence of the Italian culture. It actually is not true, especially in comparison to other European universities. Here, at John Cabot, it is authentic".

To end this section on culture, I asked students if they related or connected more to American culture or Italian culture in order to see if their feelings of identity have changed as a result of their multicultural experiences. For the Butler students, nine students echoed that they felt more connected to Italian culture, but still identified as being American, while only one felt whole-heartedly Italian. Samantha even said, "I wouldn't necessarily say that it is my second home (Italy), but I do feel very connected to that place. It is very difficult to fully be able to call some place your home when you



didn't grow up there. Especially, if you're not fully Italian or speak the language". One student expressed a desire to go live and work in Italy full-time, and it was interesting to note that this individual was one of the few students that studied Italian while abroad. In comparison, all ten of the Italian students emphasized that their identities were still 100% Italian, but that the American component of the school definitely did give them a more global understanding of society outside of the United States.

#### **D. Higher Education Experiences**

Lastly, I concluded my interviews with an in-depth discussion of the academic environment of John Cabot University in the eyes of both groups of students. In the United States, "... American students who had studied overseas (either a component or a full degree), the findings were even more positive. Interestingly, future employability did not really play a major role in their decision to study overseas, alumni chose to study overseas for a variety of reasons, the primary one being a desire to experience another culture or to see another part of the world" ("Demand for Study Overseas" 2). For the ten Butler students, they took a variety of courses: classes that counted as electives and others that were designed toward their majors. For Kathy, the classes that were with full-time JCU students were the most challenging because they had a more structured curriculum and various homework assignments. Maria said that it felt very similar to Butler, as classes were in English and rooms were occupied by groups of approximately 25 students: "I think the fact that there were a lot of American students, and classes seemed to run the same as they did at home, it was very similar to Butler. It was also an English-speaking environment, so that helped". Furthermore, the transition back to campus after four months of being abroad did pose a complex switch, as Jack stated that

the course load of classes was different at JCU in comparison to Butler University: “It was difficult to come back. Classes in Rome were easier: easier because they were more tuned to what I was good at: writing”. Many discussed that classes at JCU were easier because they were more focused on cultural competency and awareness, instead of memorization and exams. This is a familiar statement for many alumni of study abroad programs, as American universities in the U.S. typically promote programs that incorporate classes focused on cultural development while students are overseas. For many, “easy” did not seem to be the best word to describe the elective courses that they took, as the courses were just different to what they had experienced at Butler University.

For my own research, I ended the interviews with the Butler students with a “what if” question: Would you have studied abroad at an Italian university had you known the language? I received mixed reviews on this question, as half said that they would have enjoyed a more authentic experience, while others were not convinced that speaking Italian would have changed their perception of Italy. Hayley said that, “It might’ve been cool to actually meet people from Italy”, while Joan said, “It would have to be something where I was very, very comfortable with my Italian”. Caroline even said, “I think it would be so cool to understand their culture completely and experience it firsthand”. All but two students said that they possibly would have enjoyed a more Italian experience, while Anne stated that she enjoyed the comfort of JCU and the American education system: “I feel like having Americans was very comforting to me and allowed for me to feel more at home”. As this paper discusses native attitudes and perceptions toward American students, it was fascinating to hear that many American students did not feel

that their English imposed any cultural or linguistic barriers, stating that Italian was not essential to understanding a culture different from their own.

Alternatively, when discussing the academic system at JCU, Italians enjoyed the American concept of the university because it “provides the means for students to match the Italian culture with the American culture, or, rather, there is the American environment with the Italian state” (Lorenzo). The switch from the Italian high school system to JCU for the Italian natives seemed to unanimously be easier for the students, as Eleonora said that, “The Americans aren’t used to studying in the way Italians do study. We are more theoretical in a way because in high school, we go from studying philosophy and studying a lot. So, when we come here, it is actually easier”. When asking the students whether or not they thought JCU was an authentic American university, many were skeptical, discussing that it was more global in scope than American. For example, Clara discussed that there is a duality to JCU that promotes a more elite group of students and social classes: “John Cabot is multicultural, but at the same time, there are a lot of rich people, so that is what makes the difference. I don’t think it is about identity, it’s more about where you come from”. The students also had various perceptions of American universities, describing schools in the U.S. as large lecture halls and party hubs: “In America, you go and there are these huge rooms with two hundred students, you know, and that’s just not how it is at JCU. You go into a classroom and there are twenty-thirty students with desks” (Cristina). While there are large universities in Italy, many students were not familiar with the small-school feeling of Butler University, imaging it as one of the stereotypical schools in American movies.

When analyzing the classroom norms, almost all of the Italian students stated that American students are more confident in JCU courses because they are used to participating in class and sharing their opinion. In addition to this, many Italians emphasized that they were used to more theoretical practices in their Italian high schools, as well as oral exams, while JCU incorporates discussion-based classes with team projects and large papers. Michael argued this, saying that JCU actually felt more Italian than American to him: “A lot of Cabot is so Italian, like the rules and the mentality of the university. It’s 100% Italian, but it has an American name on it”. Similarly, three students discussed that it did not feel completely American because it lacked the school spirit or social aura of a true American university, such as school-sponsored events, homecoming, dances, football games, and sports: “I think JCU is supposed to be American, but from what I see in the movies, the classes are bigger, there are frat parties, and all this crazy stuff that JCU just doesn’t have. Sometimes I forget that I even go to an American university” (Cristina). In contrast to the American students, I asked if they felt that there was a certain stigma attached toward Italians that study at non-Italian universities. All ten of the students said yes, with eight of them saying that there is a very negative perception of natives toward Italian degree-seekers at JCU: “Yes, definitely. Italians think that their system is the best because it is a common thing to say, but mostly people don’t know or don’t have the means to make a comparison” (Lorenzo). Patrizia even said, “They think it is an easy school, and that since it is private, you are basically just buying your degree”. There seemed to be a stigma toward JCU where students purchased their education instead of earning it: “Yes, it’s more of a stereotype. That students have a lot of money,

the Italians that study at the John Cabot. It it's the English, or because it's private or prestigious, I don't know" (Michael).

In conclusion, I asked the Italian students similar questions to the ones that I posed to the Americans: If you had the means, would you have preferred to study abroad for four years in the U.S.? Two students said yes, while others emphasized that they are happy that they found John Cabot University, as it has allowed for them to be stay in their own country and practice their English at the same time. The American degree that comes with an education at JCU is seen as valuable asset to future careers, as all students expressed a desire to live and work abroad (not necessarily in the United States): "If you want to work in the U.S. after graduation, for example, a U.S. school may be better able to smooth the way for you with career advice and contacts" (Blackman 1). They emphasized that it gives them an advantage over other Italians, linguistically and culturally; it provides more positive experiences in finding work abroad, as well as excellent stories and professional examples for interviews ("Demand for Study Overseas" 1). On the whole, they did not believe that the American study abroad students effectively engaged and understood the Italian culture. Approximately nine of them discussed American students' attitudes at JCU as a hinderance to cross-cultural communication, as students came already expecting others to bend to their customs and social expectations.

### **VIII. American Soft Power**

In the discussion of global education and American influence internationally, the political term "soft power" arises in connection to how American programs abroad interact with native cultures. This leads to further questions on American cultural intervention, as some scholars argue that the increase in American-led exchange

programs inherently promotes American ideals and values in foreign populations: “Recent discussions in U.S. government circles about America’s public diplomacy around the world refer frequently to the strength and attractiveness of the country’s higher education system and the effectiveness of educational exchanges as a way to explain American values to the rest of the world...” (Watanabe 70). Soft power, a term coined by Joseph Nye in the 1980s, “is the ability of a country to persuade others to do what it wants without force or coercion” (Nye 1). In politics, soft power is renowned in foreign policy because it promotes diplomatic measures over military intervention to resolve conflict. The manipulation of culture is important because it can drastically change social norms and national perceptions across borders: “Although governments control policy, culture and values are embedded in civil societies. Soft power may appear less risky than economic or military power, but it is often hard to use, easy to lose, and costly to reestablish” (83). American soft power became famous through the promotion of “critical languages”, especially during the Cold War, through government-funded programs, such as Boren, National Security Education Program, and the Benjamin Gilman scholarship (Highum 6).

In terms of education, the United States did not become interested in international expansion until the 1950s, especially in the Middle East: “Not before the 1950s did the U.S. government become a significant supporter of the other classic missionary universities overseas, the American University of Beirut and the American University in Cairo, peaking in the 1970s and 1980s” (Gjedssø and Møller 30). Historically, this played an important role in American foreign policy during the Cold War, using soft power to introduce American democracy in areas, such as Latin America and the Middle East. As

English became a popular language, politically and economically, universities worldwide promoted the study of this Western language. This elevation of soft power in academia became a way for parties to influence higher authorities in decision-making; it is “a two-step model in which publics and third parties are influence, and they in turn affect the leaders of other countries. In this case, “soft power has an important indirect effect by creating an enabling environment for decisions” (Nye 94). This was principally supported through the infamous Fulbright program, which is founded by the American government, to allow American nationals to teach English abroad (Manicas and Odin 176). In today’s society, soft power is maintained in the realm of education to produce competent and globally-prepared individuals: “To keep the United States in a world leadership role, political and business leaders—and educators—argue that students must have the knowledge and skills to function in a global world” (Twombly 23). The addition of “educators” in this commentary is quite strategic, emphasizing how business and political minds view education as a strong tool in producing political allies. This “intercultural competence” that governments, such as the United States, value is a desire to fabricate future political leaders that are able to understand the innerworkings of dissimilar societies: “Intercultural competence refers to the successful engagement or collaboration toward a single or shared set of goals between individuals or groups that do not share the same cultural origins or background” (69). For many critics of global education, the expansion of American programs abroad is directly correlated to the pressure for American students face in searching for jobs: “This consumer identity mentality meshes with the need to consume others’ cultures for the instrumental purpose of helping U.S. students get jobs” (97).

Over the years, Italy has become a strong ally of the U.S. government, as well as a nation that holds a certain regard for American and Italian cultures alike. Culturally, it is deemed a Western nation, and possesses many similar political structures, capitalistic norms, and social standards that the U.S. also values. For example, in a survey conducted by the Pew Research Center in 2014, “in European countries surveyed, half or more of the publics in seven of nine nations say they see the U.S. in a positive light. Top of the list are Italians (78%), French (75%) and Poles (73%)” (Stokes 1). According to the International Institute of Education (IIE), Italy is also the second most popular destination for American study abroad students, bringing in around 34, 894 students during the 2015-2016 academic year; this is around 10.7% of all American study abroad students that travel during their undergraduate semesters (“Destinations” 1). In comparison, Butler University’s Center for Global Education website lists Italy first on its opening page. CGE lists over 110 programs in 70 countries, but around ten of these programs are in Italy (“Center for Global Education” 1). While the Italian students that I interviewed emphasized the benefits that an American education would provide them in future careers, I found that few American students discussed how this would benefit their lives post-graduation. Contrariwise, many Butler students discussed how studying abroad would open their minds and help them become better global citizens. In regard to global expansion, the United States is a perpetrator of promoting its national language and culture through American institutions overseas: “In terms of objective soft power assets, the U.S. is still largely unmatched. With American universities among the best in the world, it’s no surprise the U.S. attracts more international students than anywhere else” (“United States” 1).



Subsequently, the discussion of American hegemony is not a foreign topic in international affairs, as the U.S. rose in popularity after the two World Wars. In modern times, it is even harder to image the United States without its colossal military and economic power: “Today’s America still remains the most important and influential country in the world. Its economy produces one quarter of the gross world product, and it has the greatest conventional weaponry able to be deployed to any part of the globe. Its military expenditures are approximately equal to fifteen other countries combined” (Mania and Wordliczek 188). While it is difficult to quantify the financial costs of all the American study abroad students and programs abroad, the numbers of students that leave to study overseas are just as impressionable. Between 2015-2016, NAFSA found that there was a 3.8% increase in the number of American students that left to study abroad, jumping from 313,415 to 325,339 students in total (*Trends in U.S. Study Abroad* 1). Of these students, 54.4% studied in Europe (1), which is an incredible number, considering the variety of programs across continents. Furthermore, American universities abroad have established “an American standard” for classrooms: providing syllabi, field trips, and guest speakers for more collaborative environments (Tsuneyoshi 71). As a result, it seems that the American academic experience attracts international attention because of its classroom constructions and curriculum developments, but politically, it also provides for greater diplomatic ties and cultural exchanges amongst nations.

Recently, Representative Brian Baird discussed American soft power by way of universities abroad, presenting American expansion as more of a competitive reaction to changing times: “If the U.S. universities aren’t doing this, someone else likely will. I think it’s better that we be invited in than that we be left out” (Lewin 1). If international

exchanges become an issue of “us versus them”, is there much consideration being put into how study abroad exchanges affect native cultures? One of the most apparent obstacles to study abroad programs is the introduction of English into societies: societies where English is not the mother tongue. American study abroad students that live overseas without knowledge of the host country’s language seem to struggle with grasping cultural norms: “Immediately apparent obstacles to their participation in local activities included the lure of the American cohort... but also the temptation to retain strong social ties to home-based friends and family, the ready availability of English-medium resources, and the preference for English as lingua mundi among international students and in some classrooms” (Kinging 7). This presents a barrier to truly global experiences, as students expect to function within new cultural, political, and social societies with habits and customs from home. The most divisive issue is that American-supported study abroad programs have been found to promote American norms instead of native customs, which endorses a negative connotation of American students’ presence internationally. The lack of cultural and linguistic respect allows for natives to criticize students from the U.S., generating pessimistic stereotypes of students studying at American programs: “Any development of American-style education in a foreign country runs the risk of educating students in a way or at a level that creates an elite class that is not well connected to the local culture and needs” (Jones 1). As I saw with many of the Butler students, the student interactions with natives were limited because of linguistic deficiency, as well as inadequate program support in cultural interactions. Likewise, as many American students fill their free time with international trips to other countries,

some Italians do not believe that they truly understand Italian culture because they do not spend sufficient time within the country.

Then again, there are immense benefits and advantages to studying abroad, especially for Americans, as it increases professional and personal connections with potential language-learning, self-awareness, and cultural sensitivity (Highum 78). While this paper mostly analyzes the presence of an American university in another country, “a study abroad ‘program’ could be administered by a home university, or a third-party provider—also known as an international education organization (IEO)” (7). Throughout my research and interviews, I found that most of the American students did gain a better understanding of their host culture’s history and culture through tourism and culture-oriented classes, such as art and architecture tours through JCU. Generally speaking, many students are attracted to study abroad programs in order to practice different languages, and while this was not the case for most of the Butler students, a few students took Italian language classes, expressing the benefits of speaking Italian while abroad. Their Italian courses allowed for them to understand certain social cues, as well as learn linguistic slang that they would not have understood without knowledge on the Italian language. Culturally, only one student discussed making Italian friends, while others greatly valued the friendships that they made with other international students or degree-seekers at JCU. As John Cabot University is a very multicultural institution, many full-time students also hail from neighboring European countries or other foreign states, such as China or Brazil. The interaction with other nationalities allowed for Butler students to analyze their own country from different perspectives, as well as hear personal and professional experiences from distinct continents. By and large, the benefits of these

overseas experiences have been established and analyzed by a variety of exchange providers, but in the academic realm, study abroad has been found to increase international perspectives of students, provide face-to-face interactions with natives, and present an environment of cultural enrichment (Clotfelter 172). All things considered, the power of education is unmeasurable, as it opens professional doors for students, but global education takes this idea one step further, as it opens the eyes and minds of Americans to new realities, new societies, and new cultures.

## **IX. Conclusion**

In conclusion, while the presence of American universities abroad is a great measure of international cooperation, the Americanization of global education fails to embrace native cultures, promoting a measure of U.S. soft power as programs allow students to use English in the classrooms, maintain American ties with peers, and allow for a complete transfer of national norms in the academic realm. During my interviews with the two student groups, Butler University students seemed to essentially embrace the idea of welcoming another country's customs and norms, but by maintaining close ties with other Americans, as well as using English as their main language of communication, students did not effectively interact with native Italians: a sentiment that was echoed by the Italian students at John Cabot University. This practice of transferring cultural power overseas is seen as a soft power tool, as students have embraced the political and economic success of the United States in all aspects of social society: "Sometimes this homogenization is associated with a general rise of mass culture, or some may want to say middle-class culture. Sometimes it is related to cultural hegemony. In both cases, cultural globalization may also be referred to as *Americanization*, seeing the United

States as the typical middle-class society and hegemonic at the same time” (Manicas and Odin 8). More recently, the Soft Power 30 Index ranked the United States as first in supporting soft power throughout higher education: a status that will not be on the decline in future years because of American universities abroad, as well as satellite campuses (“United States” 1). Moreover, the incalculable power that the U.S. has in influencing external actors, internationally, has boomed throughout the twentieth century as a result of economic expansion and militaristic success. Because of newfound needs in government affairs, the pursuit of critical language knowledge in areas of American interest has just recently been a topic of interest, as the U.S. has increased government funded programs and scholarships for student to pursue linguistic studies, such as the Boren and Fulbright programs.

In addition, American education has been on the rise throughout the course of modern globalization, as nation-states seek to create deeper ties with other countries in topics of trade, politics, and culture: “Externally, states are regulating higher education in ways that compel them to confront globalization and internally, university administrations then enact policies aimed at elevating situations to the status of ‘world class’ ” (Cantwell and Maldonado-Maldonado 295). This political trend of blending national borders seeks to present more culturally sensitive and educated citizens in the workforce: “Current thinking sees international higher education as a commodity to be freely traded and sees higher education as a private good, not public responsibility” (Altbach and Knight 291). In particular, globalized higher education programs are being seen as elitist services that only promote a greater division between domestic and foreign residents. If Americans abroad are more attracted to study abroad programs that are

similar to their own cultures, why are these students actually interested in studying in a foreign country? During my interviews, many expressed that these opportunities allowed for them to learn more about a distinct culture without having to commit to doing so independently. They felt safer, more comfortable, and more confident when they had aspects of American culture in their education. In an article by the Seattle Times, Sarah Grant found that students were increasingly worried about the financial burden of domestic universities, looking to Europe for more affordable costs (1). Grant also found that “the number of students enrolled in college outside their countries rose 463 percent from 1975 to 2012” (1): an astonishing quantity of students throughout great decades of political turmoil and global change.

Many scholars have argued that as a result of the conflicts throughout the 1900s, students feel a greater need to understand the complexities of distinct cultural societies, embracing study abroad as an opportunity to open one’s mind to different realities in the twenty-first century. While I found this to be true throughout most of my research, my discussions with both Italian and American students unleashed a great number of criticisms of the American university as a global model. While this does not go to blame John Cabot University, it is more of a critical examination of how American society has imposed its culture throughout higher education. The priority of these universities place precedence on American values, such as English learning, but they have not yet managed to accurately incorporate the voices of native citizens into the discussion. It goes without saying that an American university abroad varies from a domestic institution, but in the minds of educators, scholars, and political scientists, the primitive definition of “global education” presents students with a world that is a separate entity from their nation-states.

By just simply allowing American students to travel to other countries without knowledge on the mother tongue, social norms, and cultural expressions, as well as with groups of other American peers, institutions are occulting the preciousness and duality of the host country. The sanctity of cultural differences and minority languages is at risk when universities extend their reach to other countries, and in order for student experiences to be truly global, one must prioritize respecting host countries' cultural structures in order to become a more culturally conscious citizen.

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## **XI. Appendix**

1. Why did you choose to study abroad in Italy?
2. Why did you choose John Cabot in Rome?
3. Why did you see this program at JCU as a fit for you?
4. What is your relationship with the U.S.?
5. What is your relationship to Europe?
6. How long is/was your program?
7. How many (approximately) Italian students were/are in your classes? American?
8. How many Italian professors do/did you have? How many American?
9. What are some aspects of Italian culture that you learned more about and/or adopted?
10. As an American citizen, what are some aspects of American culture that you maintained while abroad?
11. As an Italian citizen, what are some aspects of Italian culture that you maintained while at JCU?
12. Do you find yourself more connected to Italian as a result of this experience?
13. Do you find yourself more connected to Italian or American culture now?
14. What is your personal definition of Italian culture?
15. What is your personal definition of American culture?
16. Did you interact with any locals?
17. How do you interact with locals?
18. What kind of activities did you do around Rome?
19. Did you go to American services (bars, stores, and pubs)?
20. Do you feel like you authentically lived the study abroad experience in Italy?

21. Did you feel as if you were studying in an authentic American university?
22. What is your view on the Italian language?
23. What is your view on the English language?
24. What was the hardest aspect of being abroad?
25. What was the best aspect of being abroad?
26. Do you seek a career in Italy?
27. Overall, how was your experience at JCU?
28. Would you recommend it?
29. Would you rather go back and go to an authentic Italian institution?
30. What was the hardest and the best aspect of studying at an American university in Rome?
31. Is there a certain stigma attached to Italian students studying at an American university in Italy?
32. Do you seek a career in the U.S.?
33. Do you seek a career in Italy?
34. What is different about JCU than going to the U.S. to study?
35. Would you go back and go to an authentic Italian institution? or prefer studying in the United States?